

Syllabus: Phil 008

Ethics

De Anza College

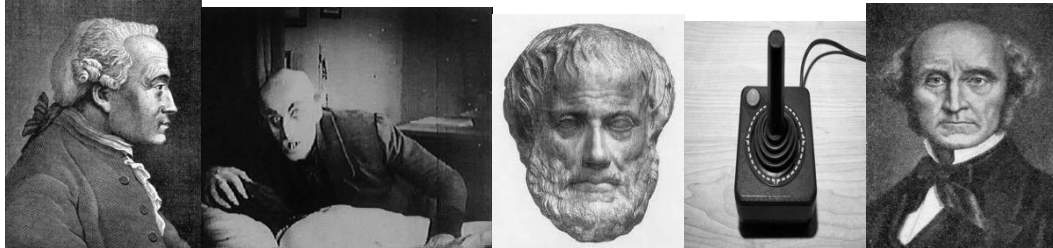
Winter Quarter, 2016

Instructor: Toño Ramirez

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Office Location: Forum Building, Room 2D

Office Hours: M-W 6:20-7:20 AM, TH 1:30-2:30 PM, or by appointment



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 moral philosophy. 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.

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 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 personal reasons 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- Participation in discussions will be evaluated according to the *quality* of student comments, and not quantity. 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. 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.
- Class discussions will frequently feature small-group work. It is expected that students will participate actively in these groups.

- Cell phones 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 is incompatible with active participation in class activities, and will not be permitted during class time.

Student Assessment

- 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 assignment, with no re-write option. In the event that an extra credit assignment is plagiarized, the full amount of the eligible extra credit will be deducted from your course total. Repeat instances will automatically result in an “F” in the course. Plagiarism 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.
- Exams:
 - Three brief exams will be given during the quarter. These will focus exclusively on the content of our readings and class discussions. The exams will not be cumulative (i.e. the content for the second exam will not be drawn from readings during the first third of the quarter, etc.).
 - In calculating the total points for the ‘Exams’ portion of your final grade (see table below), the lowest of your three exam scores will receive a lower ‘weight’ than the remaining two. The ‘Exams’ portion will be calculated as follows:
 - Lowest exam score: 20% of total
 - Average of remaining exams: 80% of total

- Exams **may not** be ‘made up’. In the event that you miss an exam, it will be recorded as a grade of 0, and will constitute your lowest exam score. If you know that you will need to miss an exam in advance, an early exam may be scheduled at the instructor’s discretion.
- Attendance buffer:
 - Students may miss a total of *four* class meetings without penalty during the term. A fifth absence will result in the loss of the “attendance buffer” (explained below) when final grades are calculated. At the instructor’s discretion, a seventh absence will result in dismissal from the course (or a mark of “F” in the event that the seventh absence occurs after the drop date).
 - Students are *not* required to provide the instructor 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 daily 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.
- [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.

Final grades will be awarded according to the following:

	With attendance buffer	Without attendance buffer
Short Essay	25	25
Longer Essay	35	35
Exams (Averaged)	30	40
Attendance Buffer	10	0

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+

Course Reading Schedule

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

Required readings come from the Cahn book unless otherwise indicated. Readings from the Rachels text (recommended, but not required) are indicated in parentheses.

- 1/4 ▪ Introduction to course—no reading assigned
- 1/5 ▪ No reading assigned
- 1/6 ▪ [Frankena, “Morality and Moral Philosophy”](#) (if using the online link, please read only up to the end of “The Nature of Ethics or Moral Philosophy”)
- 1/7 ▪ Please read [this case study](#)
- (Rachels, “What is Morality?”)

- 1/11 ▪ [Rachels, “The Challenge of Cultural Relativism”](#)
- 1/12 ▪ [Stevenson, “The Nature of Ethical Disagreement”](#)
- (Rachels, “Subjectivism in Ethics”)
- 1/13 ▪ [Nagel, “Right and Wrong”](#)
- 1/14 ▪ [Cahn and Murphy, “Happiness and Immorality”](#)

- 1/18 ▪ **No class meeting**
- 1/19 ▪ Nietzsche, [“Master Morality and Slave Morality”](#)
- 1/20 ▪ Rachels, “Egoism and Moral Scepticism”
- (Rachels, “Ethical Egoism”)
- 1/21 ▪ Cahn, “God and Morality”
- (Rachels, “Does Morality Depend on Religion?”)
- **Argument paper date**

- 1/25 ▪ [Exam #1](#)
- 1/26 ▪ Singer, “Famine, Affluence, and Morality”
- 1/27 ▪ Arthur, “World Hunger and Moral Obligation”
- 1/28 ▪ Mill, “Utilitarianism”
- **Argument paper date**

- 2/1 ▪ Pojman, “Strengths and Weaknesses of Utilitarianism”
- 2/2 ▪ (Rachels, “The Utilitarian Approach” and “The Debate Over Utilitarianism”)
- 2/3 ▪ In class film: *Gattaca* (no reading required)
- 2/4 ▪ In class film: *Gattaca* (no reading required)
- **Argument paper date**

- 2/8 ▪ Gavaghan, [“Off-the-Peg Offspring in the Genetic Supermarket”](#)
- Please bring a written response to [these questions about the film](#)

- 2/9 ▪ Kant, “The Categorical Imperative”
- 2/10 ▪ O’Neill, “A Simplified Account of Kant’s Ethics”
- (Rachels, “Are There Absolute Moral Rules?” and “Kant and Respect for Persons”)
- 2/11 ▪ Held, “The Ethics of Care”
- (Rachels, “Feminism and the Ethics of Care”)
- First Essay Due
- **Argument paper date**

- 2/15 ■ **No class meeting**
- 2/16 ■ [Exam #2](#)
- In class film: *Gone Baby Gone* (no reading required)
- 2/17 ■ In class film: *Gone Baby Gone* (no reading required)
- 2/18 ■ In class film: *Gone Baby Gone* (no reading required)
- 2/22 ■ Please bring a written response to [these questions about the film](#).
- 2/23 ■ Mayo, "Virtue Ethics"
- 2/24 ■ Aristotle, "The Nature of Virtue"
- 2/25 ■ Sommers/Zimbardo: "[The Power of the Situation](#)" (Rachels, "The Ethics of Virtue")
- **Argument Paper Date**
- 2/29 ■ Regan, "The Case for Animal Rights"
- 3/1 ■ Cohen, "The Case for the Use of Animals in Biomedical Research"
- 3/2 ■ Wallace, "[Consider the Lobster](#)"
- 3/3 ■ **NO CLASS MEETING**
- 3/7 ■ In class film: *Million Dollar Baby* (no reading required)
- 3/8 ■ In class film: *Million Dollar Baby* (no reading required)
- 3/9 ■ In class film: *Million Dollar Baby* (no reading required)
- 3/10 ■ Please bring a written response to [these questions about the film](#).
- (Ackerman, "[...After You!](#)")
- 3/14 ■ Rachels, "Active and Passive Euthanasia"
- Sullivan, "A Reply to Rachels"
- 3/15 ■ Wolf, "[Moral Saints](#)"
- 3/16 ■ Blake, "[God Ahead, Steal My Car](#)"
- Hazlett, "[Possible Evils](#)"
- 3/17 ■ [Exam #3](#)
- Final Essay Due
- 3/21 ■
- 3/22 ■
- 3/23 ■
- 3/24 ■
- 3/25 ■

Texts

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

- Cahn, *Exploring Ethics* (2nd ed) (REQUIRED)
- Rachels, *The Elements of Moral Philosophy* (5th ed) (NOT REQUIRED, BUT RECOMMENDED)

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>