

**PHI 220: Introduction to Ethics**  
MW 10-11:15am, Science Building 44  
Fall 2015

**Professor:** Jennifer Kling, PhD

**Office Hours:** MW 11:30am-1pm, TuTh 10am-12pm; available by appointment (Sacred Heart Hall 312E)

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**Course Description:**

Ethics is a branch of *practical* philosophy. It concerns our everyday actions, our attitudes, our ways of interacting with others and with the world, and our life choices. It is also *normative*—that is, it is evaluative. We make claims that actions, characters, states of affairs, or even pleasures are good or bad, right or wrong, praiseworthy or blameworthy, just or unjust, fair or unfair. Our day-to-day lives are filled with these sorts of claims: “You shouldn’t have done that.” “I was treated unfairly.” “Cindy is a terrible friend.” “What’s happening in South Sudan is awful.” “You should appreciate that he’s making an effort to be nice.” “Gandhi was a great man.”

But how do we determine whether these claims are true, or accurate, or sensible? What grounds these claims? Are they reasonable or unreasonable? Justified or unjustified? Are they the sorts of claims that can be reasonable or justified? This is where philosophy comes in. Ethical philosophy attempts to analyze and critically assess our value judgments using reason and argument. Our moral beliefs, evaluations, and judgments are only as good as our reasons for holding them—so ethical philosophy asks *why* something is good or bad, right or wrong, just or unjust, fair or unfair. Furthermore, it asks what we mean by the terms good or bad, right or wrong, etc.

In order to attempt to answer some of these big questions, we will be reading both historical and contemporary philosophical texts, with an eye to understanding what philosophers think about these issues and why. However, our efforts will not be merely an academic exercise where we will only study what others have thought. Instead, in this course you will be joining in an active and ongoing effort to better understand the world in all its complexity and our place in it. In this class, you will have to struggle with big concepts that you may not have engaged before, and you will have to work hard to succeed. Along the way you will come to better understand what ethicists do, how they do it, and why. That will entail using and refining your abilities to effectively think, argue, read, and write. In other words, in this course you are going to learn how to *do* moral philosophy, which is both difficult and rewarding.

**Course Requirements:**

**Participation (10%):** You will need to both do the readings and come to class in order to be successful in this course. If you don’t do the readings, you’ll be lost in class; if you don’t come to class, you’ll be lost in the readings and the assignments. While *\*excessive\** participation is not required, some willingness to engage with both me and your fellow classmates is necessary—without this willingness on your part, we won’t be able to have the sort of productive class discussions that will enable you to successfully engage in philosophy. So, while a lack of participation won’t harm your grade very much, participation can significantly *help* your grade.

I appreciate that speaking to a classroom full of your peers can be difficult; so, there are a number of other ways to participate in class. You may speak in class, you may engage in small group work, you may visit my office hours, you may send me emails with questions, comments, and concerns, you may join the online discussion threads, you may post relevant outside documents/videos/blogs, etc. to the course eCollege site, you may tweet and/or journal about issues raised in class, etc. If you’re unsure of whether some action

counts as participation, please see me, and we'll discuss it.

**Argument Reconstructions (5% each):** You are required to submit **four** argument reconstructions throughout the semester. Argument reconstructions are due by the start of the class period on the due date. **Late argument reconstructions will not be accepted.** They should be roughly ½-1 page in length, and should reconstruct the relevant written argument. Argument reconstructions may take the form of a detailed bulleted outline or a detailed conceptual map (hand-drawn or computer-generated are both fine). If you wish to submit an argument reconstruction in some other form, please see me, and we'll discuss it. **\*\*Collaboration is encouraged but not required.\*\***

**Blog Posts (2% each):** You are required to submit **ten** blog posts throughout the semester. You may submit up to two per week, and you may not submit any after the final week of class. Blog posts should be roughly 250-400 words, and should *thoughtfully engage* with the topics under discussion in class. You have broad leeway in your blog posts. For example, you may comment on a part of the readings you found confusing, ask a question about an author's argument or conclusion, present a problem with an author's position, discuss the relationship between two or more readings, connect the readings with an item in the news media or popular culture, or provide a considered response to questions raised by the readings or in class. You may submit a text blog post, a video post, or a podcast (videos and podcasts should be roughly 1.5-2 minutes). If you wish to submit a blog post in some other form, please see me, and we'll discuss it.

**Papers (10% each):** There are **four** required papers for this course. Each paper should be 2 pages long, and should *critically engage* with some issue brought up in the course readings and class discussions. I will provide a list of topics two weeks in advance of each paper's due date. If you wish to write on a topic not on the list, please come see me to discuss your proposed topic. If you wish to submit a paper in some other form, please see me, and we'll discuss it.

Papers are due by the start of the class period on the due date. For every 24-hour period that a paper is late, I will take 5 points off. That said, I am aware that life happens; if you feel you need an extension, please ask me as soon as possible. The earlier you ask, the more likely I am to give you an extension. Failure to turn in any one of the papers will result in failing the course.

**Final (10%):** There is a required final exam for this course. The exam will consist of a series of short answers as well as one longer essay. Please bring a bluebook for the final. Failure to take the final exam will result in failing the course.

### **Grading Scale:**

**A:** An 'A' denotes exceptional skill and ability. An 'A' student demonstrates an excellent grasp of the material (i.e., the student understands the material enough to explain it succinctly and well), and also displays the ability to engage philosophically with both the broad issues and finer points under discussion.

**B:** A 'B' denotes solid-to-impressive skill and ability. A 'B' student demonstrates a good grasp of the material (i.e., the student understands the material well enough to explain it with few mistakes), and also displays the ability to engage philosophically with most, if not all, of the issues and points under discussion.

**C:** A 'C' denotes adequate skill and ability. A 'C' student demonstrates a fair grasp of the material (i.e., the student understands the big picture, but makes some serious errors in presentation), and also displays the ability to engage philosophically with at least some of the issues under discussion.

**D:** A 'D' denotes inadequate skill and ability. A 'D' student has serious problems with grasping the material, and fails to engage philosophically with any of the issues under discussion.

**F:** An 'F' denotes catastrophic problems in fulfilling the requirements of the course. An 'F' student neither grasps the material nor engages with it critically at any level.

While hard work is correlated with success, it is not sufficient for success. To get a good grade in this course, you need to not only understand and engage with the material, but also communicate your understanding and engagement to me via your participation, blog posts, reconstructions, papers, and exam. If you sense that you are heading towards a grade you do not want, please come see me as soon as possible (if you wait until the end of the semester, it will be too late).

**Assignments:**

All readings, videos, podcasts, etc can be found on this course's eCollege site.

Date	Topic	Assignment
8/31	Introduction to the Course	
9/2	How To: Map Out an Argument	<i>Read:</i> Judith Jarvis Thompson, excerpt from “Self-Defense”
9/7 Labor Day	<b>No Class: Labor Day</b>	<i>Watch:</i> <i>12 Angry Men</i> (1957), available on youtube: <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Kwd2dYZbjVw">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Kwd2dYZbjVw</a>
9/9	How To: Write a Philosophy Paper	<i>Watch:</i> 'A Sample Philosophy Paper' by Angela Mendelovici <a href="https://prezi.com/z4h1_fwilbxj/a-sample-philosophy-paper/">https://prezi.com/z4h1_fwilbxj/a-sample-philosophy-paper/</a>
9/14	It's All Relative: Cultural and Moral Relativism	<i>Read:</i> James Rachels, “The Challenge of Cultural Relativism”
9/16	It's All Relative: Cultural and Moral Relativism	<i>Listen:</i> “Susan Neiman on Morality in the 21 <sup>st</sup> Century” Philosophy Bites Podcast <a href="http://philosophybites.com/2010/03/susan-neiman-on-morality-in-the-21st-century.html">http://philosophybites.com/2010/03/susan-neiman-on-morality-in-the-21st-century.html</a>
9/21 <b>Argument Reconstruction #1 Due</b>	Moral Theories: Utilitarianism	<b>Argument Reconstruction #1 Due:</b> John Stuart Mill, <i>Utilitarianism</i> , Chapter 2
9/23	Moral Theories: Utilitarianism	<i>Read:</i> John Stuart Mill, <i>Utilitarianism</i> , Chapter 5
9/28	Practical Applications: Utilitarianism and Global Famine/Poverty	<i>Read:</i> Peter Singer, excerpt from “Famine, Affluence, and Morality”
9/30	Moral Theories: Utilitarianism	<i>Watch:</i> “Utilitarianism Part 2” Youtube video <a href="http://www.wi-phi.com/video/utilitarianism-part-2">http://www.wi-phi.com/video/utilitarianism-part-2</a> and “Utilitarianism Part 3” Youtube video <a href="http://www.wi-phi.com/video/utilitarianism-part-3">http://www.wi-phi.com/video/utilitarianism-part-3</a>
10/5	Moral Theories: Utilitarianism	<i>Read:</i> Bernard Williams, excerpt from “A Critique of Utilitarianism”
10/7 <b>Paper #1 Due</b>	Practical Applications:	<b>Paper #1 Due on eCollege</b>

	Utilitarianism and the Ethics of Food	<i>Read:</i> Alastair Norcross, “Puppies, Pigs and People: Eating Meat and Marginal Cases”
10/12	Moral Theories: Deontology/Kantian Ethics	<i>Read:</i> David Velleman, “A Brief Introduction to Kantian Ethics,” Part 1
10/14	Moral Theories: Deontology/Kantian Ethics	<i>Read:</i> David Velleman, “A Brief Introduction to Kantian Ethics,” Part 2
10/19	Moral Theories: Deontology/Kantian Ethics	<i>Read:</i> Christine Korsgaard, excerpt from “Kant’s Formulation of Universal Law”
10/21 <b>Argument Reconstruction #2 Due</b>	Practical Applications: Deontology/Kantian Ethics and Global Famine/Poverty	<b>Argument Reconstruction #2 Due:</b> Onora O’Neill, excerpt from “Kantian Approaches to Some Famine Problems”
10/26	Moral Theories: Deontology/Kantian Ethics	<i>Read:</i> Susan Wolf, excerpt from “Moral Saints”
10/28	Practical Applications: Deontology/Kantian Ethics and Relationships	<i>Read:</i> Thomas E. Hill, Jr, excerpt from “Servility and Self-Respect”
11/2 <b>Paper #2 Due</b>	Moral Theories: Virtue Ethics	<b>Paper #2 Due on eCollege</b> <i>Listen:</i> “Introducing Virtue Ethics” Youtube video (podcast) <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PHVuzec6s0c">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PHVuzec6s0c</a> and “What is virtue ethics” Practical Ethics Bites podcast <a href="http://podcasts.ox.ac.uk/what-virtue-ethics">http://podcasts.ox.ac.uk/what-virtue-ethics</a>
11/4	Practical Applications: Virtue Ethics and Civility	<i>Read:</i> Cheshire Calhoun, excerpt from “The Virtue of Civility”
11/9 <b>Argument Reconstruction #3 Due</b>	Moral Theories: Virtue Ethics	<b>Argument Reconstruction #3 Due:</b> Martha Nussbaum, excerpt from “Non-relative Virtues: An Aristotelian Approach”
11/11	Practical Applications: Virtue Ethics and Abortion	<i>Read:</i> Rosalind Hursthouse, excerpt from “Virtue Theory and Abortion”
11/16	Moral Theories: Feminist Ethics	<i>Read:</i> Carol Gilligan, excerpts from <i>In a Different Voice</i> and from “Moral Orientation and Moral Development”
11/18 <b>Paper #3 Due</b>	Moral Theories: Feminist Ethics	<b>Paper #3 Due on eCollege</b> <i>Read:</i> Nel Noddings, “An Ethic of Caring”
11/23	Moral Theories: Feminist Ethics	<i>Read:</i> Cheshire Calhoun, excerpt from “Justice, Care, Gender Bias”
11/25 Thanksgiving Break	<b>No Class: Thanksgiving Break</b>	
11/30 <b>Argument Reconstruction #4 Due</b>	Practical Applications: Feminist Ethics and Gay Marriage	<b>Argument Reconstruction #4 Due:</b> Virginia Held, excerpt from “Care and the Extension of Markets”
12/2	Practical Applications: The	<i>Watch:</i> “Anita Sarkeesian at TEDxWomen

	Ethics of Technology	2012” TEDxWomen Talk <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?t=30&amp;v=GZAxwsg9J9Q">https://www.youtube.com/watch?t=30&amp;v=GZAxwsg9J9Q</a> and “Jon Ronson: When online shaming spirals out of control” TED Talk <a href="https://www.ted.com/talks/jon_ronson_what_happens_when_online_shaming_spirals_out_of_control#t-25436">https://www.ted.com/talks/jon_ronson_what_happens_when_online_shaming_spirals_out_of_control#t-25436</a>
12/7 <b>Paper #4 Due</b>	Practical Applications: The Ethics of Sport	<b>Paper #4 Due on eCollege</b> Read: Robert L. Simon, excerpt from <i>Fair Play: The Ethics of Sport</i>
12/9	Review/ Catch Up	
Finals Week 12/14-12/18	Final Exam	<b>In-Class Final Exam</b>

### Code of Student Conduct:

All students at Siena Heights University are responsible for knowing and adhering to the academic integrity policy of this institution. For more information, please see the [Code of Student Conduct](#). Please obey the spirit as well as the law of SHU's Code of Student Conduct. If you think that something is in violation of the Code, it probably is, so check before doing it. Please remember that unintentional plagiarism is still plagiarism, and that **you must cite all of your sources** for papers!

\*\*Please note: every assignment turned in for this class must be your own original work, produced specifically *for this class*. You may not turn in an assignment written for a previous and/or different class. To do so would constitute (self) plagiarism, and will be treated as such.\*\*

### The Writing Center:

The Writing Center at Siena Heights University is a free resource available to all CAS students. Students are encouraged to visit the writing center for writing feedback at any stage in the writing process. For information regarding their tutors, hours, location, or to utilize their online links and resources, please visit [writingcenter.sienaheights.edu](http://writingcenter.sienaheights.edu). **PLEASE NOTE:** Beginning Fall 2015, the Writing Center will be located on the main floor of the library. For more information, please contact Karin Barbee at [kbarbee@sienaheights.edu](mailto:kbarbee@sienaheights.edu).

### Diversity and Disability Statement:

Our institution values diversity and inclusion; we are committed to a climate of mutual respect and full participation. Our goal is to create learning environments that are usable, equitable, inclusive and welcoming. If there are aspects of the instruction or design of this course that result in barriers to your inclusion or accurate assessment or achievement, please notify the instructor as soon as possible. Students with disabilities are also welcome to contact the Office of Disabilities Resources (517) 264-7683 or Laura Lyall (coordinator) at [llyall@sienaheights.edu](mailto:llyall@sienaheights.edu) to discuss a range of options to removing barriers in the course, including accommodations. This process is initiated and driven by the student. It is to your advantage to begin the process in a timely manner, since accommodations are not retroactive. Grades earned before verification of a disability by the ODR will not be changed.

### Syllabus Changes:

I reserve the right to make changes to this syllabus as appropriate. The odds that I'll do so during the semester are small, but if I do, I will inform you as soon as possible.