

Tuesday – Thursday 8.00 -9.15 p.m. (Caldwell 103)

Instructor: Dr. Stan Husi

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Office hours: Wednesday 12-2 p.m.

Course Description:

In this introductory course to Ethics, we are going to systematically investigate the nature of ethics, what exactly it demands and values and why, what objective status it enjoys (or does not enjoy), whether and how we could come to acquire ethical knowledge, whether and why we should care about being ethical, what relation ethics bears to religion, and its connection to moral responsibility. We are discussing the major ethical traditions such as consequentialism, the view that the one and only criterion for the moral assessment of actions is the quality of their consequences; deontology, the view that some actions, such as the keeping or breaking of promises, may be right or wrong irrespective of their consequences; contractarianism, the view that moral rules are based on actual or hypothetical agreements regulating basic social arrangements; and virtue ethics, the view that character is key for understanding ethics. The course will be rounded off by looking at some hot ethical issues. The readings are mostly by contemporary authors and are all drawn from Shafer-Landau's excellent anthology *Ethical Theory*.

Grading:

The grading scheme for this course is straightforward. Students may earn up to 100 points, translating into grades according to the standard point-to-grade schedule given below. Grades are determined by three components:

(1) Two essays of at least five pages: The first essay counts for 20 points, the second essay counts for 30 points, adding up to a total of 50 points or 50% of the grade.

A note on the essays: For both essays, a list of discussion questions will be distributed, out of which students will pick one to discuss in detail (in at least five pages). I will also distribute a list of expectations/suggestions for writing an essay in philosophy. Students have two and a half weeks for each essay (including three weekends), 9/22-10/11 for the first essay, 11/17-12/06 for the second essay. Essays will be graded blindly in accordance with the distributed expectations. Late submission of the essays will be penalized. Submissions are considered on time when submitted by (exactly) 9 a.m. of the relevant due dates. If submitted after 9 a.m. on the relevant due date, students lose 1 point; for every additional late day, students lose 2 extra points (meaning if the essay is submitted due date +1, the student loses 3 points, due date + 2, the student loses 5 points, and so on). In case of emergencies, I would ask students to contact me as early as possible, and documentation for emergencies will be demanded in accordance with university policy.

(2) Two exams: The two exams together count for 30 points or 30% of the grade. Regarding the overall exam-score, there are two scenarios: (1) If the final exam receives a higher grade than the midterm exam, and provided the midterm receives at least a D, the midterm exam will be dropped (counting for nothing) and the final exam will count for 30 points or 30% of the grade. (2) If the midterm exam receives a higher grade than the final exam, or if the midterm receives a grade lower than a D, the final exam will count for

20 points or 20% of the grade, and the midterm exam will count for 10 points or 10% of the grade. The midterm exam thus has a probationary character, intended to prepare students for the final exam, with the nice benefit of potentially helping but not hurting a student's overall exam-score.

A note on the exams: A list of sample exam-questions will be distributed at least one week prior to the exams, enabling students to effectively prepare for the exam (for the final exam, the list will be distributed in week 15). Questions on the sample list may or may not appear on the actual exam, though there is a decent probability that many will. At the class immediately preceding the exam, we will reserve some time for exam-preparation, and students are encouraged to ask clarificatory questions about the distributed list of questions, though naturally should not expect "substantive" answers. Students will have a full three hours for the final exam, even though the exam will be designed so as to require significantly less time (around two hours). The midterm exam will be held in class on November 11th, and take one hour.

(3) Quizzes: There will be 10 quizzes during the course, and together they will count for 20 points or 20% of the grade. The three quizzes with the lowest scores will be dropped. Each quiz will receive between 0 and 3 points: 3 points for getting it exactly right, 2 points for getting it mostly right, 1 point for getting more than half of it right and 0 for getting more than half of it wrong. Students will receive the 20 point maximum by getting a total of either 20 or 21 quiz points, correcting for the mathematical impurity, and thus granting students an extra "grace point." (*meaning 6 perfect quizzes plus one "almost" perfect quiz equals an overall perfect quiz score*)

A note on the quizzes: The quizzes serve one sole purpose: to ensure students come prepared to class, and have read the assigned texts. Reading the assigned texts is a core component of this course, and thus the quizzes together count for a rather substantial portion of the grade. Students who regularly come prepared to class should receive close to the 20 point maximum. The quizzes do not test for deeper comprehension of the reading material, nor a full mastery of the arguments presented; instead, they identify a few key points any student who has read the material is most likely to remember. For instance, should a text contain a central example, the quiz might ask about some crucial details of the example, where it took place, when it took place, how many people were in it, etc. Usually there will be two to four questions in each quiz, and students will roughly have 5 minutes for each quiz. All quizzes will be taken towards the beginning of the class. They test for the assigned readings of the entire week, not just for the individual class at which they are taken.

Points-to-grade schedule:

93-100	A
90-92	A-
87-89	B+
83-86	B
80-82	B-
77-79	C+
73-76	C
70-72	C-
67-69	D+
63-66	D
60-62	D-
0-59	F

Honor Code:

All students are expected to abide by the University's Honor Code: <http://honor.unc.edu>

Required Readings:

Russ Shafer-Landau, *Ethical Theory – An Anthology*, Oxford, UK: Blackwell Publishing 2007.

A note on the readings: All readings are drawn from Shafer-Landau's excellent anthology. Authors, titles, and chapter numbers in "()" all refer to the anthology. The number of pages assigned for each class is indicated by "[]", and with few exceptions does not surpass 20 pages. The anthology, in its original price, is not inexpensive. It is available, however, at various venues for less than its original price. At one popular internet bookstore, it currently sells for \$38.01 new, and \$32 used.

Any student with a documented disability needing academic adjustments or accommodations is requested to speak with me during the first two weeks of class. All discussions will remain confidential. Students with disabilities should also contact the Department of Disability Services, <http://disabilityservices.unc.edu/>

Course Schedule:

Week 1 – Ethics and Religion

08/23 Introduction

08/25 Plato, *Euthyphro* (23); Adams, *A New Divine Command Theory* (24);
Craig & Sinnott-Armstrong, *God and Objective Morality: A Debate* (25) [13]

Week 2 – Ethics and Religion & The Status of Morality

08/30 Layman, *God and the Moral Order* (27); Wielenberg, *God and Morality* (28) [19]

09/01 Ayer, *A Critique of Ethics* (2); Mackie, *The Subjectivity of Values* (3) [18] FIRST QUIZ

Week 3 – The Status of Morality (continued)

09/06 Harman, *Moral Relativism Defended* (5); Midgley, *Trying Out One's New Sword* (7) [14]

09/08 Smith, *Realism* (9); Shafer-Landau, *Ethics as Philosophy* (8) [15] SECOND QUIZ

Week 4 – Moral Knowledge

09/13 Kagan, *Thinking about Cases* (10); Sher, *But I Could Be Wrong* (11) [20]

09/15 Brambrought, *Proof* (12); Sayre-McCord, *Coherentism and the Justification of Moral Beliefs* (14) [22] THIRD QUIZ

Week 5 – Why be Moral? – The Threat of Egoism

09/20 Feinberg, *Psychological Egoism* (19); Rachels, *Ethical Egoism* (21) [20]

09/22 Kavka, *The Reconciliation Project* (17) [14]

FIRST ESSAY DISCUSSION QUESTIONS DISTRIBUTED

FOURTH QUIZ

Week 6 – Value

09/27 Mill, *Hedonism* (29); Nozick, *The Experience Machine* (30);

Feldman, *The Good Life: A Defense of Attitudinal Hedonism* (31) [20]

09/29 Parfit, *What Makes Someone's Life Go Best* (35); Kraut, *Desire and the Human Good* (33);

Ross, *What Things are Good?* (34) [20]

FIFTH QUIZ

Week 7 – Moral Theory: Consequentialism

10/04 Mill, *Utilitarianism* (48), Shaw, *The Consequentialist Perspective* (49) [18]

10/06 Smart, *Extreme and Restricted Utilitarianism* (50), Hooker, *Rule Consequentialism* (51) [21]

SIXTH QUIZ

Week 8 – Moral Theory: Deontology

10/11 Nozick, *The Rationality of Side Constraints* (58); Gewirth, *The Golden Rule Rationalized* (59) [16]

FIRST ESSAY DUE

10/13 Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals* (55) [14]

SEVENTH QUIZ

(Short) Week 9 – Moral Theory: Deontology (continued)

10/18 Korsgaard, *Kant's Formula of Universal Law* (56) [12]

10/20 FALL RECESS – NO CLASS

Week 10 – Moral Theory: Contractarianism

10/25 Gauthier, *Why Contractarianism?* (63) [11]

10/27 Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (64) [12]

EIGHTS QUIZ

Week 11 – Moral Theory: Virtue Ethics

11/01 Aristotle, *The Nature of Virtue* (66) [17]

11/03 Nussbaum, *Non-Relative Virtues: An Aristotelian Approach* (67);

Annas, *Being Virtuous and Doing the Right Thing* (71) [26]

NINTH QUIZ

Week 12 – Moral Theory: Particularism

11/08 Ross, *What Makes Right Acts Right?* (72); Dworkin, *Unprincipled Ethics* (76) [18]

11/10 **MIDTERM EXAM**

Week 13 – Moral Responsibility

11/15 (Galen) Strawson, *The Impossibility of Moral Responsibility* (37);
(Peter) Strawson, *Freedom and Resentment* (41) [19]

11/17 Nagel, *Moral Luck* (39) [8]

SECOND ESSAY DISCUSSION QUESTIONS DISTRIBUTED

TENTH QUIZ

(Short) **Week 14 – Moral Sainthood**

11/22 Wolf, *Moral Saints* (22) [13]

11/24 THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY – NO CLASS

Week 15 – Famine, Animals & Future Generations

11/29 Singer, *Famine, Affluence and Morality* (53);
O’Neill, *Kantian Approaches to Some Famine Problems* (57) [20]

12/01 Singer, *All Animals are Equal* (43);
Feinberg, *The Rights of Animals and Unborn Generations* (44) [21]

(Short) **Week 16**

12/06 LAST CLASS

SECOND ESSAY DUE

12/13 FINAL EXAM (8-11 a.m.)