

# Ethics (PHIL 3100)

## Spring 2020

“The purpose of our examination is not to know what virtue is, but to become good, since otherwise the inquiry would be of no benefit to us.” - Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* 1103b26-29

**Course Number:** PHIL 3100, section 10

**Class Schedule:** Mondays & Wednesdays, 12:40-2:10pm

**Class Location:** University Hall 3222

**Professor:** Dr. Carissa Phillips-Garrett

University Hall 3635 (inside the Philosophy Department on the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor of UHall)

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*Office Hours:* M, 4-5pm; Tu, 10-11:30am; W, 9:30-11:30am; and by appointment

**Core Area:** Ethics and Justice

**Flags:** None

**Recommended Background:** PHIL 198 (Philosophical Inquiry) or the equivalent

### Course Description

Two central questions of philosophy include what sort of life I ought to choose and what sort of person I ought to be. In this course, we will ask this question by considering what it means to live a full and good life, one that is full of meaning and the pursuit of what is truly valuable. We'll use some of the classic texts as a jumping-off point to explore the answers to these questions, but the ultimate aim is that each of us will develop our own answers that can shape our goals and pursuits beyond the classroom. Among the specific questions we will explore include:

- What is a good life for a human being consist in?
- How can we develop our ethical character?
- What are the central moral considerations I ought to take into consideration when making decisions in my everyday life?
- How should I choose between different goods?
- What provides justification for following the demands of morality?
- What is the relationship between meaning and morality?
- What does a meaningful life look like?
- Is there universal moral truth, and how can we know what is right or good? Can judgments of value transcend taste and cultural preference?

### Course Learning Objectives

The most important learning goals for this course is moral development. By this, I don't just mean being able to explain moral theories (i.e., intellectual understanding of theoretical concepts about

morality), but instead that each of you should actually be able to develop your own ethical reasoning skills, use those skills to reflect on your practices and goals, and incorporate ethical habits into your own life. In other words, the goal for the course is not just to *understand* ethical ideas better but to actually *live* better. Given this overarching aim, there are a number of more specific abilities and skills that all who successfully complete the course should develop and improve. These skills include:

- (1) Reading texts and listening to one another in a carefully, charitable, and critical way that leads to understanding.
- (2) Engaging both the texts and one another in conversations that seek to understand and analyze the philosophical claims and conclusions.
- (3) Understanding how to develop philosophical questions and arguments.
- (4) Examining how ethical assumptions, reasons, and theories relate to your own ethical reasons, views, and decisions.
- (5) Thinking carefully about and then practicing the habits that help you develop ethically.

## **Required Texts**

All required books are available in the bookstore or online. I've chosen these editions specifically because of the quality of the translation, commentary material designed specifically for students, and the reasonable cost for each. It is important that we all have the same edition for use in the classroom, so please purchase these exact editions:

- Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. Terence Irwin, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Hackett), ISBN 9780872204645
- Immanuel Kant, *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*, trans. Allen Wood, 2018 ed. (Yale University Press), ISBN 9780300227437
- John Stuart Mill, *Utilitarianism*, ed. George Sher, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Hackett), ISBN 9780872206052

All other readings will be available online in Brightspace. Reading electronic texts is less conducive to the kind of careful and thorough reading that is expected in this course, so please plan to **print all non-book readings**. You will get the most out of the texts if you make sure to set aside enough time to read through the texts prior to class several times (we will discuss specific techniques) and annotate the texts as you read. We will use the texts in class, so come prepared to further annotate and refer to the text in class by bring all readings to class **in hardcopy**. If you did not bring your hard copy format of the text for that day, you may be unable to complete in-class assignments, which will result in a "0" for participation for that day; since laptops and other electronic devices are not allowed in the classroom, electronic access is *not* a substitute for having a hard copy.

## **Assignments**

Character Project (30%), Discussion Questions (10%), Quizzes (20%), Paper/Final Exam (30%), In-Class Contribution (10%)

The Character Project: You will select one virtue to cultivate throughout the course, design a plan to implement the chosen virtue throughout the course of the semester, and keep a regular journal that

chronicles and reflects on your experience cultivating your virtue. Both throughout and at the end of the semester, you will reflect on the experience of cultivating the virtue and your learning.

Discussion Questions: You will be responsible for posting discussion questions online on Brightspace in our discussion forum and leading the conversation in your discussion group for three (3) classes this semester. Entries will be due 24 hours prior to class (i.e., by Sunday afternoon for a Monday class or Tuesday afternoon for a Wednesday class), and no late entries will be accepted. You will also be responsible for responding to a classmate's discussion question (by 11am on the day of the class) at least ten (10) times over the course of the semester. **If there are technical issues, it is your responsibility to inform me immediately via email**, along with the question or response that you were attempting to post and a screenshot of the problem. This allows us a chance to resolve the issue prior to the deadline. If this is done before the deadline, a one-time exception may be made to the late policy, but no other exceptions will be made.

Quizzes: Most classes will begin with a short quiz on the reading; the lowest 3 scores will be dropped. The expectation is that if you have done the reading carefully and critically (this means that you have not merely read the material but you have thought about it prior to coming to class) you should do well on these.

Paper: There will be a final essay (~2,000 words) that explains two ethical insights derived from the texts and discussions, and then applies those insights to a past ethical decision and to your own future choices.

Final Exam: This is an optional oral exam that will be scheduled during finals week at the convenience of both of us. If you elect to take this option, the paper grade will be averaged with your final exam grade (so each will be worth 15%).

In-Class Contribution: Philosophy is an interactive discipline, so this class offers the opportunity to create a learning community in which we all have a responsibility to push the discussion forward and actively participate in the learning process. We will be learning through dialogue together, so we are all co-creators of the community that we build together. As such, I expect each of us to engage with the arguments and ideas of the authors we read as well as with our fellow participants in the classroom. This kind of active participation requires careful preparation for the class (the kind of careful, charitable, and critical engagement with the readings that prepares you to discuss the ideas and arguments presented) and your full focus while in the classroom so that you can listen well to what others are saying, respond helpfully to others, and develop your own ideas.

I recognize that some students are less comfortable than others speaking in class, but completing the reading carefully and critically allows you to reflect on the ideas before class and think in advance about the topic. You are also encouraged to discuss the questions and arguments or ask questions

during office hours, which will also count toward participation. In the classroom, this kind of contribution can take many forms, such as:

- Asking careful and critical questions about the ideas and arguments put forward in the text or fellow class participants
- Developing a positive interpretation of the arguments or ideas in the text
- Helping other participants to work out their ideas through careful questions
- Criticizing, correcting, or responding to the arguments presented in the text and by other class participants
- Connecting the current text or questions to ideas explored elsewhere, either earlier in the class or in the world outside of the classroom

### **Grading Scale**

A = 93-100, A- = 90-92, B+ = 87-89, B = 83-86, B- = 80-82, C+ = 77-79, C = 73-76, C- = 70-72, D = 60-69, F = 0-59

### **Late Assignment Policy**

I understand that life happens, so you have one free, no-questions-asked, no-excuse-needed late submission allowed per semester (though you do need to communicate that you are doing that, and at that the time of notification, inform me if you are requesting an extension of more than 48 hours). Other late assignments may lose up to 3% of the total points as a late penalty per day. Rather than not turning something in, however, please come speak to me as soon as you realize you won't be turning in the assignment on time. If you have extenuating circumstances, please speak with me as far in advance as possible.

To be counted as being submitted on time, the file must be received in the appropriate, working format; it is your responsibility to verify this. **If there are technical issues, it is your responsibility to inform me immediately** in an email with the file/content that you are attempting to submit and a screenshot of the problem. This allows us a chance to resolve the issue prior to the deadline. If this is done before the deadline, a one-time exception may be made to the late policy, but no other exceptions will be made.

### **Class Attendance Policy**

As conversational partners, we all have a responsibility to participate in pushing the discussion forward in the classroom. This only happens if we are all engaged, however, and a necessary (but not sufficient!) condition of this is being present for the discussion, so **if you are looking for a class where the main class activity is lecture, attendance is not required, and student participation isn't expected, this isn't the class for you.** I do not distinguish between unexcused or excused absences (except in rare cases, such as a formal accommodation request directly from the Office of Student Affairs), so you may miss up to three classes for any reason. After the three absences have been exceeded, each absence will result in a 2% drop in the final grade (e.g., if your grade without counting

absences is a 90, an A-, and you have a total of four absences, your final grade would become 86, a B). It would be wise to reserve an absence for something unexpected that may happen late in the semester (e.g., being too sick to come to class or getting a flat tire on the way to class). If an unexpected or chronic issue comes up that will affect your ability to get other work done or will cause more than one absence in a row (e.g., a family tragedy or chronic illness), please speak with me directly as soon as possible.

### **Classroom Expectations**

- Use language that is respectful and inclusive. It is perfectly fine to disagree with views expressed (either by the readings or other students), but target the argument you disagree with, not the person.
- Come to class prepared for discussion of the readings assigned for that day. Preparing for discussion means that you should have read and annotated the text carefully and thought about it in advance. Come having thought about what questions you have or in what ways you can contribute to the discussion for the day.
- While in the classroom, remain focused on the lecture and discussion for this class. Texting, emailing, leaving class frequently, and other behaviors that distract and interrupt the learning environment are inappropriate, and are grounds for receiving a 0 for daily in-class participation. Consider this your warning in advance.
- **Please arrive on time.** I will ensure that we finish on time, so please respect the rest of the class and ensure your arrival is not disruptive by arriving on time. Although I will not “call roll,” I do keep track of attendance and participation at every class, and if you are not there when I make a note of it, you may be marked absent even if you show up later.
- Please arrive at class prepared to remain in the classroom for the duration of the class period. Sometimes unexpected things come up that may require you to leave the classroom (e.g., an emergency phone call that could not be rescheduled, a sudden illness, or an unexpected need to use the restroom), but prepare for the things that you can (e.g., leaving the classroom simply to refill your water bottle is disruptive, and could be remedied by refilling before class). **Leaving class should be rare and only for a very good reason, not a regular occurrence,** and regularly leaving class in the middle will be reflected in your participation grade.
- Missing a significant amount of any particular class will be counted as 1/3 of an absence.

### **Workload Expectations**

General expectations of work outside of the class is 2-3 hours per unit of college credit, so for this class, that is 8-12 hours every week outside of the classroom.

### **Communication**

- Feel free to email at any time, but please first check that the answer is not found in the syllabus or on Brightspace.

- Your official LMU email and Brightspace will be used for all communication, so it is your responsibility to regularly check both. If you don't want to check Brightspace manually, you can also set your Brightspace settings so that you receive notification when something new is posted, but time-sensitive messages will be emailed.
- I will respond to emails within 24 hours from Monday-Friday (so if you email me by Thursday evening, expect an email back by late Friday, but if you email me on Friday evening, expect a reply by sometime on Monday).

## **Electronics Policy**

Due to the distractions caused by electronic devices, all electronic devices (including laptops) should be **silenced and put away** for the duration of the class. I reserve the right to temporarily confiscate any electronics during the class that are not put away, and your participation mark for that class will be negatively impacted since the use is not only distracting for yourself but distracting for others around you.

I have several reasons for this policy. Here are the primary reasons:

- 1) Almost no one can multi-task well (e.g., according to [this study](#), approximately 2% of the population is decent at it, and it is significantly lowers performance for everyone else), and [multi-tasking impairs long-term retention of material](#).
- 2) For the kind of reading we'll be doing in this class, electronic texts are much less effective than paper texts (as [this article](#) in *Scientific American* reports; a literature review of the relevant studies is found [here](#)).
- 3) There is a lot of evidence (e.g., [here](#), [here](#), [here](#), and [here](#)) that taking notes by hand is much more effective than typing for retention of material. If you want a digital version of your notes, scan them or, better, type them out after class since interacting with the material once again will help with long-term retention and engagement.
- 4) Using electronic devices in the classroom is distracting to other students, and [lowers grades for everyone](#) (to read about two other studies that show this, see [here](#) and [here](#)).

## **Academic Honesty**

All students will be expected to follow LMU's Academic Honesty Policy, found at <https://academics.lmu.edu/honesty/>. This document outlines the university's expectations for the integrity of your academic work, the procedures for resolving alleged violations of those expectations, and the rights and responsibilities of students and faculty members throughout the process. While it is expected that you will discuss the issues in the course with other students both in and out of class, all written work you turn in must be *your own*. Please come talk to me if you have questions about what this means! Passages taken from another source must be *explicitly quoted and cited*. Any questions about what constitutes plagiarism should be addressed prior to handing in your written assignments. Ignorance of what is required will not be accepted as an excuse. Also, even if it is your own work, work submitted for credit in this course cannot have been submitted for another course. Finally, unless it is explicitly allowed, work written up for an earlier assignment in this course also cannot be used

wholesale for a later assignment and all work must be submitted according to the assignment directions in a working file. Again, please ask prior to submission if you have any questions.

### **The Writing Center at LMU**

An important part of improving your writing is getting feedback and revision suggestions on your writing projects in progress. The Writing Center offers free tutoring sessions (online or face-to-face) in which you can get feedback from a peer writer on your digital and print texts for any class at any stage in your process. For more information, including hours of operation, check out the Writing Center's website: <https://academics.lmu.edu/arc/writingcenter/>. To make an appointment with a writing tutor, call 310.338.2847 or visit Daum Hall, 2<sup>nd</sup> floor.

### **Special Accommodations**

Students with an identified disability who require accommodations in this course should promptly direct their request to the Disability Support Services (DSS) Office. Any student who currently has a documented disability (ADHD, Autism Spectrum Disorder, Learning, Physical, or Psychiatric) needing academic accommodations should contact the DSS Office (Daum Hall 2<sup>nd</sup> floor, 310.338.4216) as early in the semester as possible. All discussions will remain confidential. Please visit [www.lmu.edu/dss](http://www.lmu.edu/dss) for additional information.

### **On Campus Resources**

I am always available to help you with this class or with anything related to your experience at LMU more generally. I hope that you will always feel free to come and speak with me if you have any problems. However, there are also specialized resources on campus that might be useful for you as well, and I encourage you to make use of those as well. Those include:

- [Academic Resource Center](#) (Daum Hall, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor, 310.338.2847)
- [Disability Support Services](#) (Daum Hall, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor, 310.338.4535)
- [Campus Ministry](#) (Malone Student Center 210, 310. 338.2860)
- [Student Health Services](#) (Burns Recreation Center, 1<sup>st</sup> Floor, North, 310.338.2881)
- [Student Psychological Services](#) (Burns Recreation Center, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor, North, 310.338.2868)
- [LGBTQ Student Services](#) (Malone Student Center 201, 310.258.5482)
- [Title IX Office](#) (Sara Trivedi, UHall 1900, 310.568.6105, [strivedi@lmu.edu](mailto:strivedi@lmu.edu))
- [Food Pantry](#) (adjacent to St. Robert's Annex, [lmufoodpantry@lmu.edu](mailto:lmufoodpantry@lmu.edu))
- [Department of Public Safety](#) (Foley Annex & UHall, 1<sup>st</sup> floor, 310.338-2893)

## Reading & Assignment Schedule

### Week 1

Monday, January 13: Introduction

Wednesday, January 15: **What is Virtue?** [Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* II.5-9 & III.6-9 (book II, chapters 5-9 & book III, chapters 6-9); David Brooks, “The Moral Bucket List”]

### Week 2

Monday, January 20: NO CLASS (Martin Luther King, Jr. Day)

Wednesday, January 22: **Becoming Virtuous** (Aristotle, *NE* II.1-3; Nicolas Bommarito, “Imaginative Moral Development”; James Gould, “Becoming Good”)

Friday, January 24 (11:59pm): **Character Project Research Assignment DUE**

### Week 3

Monday, January 27: **Virtue, Cultural Difference, & Moral Disagreement** (Kwame Anthony Appiah, “Moral Disagreement”)

Wednesday, January 29: **A Good Human Life** (Aristotle, *NE* I.4-5, I.7-9, & I.13)

Friday, January 31 (11:59pm): **Character Project Self-Assessment DUE**

### Week 4

Monday, February 3: **Responsibility & Agency** (Aristotle, *NE* III.1-5 & VII.9-10)

Wednesday, February 5: **Moral Responsibility & Luck** (Thomas Nagel, “Moral Luck”)

Friday, February 7 (11:59pm): **Character Project Plan DUE**

### Week 5

Monday, February 10: **Virtues, Eudaimonia, & Non-Ideal Circumstances** (Lisa Tessman, “Eudaimonistic Virtue Ethics Under Adversity”)

Wednesday, February 12: **Good Will & Moral Worth** (Immanuel Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals* 4:393-400)

### Week 6

Monday, February 17: **Respect & Imperatives** (Kant, *Groundwork* 4:400-403 & 4:412-416)

Wednesday, February 19: **Categorical Imperatives & Maxims** (Kant, *Groundwork* 4:420-424)

### Week 7

Monday, February 24: **Respect for Humanity & Autonomy in the Kingdom of Ends** (Kant, *Groundwork* 4:427-436; Onora O’Neill, “A Simplified Account of Kant’s Ethics”)

Wednesday, February 26: NO CLASS (instructor at conference)

### Week 8

Monday, March 2: **Moral Worth & Inclination** (Kant, *Groundwork* 4:436-440; Rae Langton, “Maria von Herbert’s Challenge to Kant”)

Wednesday, March 4: **Self-Respect as a Duty** (Thomas E. Hill Jr., “Servility and Self-Respect”)



**Week 9**

Monday, March 9: NO CLASS (Spring Break)

Wednesday, March 11: NO CLASS (Spring Break)

**Week 10**

Monday, March 16: **Greatest Happiness Principle** (John Stuart Mill, *Utilitarianism*, pp. vii-xi, 6-12)

Wednesday, March 18: **Defending the GHP** (Mill, *Utilitarianism*, pp. 12-26)

Friday, March 20 (11:59pm): **Character Project Journal Entries for Weeks 6-10 & Interview Reflection DUE**

**Week 11**

Monday, March 23: **Pleasure & Happiness** (John Stuart Mill, *Utilitarianism*, pp. 35-41; Robert Nozick, “The Experience Machine”)

Wednesday, March 25: **Consequences & Moral Dilemmas** (Judith Jarvis Thomson, “The Trolley Problem”)

Sunday, March 29 (11:59pm): **Character Project Mid-Semester Reflection DUE**

**Week 12**

Monday, March 30: **What is Good Friendship?** (Aristotle, *NE* VIII.1-7 & VIII.13-14)

Wednesday, April 1: **Self-Love, Friendship, & the Common Good** (Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* IX.3-12)

**Week 13**

Monday, April 6: **Care as Practice** (Virginia Held, *The Ethics of Care* chapter 2)

Wednesday, April 8: NO CLASS (Easter Holiday)

**Week 14**

Monday, April 13: **Care as Value** (Virginia Held, *The Ethics of Care* chapter 3)

Wednesday, April 15: **Meaning & Subjectivity** (Susan Wolf, “Happiness and Meaning: Two Aspects of the Good Life”)

**Week 15**

Monday, April 20: **Is an Ethical Life Important for Meaning?** (Laurence Thomas, “Morality and a Meaningful Life”)

Wednesday, April 22: **Transcendence & Meaning** (Leo Tolstoy, “My Confession”)

Thursday, April 23 (10am): **Term Essay DUE** (hard copy, submitted in person)

**Week 16**

Monday, April 27: **Meaning Amidst Absurdity** (Robert Nagel, “The Absurd”)

Wednesday, April 29: **Wrapping-Up: What Sort of Life to Pursue?**

Friday, May 1 (11:59pm): **Character Project Journal Entries for Weeks 11-16 DUE**

**Finals Week**

Tuesday, May 5 (11:59pm): **Character Project Final Reflection DUE**

Monday, May 4-Friday, May 8: **Final Exam** (*optional; if chosen, will sign up for a time during this week*)