

# PHIL 8 Ethics

## Canvas, Winter 2023

Michael Fitzpatrick - [fitzpatrickmichael@fhda.edu](mailto:fitzpatrickmichael@fhda.edu)

Office hours: Weds 10-12 by appt on Zoom, <https://fhda-edu.zoom.us/j/9424184799>

*Our very lives depend on the ethics of strangers, and most of us are always strangers to other people.*

- Bill Moyers

Ethics is a branch of philosophy that deals with questions like: what defines good and bad, right and wrong? How ought we to live our lives? Are we under any obligations at all besides what we want? What gives meaning to life? And finally, what kinds of choices should we make in particular situations? Together, we will be learning how to explore these kinds of questions, and the tools philosophers use to do it. We will work together to understand and develop a particular classical theory of ethics, the virtue ethics of Plato, as well as how to apply Platonic principles in practical, everyday situations where we face ethical choices.

### Student Learning Outcomes:

- Identify and analyze central questions about right action and/or the good life.
- Analyze and assess arguments and approaches to these questions from a variety of traditions.
- Articulate and defend a personal stance on at least one of these questions and/or traditions.
- Formulate an application of this discourse to one's own personal decision making

### Expectations:

- Make sure to read, watch, and listen to the assigned material, and I strongly encourage taking notes while you read.
- Our online classroom is a place for sharing and generating ideas. I expect civil, respectful discussions of our ideas. Everyone's perspective matters, and no one will be excluded.

### Coursework:

- Weeks 1-11 will require you to engage in discussion each week on the assigned readings via Perusall. You will be reading course texts inside the Perusall app, which will allow you to comment on the text as you read, and allow you and others to respond to each other's comments. You will be expected to make comments of your own and respond to multiple other student comments.
- There will be a mid-term and final quiz during the course that will consist largely of material from the lectures, podcasts, and readings, so it's important to watch/listen to all the lectures and do all the readings while taking notes.
- Attendance/participation will be based upon you watching the course lectures, engaging with me in office hours or by email, and asking questions when you don't understand the material.

### Policies:

- **Emails:** I generally try to respond to your emails within the week. Sometimes it will be longer, e.g. weekends and when I'm traveling. Budget your time accordingly, and email well in advance of deadlines. I almost never respond quickly to last minute emails.
- **Sexual harassment and discrimination:** Absolutely no sexual harassment or illegal discrimination is acceptable in this course.
- **Students with documented disabilities:** Students who may need an academic accommodation based on the impact of a disability must initiate the request with the Disability Support Programs and Services Division (DSPS), located within the Advanced Technology Center (AT) 209. DSPS staff will evaluate the request with required documentation, recommend reasonable accommodations, and prepare an Accommodation Letter. Students should contact DSPS as soon as possible since timely notice is needed to coordinate accommodations. The DSPS can be reached by phone at 408-864-8885.

### Grading:

- Attendance/Participation: 25%
- Perusall discussions: 55%
- Mid-term Exam: 15%
- Final Exam: 15%

### Texts:

All texts will be provided to the class via either Canvas or Perusall.

## **Course Readings**

### Week 1 - Unsettling Our Assumptions

**Read:** Plato's Euthyphro

**Watch:** Ken Taylor on Normativity

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H2XV9zkNG-0>

### Week 2 - Does Might Make Right?

**Read:** Plato's Republic Book I

**Watch:** WiPhi - Socrates and Plato

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-oJs5u\\_GAYA](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-oJs5u_GAYA)

### Week 3 - Is It Always Better to be Good?

**Read:** Plato's Republic Book II

**Read:** D. Z. Phillips, "Glaucon's Challenges"

Week 4 - Searching for Justice

**Read:** Plato's Republic Book III

**Watch:** Michael Sandel's discussion, "The tyranny of merit"

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qewckuxa9hw>

Week 5 - Justice Discovered, In Society and In Ourselves

**Read:** Plato's Republic Book IV

**Watch:** Linda Zagzebski's discussion, "What is Virtue? Components of a virtue"

[https://youtu.be/w9dtDpLm8JE?si=DnULPTcjwFYJ\\_7VN](https://youtu.be/w9dtDpLm8JE?si=DnULPTcjwFYJ_7VN)

**Mid-term on Canvas**

Week 6 - Overcoming The Three Great Antagonisms to Justice

**Read:** Plato's Republic Book V

**Read:** Michael Fitzpatrick, "The Three Great Antagonisms"

**Listen:** Sidney Poitier reads from Plato's Republic, Book V

<https://youtu.be/YVs2klGFzEw?si=APUx90Sw7Atbli2k>

Week 7 - The Idea of the Good

**Read:** Plato's Republic Book VI

**Read:** Plato's Symposium (excerpt, Socrates' recollection of Diotima's speech)

Week 8 - Training Good Civil Servants

**Read:** Plato's Republic Book VII

**Listen:** Sidney Poitier reads from Plato's Republic, Book VII

<https://youtu.be/IWPaM80G6QA?si=nU5i8DQcHdBBtSHy>

Week 9 - How Good People and Good Societies Become Corrupt

**Read:** Plato's Republic Book VIII

Week 10 - Democracies and Tyrannies; Goodness is True Happiness

**Read:** Plato's Republic Book IX

**Read:** Julia Annas - Wickedness as psychological breakdown

Week 11 - The Life Worth Living

**Read:** Plato's Republic Book X (excerpt, line 608b to the end [pp. 1212-1223])

**Read:** Alain Badiou's imaginative modernization of the finale to Plato's Republic

Week 12 - Final Exam

**Read (before Exam!):** Excerpts on despair vs. hope for change

**Listen:** Michael Sandel - The lost art of democratic debate

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HkgHLK9\\_Zt8](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HkgHLK9_Zt8)

**Exam available on Canvas Tuesday, March 26, 9:00am  
until March 28, 11:00pm**