

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT TYLER

Course Syllabus

PHIL 2306: Introduction to Ethics
Instructor: Gregory L. Bock, Ph.D.
Spring 2024
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Required Textbooks

Justice by Michael Sandel
The Sunflower by Simon Wiesenthal
Other reading materials are provided for free (OER) in Canvas.

Course Catalog Description:

A study of moral theory and ethical decision-making including a critical analysis of practical and professional cases.

Course Outcomes:

By the end of this course, students will be able to...

1. explain and critique the ethical theories of the world's most influential philosophers.
2. apply various ethical theories to concrete cases and contemporary moral problems.
3. analyze and evaluate the argument of an essay that takes a point of view on an ethical issue.
4. demonstrate competent writing skills in an argumentative and philosophical essay.
5. demonstrate competent oral communication skills, arguing for a point of view in a presentation.
6. describe how theories of morality apply to the self.

Grading Scale Percents

A=90-100%, B=80-89%, C=70-79%, D=60-69%, F=less than 60%

Grading:

Group Case Presentations (2@100 points each):	200 points
Midterm	100 points
Final Exam	100 points
Term Paper	100 points
Attendance	50 points

TOTAL:

450 points (lowest 100-pt. assignment dropped)

Assessment:

Group Case Presentations: Students will work in groups of no more than five students to analyze a case from the case set. Preparation will involve researching the background of the case and exploring the moral dimensions of the case. On the day of the presentation, the group will summarize the case for the class and answer one of the questions at the end of the case. The grade will be based on evidence of critical thinking and being able to support a point of view, using moral theory.

Grading rubric:

1. Did the group's presentation clearly and systematically address the question? (25 points)
2. Did the group's presentation identify and thoroughly discuss the central moral dimensions of the case? (25 points)
3. Did the group's presentation indicate both awareness and thoughtful consideration of different points of view? (25 points)
4. Did the group's presentation make clear connections to the ethical theories discussed in the first part of the semester, e.g. utilitarianism (25 points)

Exams: The midterm and final exams will be closed-book and based on the group case presentations. On the day of the exam, the instructor will randomly choose one of the cases from the group presentation assignment and put it on the screen with one of the questions from the end of the case. Students will answer the question with a short essay in the time provided. Grades will be based on the same grading rubric as the group case presentation assignment.

Term Paper: Students will argue for a point of view on one of the many case studies from the National High School Ethics Bowl. Your job is to (1) review the select cases, (2) pick one you like, (3) choose *just one* of the questions at the end of the case to answer in the form of a five-paragraph argumentative essay. The paper will be 1500 to 2000 words and follow the [Chicago Manual Style of Citations](#).

BASIC REQUIREMENTS:

- 1500-2000 words (not including citations and bibliography)
- Double-spaced
- No cover page
- Name and title at the top center of first page
- Page numbers on the bottom right of each page
- Standard twelve-point font (e.g. Times New Roman)
- One-inch margins
- .docx, rtf, or pdf file formats only
- The introduction should be no more than half a page.
- The conclusion should be no more than half a page and only review the main points.
- No inflammatory or disrespectful language

The paper should be a standard five paragraph argumentative essay (no more and no less than five paragraphs), which means an introduction, three body paragraphs, and a conclusion. The thesis statement requirement: *the last sentence* of the introduction should be the *complete thesis statement* that clearly states your point of view. The topic sentence requirement: the first sentence of each body paragraph should act as a topic sentence and support thesis statement. The paper should be organized in the following way:

<u>First paragraph</u> : This paragraph includes background info, case summary, and any terms that need to be defined. The thesis statement should clearly state your point of view on the question.
<u>Second paragraph</u> : first argument in support of your point of view
<u>Third paragraph</u> : second argument in support of your point of view
<u>Fourth paragraph</u> : an articulation of a contrary point of view (to yours) immediately followed by your careful and thorough rebuttal.
<u>Fifth paragraph</u> : conclusion, review of main points

TERM PAPER RUBRIC (100 POINTS)	
0-20 points	Does the paper demonstrate critical thinking? The paper is an argumentative essay, containing a well-supported argument. It also makes careful distinctions and avoids logical fallacies and gaps in reasoning.
0-20 points	Are connections made with other readings in the course? Multiple, relevant connections (with citations) are made to course materials from the entire semester. Students should demonstrate how much they have learned by using relevant ideas in service of their argument.
0-20 points	Is ethical theory successfully applied? Moral theory from the course plays a prominent role in the paper – utilitarianism, Kant, virtue theory, etc. – and is correctly applied in the argument to support the student’s thesis statement.
0-20 points	Is another point of view carefully addressed? A contrary point of view is carefully considered and critiqued.
0-20 points	Is the paper well-written? Grammar is polished, and citation style conforms to Chicago Manual of Style. Also, the paper meets the thesis statement and topic sentence requirements in the instructions and is a five-paragraph essay organized in the way described above.

Additional points will be deducted for late papers and papers that don't satisfy the "BASIC REQUIREMENTS" above. Cases of plagiarism earn an automatic zero and a possible F in the course. Plagiarized papers may be sent to UT Tyler Judicial Affairs to receive additional consequences.

You're not graded for your political, religious, or moral beliefs but whether you demonstrate good critical thinking, argumentation, and application of concepts from the semester. Review the grading rubric above carefully.

If you receive help from the Writing Center on an early draft and use the information to revise your paper, I will award you five extra credit points in the extra credit column, which amounts to half a letter grade on the paper. In order to receive extra credit, you must opt in to "email instructor" when you visit the Center. If I don't receive an e-mail from the Writing Center, you will not receive credit. The Writing Center is often busy, so you must plan ahead and make an appointment. No exceptions will be made if you are too late in making your appointment. You can earn only five points even if you visit the Writing Center multiple times. Visiting the Writing Center does not guarantee you a good grade but makes it more likely you will receive a better grade than you would have.

Attendance: At the start of the semester, each student has fifty points for attendance and one free unexcused absence. Each unexcused absence after the first is penalized five points per day against the attendance grade up to fifty points. Excused absences will not count against the fifty points but need to be accompanied with documentation (e.g. a doctor's note). This documentation must be submitted when the student returns to class and no later. After losing fifty points, no further points will be deducted even if there are more absences. Students may not see points deducted in the grade book immediately or even until the end of the semester, so it is the student's responsibility to be aware of the number of attendance points remaining and make sure that the attendance sheet is accurate on a weekly basis.

Course Policies:

Late work policy: Exams must be taken during the class time on the day of the test. Make-ups are only allowed under special circumstances, such as a serious illness accompanied by a doctor's note.

Communication policy: The best way to communicate with the instructor is through UT Tyler e-mail (gbock@uttyler.edu) or in Canvas. Students can expect replies within 48 hours, excluding weekends and holidays. Students who do not receive a reply within this timeframe should attempt to contact the instructor again. The instructor communicates with the class via Canvas emails and announcements. It is important that students check their email and allow push notifications for class announcements.

Class conduct policy: The subject matter of this class can make some people hot under the collar. This said, all comments and behavior must be classroom appropriate. What does "classroom appropriate" mean? It does *not* mean that students cannot express unpopular opinions. It means practicing reasoning and logical argumentation. It means being civil and

listening with respect. Insults, snide comments, name-calling, cutting someone off, derogatory tones, sarcasm, ridicule, cussing, vulgarity, personal attacks, racial slurs, misogynistic remarks, etc. will not be allowed. If you are unsure about what counts as disrespectful, consult the instructor or the Golden Rule. The instructor will act as the final word on what is or is not classroom appropriate. Violators may be ejected from the class.

Cell phone policy (face-to-face sections): Mobile devices can be used in the classroom if it is related to what is going on in class. If you have an electronic textbook or plan to take notes on your device, please let me know early in the semester. They are permissible as long as they don't distract you or your classmates from the lesson.

Arriving late or leaving early policy (face-to-face sections): Arriving on time can sometimes be challenging, but it is better to be late than never. However, late arrivals and early departures can be disruptive to others in the classroom. For this reason, please don't make a habit of it. If it does become a habit, points will be deducted from the attendance grade.

Extra credit policy: Extra credit may be available from time to time when the instructor announces it. It is not available upon request, especially not during the last week of class.

"It is what it is" final grade policy: Grades are final once the final grade percentage has been posted in Canvas at the end of the semester. No changes will be made unless the instructor has made a mistake. Grades are not bumped up unless the student is within .5% of the next letter grade. For example, an 89.5% is an A. An 89.4% is a B. No extra credit opportunities will be given during finals week. The conditions for an "incomplete" are stated in the university handbook: "(a) the student has been making satisfactory progress in the course; (b) the student is unable to complete all course work or final exam due to unusual circumstances that are beyond personal control and are acceptable to the instructor; and (c) the student presents these reasons prior to the time that the final grade roster is due." The terms and deadline for satisfying an "incomplete" will be set by the instructor.

[UT TYLER HONOR CODE](#)

I embrace honor and integrity.
Therefore, I choose not to lie, cheat or steal, nor to accept the actions of those who do.

By the way, it's really bad karma to cheat in an ethics class.