

Philosophical Ethics

PHIL 3000 EP3 | SPRING 2021 | T/F 10-11:15AM | FULLY ONLINE | [ZOOM CLASSROOM](#)

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Course Description

What is the best life for human beings? Is it simply the pursuit of pleasure and avoidance of pain? Does it involve following one's conscience or adhering to duty? Being a good or virtuous person? But what does morality require of us? And how can we become virtuous?

Such questions inevitably arise for each of us in our own lives, and this course will offer an introduction to some of the most prominent answers that have been offered by philosophers throughout history. We will read the classic works of Aristotle, Immanuel Kant, and John Stuart Mill, along with works by more contemporary figures who have engaged with, challenged, and applied those theories.

Course Objectives

Throughout the course, you will learn to:

- ▶ Critically read and annotate historical and contemporary philosophical texts
- ▶ Identify, evaluate, and engage with arguments and positions
- ▶ Articulate your own thoughts clearly and persuasively in both informal and formal writing
- ▶ Engage in respectful and collaborative philosophical discussion
- ▶ Refine your ability to orally present and explain philosophical ideas and arguments

Required Texts

Utilitarianism

John Stuart Mill
Edited by George Sher
Hackett
ISBN 9780872201668

Grounding of the Metaphysics of Morals

Immanuel Kant
Translated by James Ellington
Hackett
ISBN 9780872206052

The Nicomachean Ethics

Aristotle
Translated by David Ross
Oxford World's Classics
ISBN 9780199213610

Texts must be purchased through Perusal

Other readings will be provided through Perusal.

Readings and annotations are always due by 8am on the day of class

COURSE MODALITY AND TECHNOLOGY

In a normal semester, we would meet in person twice a week as a full group to discuss the readings. Because of the restrictions placed on us by the COVID-19 pandemic, we will be operating in a hybrid, fully online modality. We will use the following platforms and technologies (there is more information on our platforms and modality available on Blackboard).

Course Portals - Blackboard and Google Drive

Blackboard should be your starting place for all course information and assignments
We will use a shared Google Drive for various documents and for our writing workshops

Synchronous Meetings - Zoom

You will have to register with your ID the first time, and after that, you will access the Zoom meetings from a stable Meeting ID. These will be accessible via Blackboard.
After the first few class meetings, we will most often meet in smaller groups twice a week, for 35 minutes. To make up for the missed synchronous time, there will be a more robust set of asynchronous course components.

Asynchronous Components:

Reading and Notes: Perusall
Lecture Videos: Available on Blackboard
Writing: Submitted through Blackboard

Attendance, Preparation, and Participation

You are required to attend class on time and prepared. **What does that look like in a fully on-line class?**

- ▶ **Attendance and Preparation for Synchronous Meetings** (10% of grade) involves showing up on time for your group's Zoom sessions, and engaging as appropriate in that session (I will make special accommodations as needed). Of course, given our current situation, something might come up that makes it impossible for you to attend a session or two (you might get ill, or have internet connection issues, etc.). If that happens, please send me an email whenever you can to explain your absence. It's best if you send it ahead of time, but you can also email me as soon as you can after the class. If I don't hear from you at all I'll mark you as absent. **You can miss two live sessions without explanation and without penalty.**
- ▶ **Participation in Weekly Asynchronous Assignments** (20% of grade) involves engaging with and completing a variety of asynchronous assignments *on your own time but by the assigned deadline*. Your Perusall assignments will make up half of this grade (10% of total grade). The other half will come from your engagement with the lecture videos, measured through your completion of 10 discussion board posts, prompted in the lecture videos (10% of total grade). **You are required to watch all the lecture videos and to complete all 10 discussion board posts. Discussion posts are due by 8am on the associated class day.**

Perusall

All of our readings will be completed on Perusall, with links through the Blackboard site. This helps us to start our conversation about texts early, setting up our synchronous discussions. **Most Perusall assignments will be to make at least 4 annotations on the assigned reading**, but always check the assignment for specific instructions. **Your annotations are due by 8am on the day of our class meeting.** **You may skip up to two annotation assignments without penalty.**

We will use a modified Perusall algorithm for evaluating engagement. Three dimensions will be assessed: required number of annotations, on-time submission, and quality of individual annotations. During the first two weeks of class, any student that makes the required number of annotations will receive full credit. After the first two weeks, I will rely on Perusall's algorithm. This should allow you to learn how Perusall scores your annotations, and to adapt before the scoring sets in.

Assignments

Papers

A large portion of your writing will be from your annotations and asynchronous assignments. These offer an opportunity to respond informally to the readings and class discussion. You will also write three papers on assigned topics. Each paper will receive a grade based on the final submitted product, but that grade will include assessment of your engagement in the drafting and workshopping activities.

The **first paper** will be 3 pages long (10% of grade). You will be required to submit a self-assessment along with this paper. You will submit both documents to me.

The **second paper** will be 4 pages long (20% of grade). You will submit a *full draft* to me and to a small group of classmates. You will then asynchronously provide feedback on your group members' drafts. On the assigned workshop day, you will meet synchronously with your group members to discuss feedback and workshop your drafts. You will then revise your paper based on feedback and discussion, and submit the revision to me.

The **third paper** will be 5 pages long (30% of grade). You will be expected to go through your own draft-revision process and you will submit a self-assessment document with the paper describing your process of revision. This paper will be due on the day of our scheduled final exam in lieu of an exam.

You must submit all three papers to pass this course.

Presentation

You are required to do a formal presentation (10% of grade). You will have two options:

1. Pair up with another student and produce a mini-podcast (under 10 minutes) where you explain and discuss a concept or topic from class, but in a new context (applied case, usage in popular media, new criticism, etc.). The podcast should be a dialogue of some kind, it should involve each partner equally, and it will be posted for the rest of the class to access.
2. Or, during a designated synchronous Zoom session (at the end of the semester), do a brief teaching demo on a chosen topic from our course. Then field 2-3 questions from your classmates.

GRADING BREAKDOWN

- 10% Attendance and Preparation for Synchronous Meetings
- 10% Perusal Annotations
- 10% Discussion Board Posts
- 10% Paper One
- 20% Paper Two
- 30% Paper Three
- 10% Presentation

Late papers will receive a penalty.

To avoid a penalty, submit your paper on by the due date. If you think you will need extra time to complete the assignment, email me to **request an extension**. I tend to be generous in granting extensions.

There is no extra credit in this class, and there are no revisions outside of the standard draft-revision process for Paper Two. If you think your paper receives a grade it does not deserve, you may write a petition presenting your case for why your paper deserves a different grade. I will provide further details on this process with the first assignment.

Grading Policies

Grades will follow the official Fordham guidelines, with a strong dose of awareness about the special challenges we are all facing this semester. I will say more about my assessment practices when we discuss the first paper.

Letter	Percentage	Description
A	94-100	Excellent, honors-level work
A-	90-93	Still excellent
B+	87-89	Very good
B	83-86	Good, solid and above average
B-	80-82	Good and still above average
C+	77-79	Average
C	73-76	Satisfactory
C-	70-72	Minimally acceptable
D	60-69	Passing but unsatisfactory
F	0-59	Failure

Grading for all submitted work will be determined largely by the following criteria:

- **Accuracy:** How well have you understood the material? Can you present the concepts and arguments clearly and correctly? Are you understanding the theories in a concrete way or only in a general way? (Accuracy will be more important in the papers).

- **Effort:** Have you clearly put time into your work? Are you consistent and conscientious about reading and submitting assignments? If you struggled on an early assignment, have you made efforts to improve?
- **Attention to detail:** Are you proofreading everything that you submit? Have you met the requirements in the prompts?
- **Creativity:** Are you thinking originally about our course material? Are you synthesizing and connecting what we read and discuss? (This element is often what separates excellent work from very good work).

More specific grading information will be given for each paper, and we will have a class discussion on excellence in writing before the first paper is due.

Course Policies

Education in the Time of a Global Pandemic

Learning and teaching in the past year has posed incredible challenges. Many of us are dealing with unprecedented personal difficulties and stresses while also trying to pursue our goals in education. Many of us are also acutely aware of the forces, structures, and systems that contribute to those difficulties and stresses. Because of this, my hope for our class is that we are able to practice mutual care, understanding, and patience towards one another. **I hope we can remember that we are human beings first, students and professors second.**

This practice can take many forms. The one I encourage in our context is **generosity**: the recognition that we may not always be at our best, that needs outside the course may impact our work inside it, and that we may not always hit the marks we'd like when we'd like. I will do my utmost to accommodate circumstances as they arise, in direct dialogue with you. At the same time, as your professor in a core class designed to meet specific requirements, I need to be able to fairly assess your learning over the course of the semester, which depends on your active participation during synchronous meetings and asynchronous activities, and your completion of required assignments. If you are facing challenges in completing your work, or if you anticipate challenges fulfilling the course requirements, please talk with me about it: let's exchange emails or talk during office hours. I will do everything I can to support you in making the most out of this course.

And I will need your generosity too! Even with the tremendous amount of work I put in over the summer and winter breaks to prepare my courses, the logistical challenges of this semester and the demands on my time are daunting. Your constructive feedback about how things are working (or not working) is very welcome, so don't hesitate to reach out. My hope is that if we resolve to practice mutual care, understanding, and patience towards one another this term, then we will face what the semester brings from within a cooperative and supportive learning community, and we can all make the most of our time together.

Office Hours

Office Hours will be managed through Zoom and Google Calendar. To make an appointment during my regularly scheduled office hours (T 2:30-4:30 and W 10-12), go to my [google calendar appointments page](#) to sign up for a time slot. To make an appointment outside of office hours, email me to arrange a time to meet. Office hours will always take place in my [Personal Zoom Room](#); Meeting ID: 365 584 1600, Meeting Password: KopajticOH

Synchronous Discussion Expectations and Best Practices

All synchronous meetings will occur through Zoom, and you should always consult the syllabus for details on group format. I will record the sessions and make those recordings available through Panopto, accessible through Blackboard. Additionally, **I encourage (but do not require) you to:**

- Have your camera on and to participate in the conversation
- Keep your microphone on mute when you aren't speaking
- Have the participant list and the chat window open in Zoom
- Use the blue 'raise hand' feature
- Work from a place where you can minimize environmental distractions
- Work from a laptop, tablet, or monitor, and use your mobile device as a backup
- Connect using an ethernet cable, or a strong and stable wifi connection
- Regularly update your Zoom client, internet browser and other regularly used resources

Academic Integrity

Discussion and the exchange of ideas are essential to academic work, but you should ensure that any written work you submit for evaluation is the result of your own research and writing, and that it reflects your own approach to the topic. You must also adhere to standard citation practices and properly cite any books, articles, websites, lectures, etc. that have helped you with your work. If you receive any help with your writing (feedback on drafts, writing tutor, etc.), you must also acknowledge this assistance.

Plagiarism is a serious offense and will not be tolerated. If a student is caught plagiarizing, they will fail that assignment. A subsequent offense will result in a failure for the class. For the complete policy on plagiarism, please see the [Undergraduate Handbook](#).

If you are even the slightest bit concerned about how to avoid plagiarism, please ask! It is far better to be cautious than to inadvertently plagiarize.

Accessibility Services

Under the Americans with Disabilities Act and Section 504 of the Vocational Rehabilitation Act of 1973, all students are entitled to equal access to the programs and activities of Fordham University. Accessibility in an online class may pose new challenges, and I encourage you to reach out to me or to the Office of Disability Services if you find it difficult to function in our class. If you believe that you have a disabling condition that may interfere with your ability to participate in the activities, coursework, or assessment of this course, you may be entitled to accommodations. Please schedule an appointment to speak with someone at the Office of Disability Services.

Mandatory Reporting

As a faculty member of the university, I am a mandatory reporter in matters regarding sexual harassment, sexual assault, dating or domestic violence, stalking, and other matters regarding sexual misconduct. This means that if you disclose personal information to me relating to these matters, I must contact the University's Title IX Coordinator and relay the information to them. If you wish to speak to someone confidentially, you can contact the University Counseling and Psychological Services, the University Health Services, or the Office of Campus Ministry. The Student CARE Brochure can provide you with on and off-campus resources for support and more information, and you can also visit www.fordham.edu/care or www.fordham.edu/sexualmisconduct for more information.

Class Schedule by Unit

For a more detailed account of the class schedule, visit Blackboard and click on the Learning Module associated with each unit. All reading assignments will have an associated Perusall annotations assignment. See the Perusall site for specific assignment details.

Note that Zoom sessions will take place on each scheduled class day (Tuesday/Friday) and within the scheduled time frame (10-11:15am). Most of the time, you will meet in your smaller group for half of our scheduled time (group assignments will be made in the second class). But sometimes we will meet as a full class.

And note that "Asynchronous Activities" will often be the sorts of things we would do in class if we were able to meet in person as a full group. These activities will help you to master the course content, to prepare for our synchronous sessions, and to hone your writing skills.

Finally, always check the learning module on Blackboard for the most up-to-date and specific information.

Introduction and Orientation

Date	Synchronous Meeting 10-11:15 (Zoom)	Class Content / Reading Assignment (Perusall)	Asynchronous Activities and Deadlines (Complete these before class meeting, in accordance with due dates)
T 2/2	All students	Course Orientation and Syllabus	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▸ Visit Blackboard site▸ Familiarize yourself with technology platforms for this course (Zoom, Google Drive and Perusall)▸ Practice using Perusall on syllabus▸ Purchase texts through Perusall▸ Let Dr. Kopajtic know about any special accommodations needed this semester
F 2/5	All students	Introductions (class participants); Small Group Assignments; James Rachels, "An Introduction to Moral Philosophy"	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▸ Prepare your introduction slide (Google Drive)▸ Perusall annotations▸ Lecture Video

Unit 1: Mill and Utilitarian Ethics

Date	Synchronous Meeting 10-11:15 (Zoom)	Class Content / Reading Assignment (Perusall)	Asynchronous Activities and Deadlines (Complete these before class meeting, in accordance with due dates)
T 2/9	Small Groups	John Stuart Mill, <i>Utilitarianism</i> , Chapter 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▸ Perusall annotations ▸ Lecture Video
F 2/12	Small Groups	John Stuart Mill, <i>Utilitarianism</i> , Chapter 2; First Paper Prompt Distributed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▸ Perusall annotations ▸ Lecture Video
T 2/16	Small Groups	John Stuart Mill, <i>Utilitarianism</i> , Chapter 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▸ Perusall annotations ▸ Lecture Video
F 2/19	All students	Class discussion of Philosophical Writing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▸ Perusall annotations (optional) ▸ First Paper Due Sunday 2/21, by 11:59pm
T 2/23	Small Groups	John Stuart Mill, <i>Utilitarianism</i> , Chapter 5 (selection only)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▸ Perusall annotations ▸ Lecture Video
F 2/26	Small Groups	Sarah Ahmed, "Utilitarianism and Empire"	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▸ Perusall annotations ▸ Lecture Video
T 3/2	Small Groups	Ursula LeGuin, "The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas"	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▸ Perusall annotations ▸ Special Activity ▸ Lecture Video

Unit 2: Kant and Deontological Ethics

Date	Synchronous Meeting 10-11:15 (Zoom)	Class Content / Reading Assignment (Perusall)	Asynchronous Activities and Deadlines (Complete these before class meeting, in accordance with due dates)
F 3/5	All students	Kant, <i>Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals</i> , Preface	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▸ Perusall annotations ▸ Lecture Video
T 3/9	Small Groups	Kant, <i>Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals</i> , Section 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▸ Perusall annotations ▸ Lecture Video
F 3/12	Small Groups	Kant, <i>Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals</i> , Sections 1 and 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▸ Perusall annotations ▸ Lecture Video
T 3/16	Small Groups	Kant, <i>Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals</i> , Section 2 (continued)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▸ Lecture Video
F 3/19	All students	Kant, "On the Supposed Right to Lie for Philanthropic Purposes"; Second Paper Prompt Distributed; Workshop group assignments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▸ Perusall annotations ▸ Lecture Video
T 3/23	Small Groups	Rae Langton "Duty and Desolation" (pages 481-92)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▸ Perusall annotations ▸ Lecture Video
F 3/26	Small Groups	Rae Langton "Duty and Desolation" (pages 492-505)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▸ Perusall annotations ▸ Lecture Video
T 3/30	Small Groups	Lucy Allais, "Kant's Racism"	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▸ Perusall annotations ▸ Lecture Videos (2!) ▸ Draft of Second Paper due by Tuesday 3/30, 11:59pm
T 4/6	All students/ Workshop Groups	Read group members' drafts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▸ Prepare feedback on group drafts ▸ Paper revisions

Unit 3: Aristotle and Virtue Ethics

Date	Synchronous Meeting 10-11:15 (Zoom)	Class Content / Reading Assignment (Perusall)	Asynchronous Activities and Deadlines (Complete these before class meeting, in accordance with due dates)
F 4/9	All students	Aristotle, <i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> , Book 1 (1-5, 7-8, 13) Presentation Prompt Distributed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▸ Perusall annotations ▸ Lecture Video ▸ Presentation sign-ups
T 4/13	Small Groups	Aristotle <i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> , Book 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▸ Perusall annotations ▸ Lecture Video ▸ Revision of Second Paper due by Wednesday 4/14, 11:59pm
F 4/16	Small Groups	Aristotle, <i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> , Book 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▸ Perusall annotations ▸ Lecture Video
T 4/20	All students	Aristotle, <i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> , Book 4; Third Paper Prompt Distributed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▸ Perusall annotations ▸ Lecture Video
F 4/23	Small Groups	Aristotle, <i>Politics</i> , Book 1 (selections); Sepulveda, "Democrates Alter" (selections) Las Casas, "A Short Apologetic History" (selections)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▸ Perusall annotations ▸ Lecture Video
T 4/27	Small Groups	Agnes Callard, "Should We Cancel Aristotle?" Bryan Van Norden, "Who is Cancelling Aristotle?"	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▸ Perusall annotations ▸ Lecture Video ▸ Podcasts (if doing) due by Wednesday 4/28 by 11:59pm
F 4/30	All students	Group One Presentations and Podcasts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▸ Engage with podcasts
T 5/4	All students	Group Two Presentations and Podcasts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▸ Engage with podcasts

Final Paper due Tuesday May 11th by 11:30am