

**Syllabus: Phil 008.02**

**Ethics**

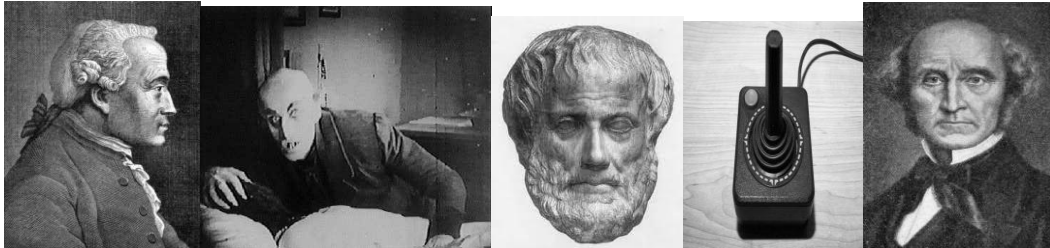
**Foothill College**

**Winter Quarter, 2012**

**Instructor: Toño Ramirez**

**Email: ramireztono@fhda.edu**

**Office Hours: Fridays from 9-10 AM in the campus center**



## Course Description

This course introduces students to the methods and practices of philosophy through a rigorous investigation of central topics pertaining to traditional themes in epistemology and metaphysics. Students will engage key readings and ideas from the history of philosophy, and will find that the themes encountered bear heavily on current issues, events and popular culture. The course will focus on three primary topics: The nature and scope of knowledge, understandings of reality, and the nature of personhood. Our discussions will culminate in an investigation of the relevance of these topics to the possibility of a meaningful life.

## Student Learning Outcomes

Students who successfully engage with the course and its content will be able to:

- Identify and analyze central questions about right action and/or the good life
- Analyze and assess solutions to these problems from a variety of philosophical traditions
- Articulate and defend original positions on these questions
- Identify applications of philosophical tools to real-world actions and decisions

## Course Expectations and Requirements

- Students who are considering dropping the course for *any* reason are encouraged to meet with me first—I'm happy to do what I can to help you succeed in this class! To this end, I strongly encourage you to take advantage of office hours.
- Students may miss a total of *three* class meetings without penalty during the term. A fourth absence will result in the loss of the "attendance buffer" (explained below) when final grades are calculated. A sixth absence will result in dismissal from the course.
- Students are *not* required to provide me with a reason for absence, nor are apologies necessary. I assume that absences will only occur under legitimate circumstances.
- Students who miss a class meeting are responsible for obtaining any information or assignments they may have missed.
- Attendance will be taken at the beginning of class on a regular basis. It is the student's responsibility to ensure that his/her name has been recorded accurately on daily attendance sheets.
- Students are expected to come to class *on time*. Three late arrivals will be considered equivalent to one absence on the attendance record.
- Reading assignments are *required* in this course. I understand that some of the

reading will be challenging, and that it may not be fully understood without subsequent in-class explanation. Nevertheless, I expect that students will read the texts assigned, and will spend time thinking about them before each class meeting.

- As a significant portion of the course will involve class discussion of texts, it is expected that students will have completed assigned readings *before* the corresponding class meeting.
- It is expected that students will engage one another's ideas in discussion, and that this will be done in a respectful manner. Neither disparaging remarks nor personal attacks will be tolerated in any way. Students who demonstrate excellence in discussions will attend closely to the comments of other students, and offer remarks that are of relevance to the discussion at hand.
- Class discussions will feature small-group work. It is expected that students will participate actively in these groups.
- Cell phones and other electronic devices must be turned off during class. Students who need to leave a phone on for emergency purposes should let me know at the beginning of the class session. Text messaging/web-surfing is incompatible with active participation in class activities, and will not be permitted during class time. Students who use electronic devices in class without obtaining prior permission will be asked to leave.

### Student Assessment:

Evaluations will be based upon the quality of individual student participation in discussions and written work. The final grade will be earned according to the following criteria:

- Homework journal:
  - In order to promote reading comprehension and improve the quality of class discussions, students will keep a journal documenting responses to all course readings. These responses are to address each of the questions found at the end of the assigned readings from the Cahn text. It is expected that all students will have this journal with them, *completed and up-to-date*, at the *beginning of every* class meeting. I will collect small groups of journals at random throughout the course to check for completion, and occasionally offer comments on journal entries.
  - Failure to provide an-up-to-date journal available on request will be handled as follows:
    - First instance: Student will be given an opportunity to provide the up-to-date journal at the beginning of the next class meeting
    - Second instance: Student will lose the 10 percentage points allotted to "HW Journal" in the calculation of the final grade
    - Third instance: Student will be dropped from the course
  - If a student is absent on a date when his/her journal is requested, the journal will be due for submission upon the student's return to class
- Paper assignments:
  - All students will submit one short essay, and one longer essay.
  - Essays will be evaluated according to standards provided with assignment prompts. Standards for each paper will also be addressed verbally in class at the time of assignment. It is expected that students who remain unclear

as to the standards of excellent written work will meet with the instructor *before* the assignment is due. “Re-writes” are not accepted for paper assignments. I am happy to review advance drafts of papers with you **in person**, but not via email.

- Academic honesty is imperative in written work. I will spend time in class discussion plagiarism, and will take measures to help students avoid accidental plagiarism. **Any** plagiarized paper submitted to me will automatically result in a grade of “F” for the course, and will be reported to the Dean of Academics. Students who are unsure about standards for academic honesty should [review this tutorial](#), and consult with me. In short, **any uncited material, presented as your own original work**, constitutes plagiarism. This includes uncited quotes from internet and print sources. **There will be no exceptions to this policy.**
- Paper Assignments turned in on time will be graded and returned with comments within one week of the due date. Students may submit assignments up to one week after the due date at no penalty, but I make no guarantees for a prompt return. I will not accept any papers that are turned in after this time.
- I practice blind grading to ensure impartiality in evaluating student work. Students **should not** write their names on the front of any paper assignment. Rather, the name should be written lightly in pencil on the back of the last page.
- Discussion section presentations
  - Each student will give a brief in-class presentation during a Friday meeting of the course. The standards and criteria for these presentations will be addressed in class, and will be available on the course website
- Mid-Term and Final Exams:
  - A make-up exam will only be available under certifiable emergency circumstances, as determined by the instructor. Students who miss either exam for non-emergency reasons will not have the option for a make-up.
  - Students who miss three or fewer classes will automatically keep an “attendance buffer”, which will be used in calculating the final grade. The buffer is lost upon a fourth absence, and will not be restored. Final grades will be calculated as follows

	<b>With</b> attendance buffer	<b>Without</b> attendance buffer
HW Journal	10	10
Short Essay	20	25
Discussion presentation	5	5
Longer Essay	25	30
Midterm Exam	15	15
Final Exam	15	15
Attendance Buffer	10	0

- Argument Paper: 2 pts extra credit (OPTIONAL)
  - Students may earn up to 2 extra percentage points in the course by submitting an argument paper. Argument papers are described in detail on

the “Assignments” page of the course website, and will be explained verbally in class. Only one argument paper may be submitted for the course.

**GRADE SCALE:** A+ (100-97), A (96-93), A- (92-90), B+ (89-87), B (86-83), B- (82-80), C+ (79-77), C (76-73), D+

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## Course Reading Schedule

(n.b.: The schedule is subject to change at my discretion)

Readings come from the Cahn book unless otherwise indicated. Readings from the Rachels text (recommended) are indicated in parenthesis. Readings in parenthesis are not required for HW journals.

- 1/9           ▪ Introduction to course—no reading assigned
- 1/11           ▪ Frankena, “Morality and Moral Philosophy”
  - Rachels, “The Challenge of Cultural Relativism”
  - (Rachels, “What is Morality?”)
- 1/13           ▪ Discussion section—no reading assigned
  
- 1/16           ▪ **NO CLASS MEETING**
- 1/18           ▪ Nagel, “Right and Wrong”
  - Stevenson, “The Nature of Ethical Disagreement”
  - (Rachels, “Subjectivism in Ethics”)
- 1/20           ▪ Discussion section—no reading assigned
  
- 1/23           ▪ Cahn and Murphy, “Happiness and Immorality”
  - Nietzsche, [“Master Morality and Slave Morality”](#)  
(note: journal questions for this reading are located at the *beginning* of this reading, on p.2)
- 1/25           ▪ Cahn, “God and Morality”
  - (Rachels, “Does Morality Depend on Religion?”)
  - **Argument paper date**
- 1/27           ▪ Discussion section—no reading assigned
  - Presentations: 14, 25
  
- 1/30           ▪ Singer, “Famine, Affluence, and Morality”
- 2/1            ▪ Arthur, “World Hunger and Moral Obligation”
- 2/1            ▪ Rachels, “Egoism and Moral Scepticism”
  - (Rachels, “Ethical Egoism”)
  - **Argument paper date**
- 2/3            ▪ Discussion section—no reading assigned
  - Presentations: 24, 13, 17, 7
  
- 2/6            ▪ Mill, “Utilitarianism”
  - Pojman, “Strengths and Weaknesses of Utilitarianism”
  - (Rachels, “The Utilitarian Approach” and “The Debate Over Utilitarianism”)
- 2/8            ▪ In class film: *Gattaca* (no reading required)
- 2/10           ▪ **NO CLASS MEETING**
  
- 2/13           ▪ Gavaghan, [“Off-the-Peg Offspring in the Genetic Supermarket”](#) (for HW journal, please respond to [these questions](#))
- 2/15           ▪ Kant, “The Categorical Imperative”
  - O’Neill, “A Simplified Account of Kant’s Ethics”
  - (Rachels, “Are There Absolute Moral Rules?” and “Kant

- and Respect for Persons”)
  - **MID-TERM EXAM**
  - **Argument paper date**
  - **First Essay Due**
- 2/17
  - **NO CLASS MEETING (campus holiday)**
- 2/20
  - **NO CLASS MEETING (campus holiday)**
- 2/22
  - Presentations: 11, 1, 2
  - Mayo, “Virtue Ethics”
  - Held, “The Ethics of Care”
  - (Rachels, “Feminism and the Ethics of Care”)
  - **Argument paper date**
- 2/24
  - Discussion section—no reading assigned
  - Presentations: 5, 3, 18, 19
- 2/27
  - Aristotle, “The Nature of Virtue”
  - Sommers/Zimbardo: **“The Power of the Situation”** (no response questions)
  - (Rachels, “The Ethics of Virtue”)
- 2/29
  - In class film: *Gone Baby Gone* (no reading required)
- 3/2
  - Discussion section—no reading assigned
  - Presentations: 22, 21, 12, 8
- 3/5
  - Rawls, “A Theory of Justice”
  - For HW journal, please respond to **these questions**
- 3/7
  - Regan, “The Case for Animal Rights”
  - Cohen, “The Case for the Use of Animals in Biomedical Research”
  - Wallace, **“Consider the Lobster”** (no questions for this one)
  - **Argument paper date**
- 3/9
  - Discussion section—no reading assigned
  - Presentations: 23, 6, 20, 6
- 3/12
  - Wolf, **“Moral Saints”** (for HW journal, please respond to **these questions**)
  - Ackerman, **“For the Loved Ones in Your Life”**
- 3/14
  - In class film: *Million Dollar Baby* (no reading required)
- 3/16
  - Discussion section—no reading assigned
  - Presentations: 26, 15, 9
- 3/19
  - Rachels, “Active and Passive Euthanasia”
  - Sullivan, “A Reply to Rachels”
  - Ackerman, **“...After You!”** (no reading questions)
- 3/21
  - Blake, **“Go Ahead, Steal My Car”**
  - Hazlett, **“Possible Evils”**
  - For HW journal, please respond to **these questions**
- 3/23
  - Discussion section—no reading assigned
  - Presentations: 4, 8, 10, 16
- 3/26
  - King, “Letter From a Birmingham Jail”
  - **FINAL EXAM**
  - **FINAL ESSAY DUE**

## Texts

Readings will come from the following books, which are available for purchase at the bookstore:

- Cahn, *Exploring Ethics* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed)
- Rachels, *The Elements of Moral Philosophy* (5<sup>th</sup> ed)

Additional course readings will be distributed on the course website.

### Course Website

Announcements, grade trackers, and electronic versions of most class materials will be available at

<http://www.deanza.edu/faculty/ramireztono/phil08>