

# Phi 192 - Summer 2021

## Introduction to Moral Theory

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**Time:** ...

**Where:** ...

**Instructor:** Thiago Xavier de Melo

**Office hours:** ... & by appt.: [txdemelo@syr.edu](mailto:txdemelo@syr.edu)

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### Course Description

This course is an introduction to moral philosophy. Our focus is on theories about what makes an act morally *right*, *wrong*, or *obligatory*—such as utilitarianism, deontology and virtue ethics. We will also directly investigate some *applied* moral issues—such as on famine relief, inequality, consumption of animals, genetic engineering, and abortion. Along the way, we address the question on what constitutes a *good life*—pleasure, satisfaction of desires, or something less subjective?—and we will reflect on the *methods* used to reason about moral issues, and the *status* of morality itself—can moral claims be true and known?

### Learning Objectives

By the end of this course, students should be able to:

- state and explain normative, metaethical, and value theories;
- reconstruct arguments in favor and against those theories;
- identify further potential objections to, and arguments for, those theories;
- apply those theories to specific moral questions.

### Course Materials

- Readings will be posted on [Blackboard](#). See reading schedule below for details.

**Use of Class Materials and Recordings:** Original class materials (slides, handouts, assignments, etc.) and recordings of class sessions are the intellectual property of the course instructor. You may download these materials for your own use in this class. However, you may not provide these materials to other parties (e.g., web sites, social media, other students) without permission. Doing so is a violation of intellectual property law and of the student code of conduct.

## Assessment and Grade distribution

30% — Six quizzes (5% each)

48% — Four home assignments (12% each)

20% — Final essay

2% — Participation

**Letter grade:** A 93 - 100; A- 90 - 92.99; B+ 87 - 89.99; B 83 - 86.99; B- 80 - 82.99; C+ 77 - 79.99; C 73 - 76.99; C- 70 - 72.99; D+ 67 - 69.99; D 63 - 66.99; D- 60 - 62.99; F 0 - 59.99.

## Grade components and course requirements

**Quizzes:** These are sets of multiple choice questions on readings. Available every Thursday through Blackboard. They must be completed until Monday before class.

**Home assignments:** These are assigned on the first four Thursdays and will be due on Monday following that Thursday. They contain questions that ask you to explain concepts and/or reconstruct and evaluate arguments found in our readings. Specific instructions will be provided.

**Final Essay:** Specific instructions will be provided on August 19. The essay is due on August 26 by 11:59pm (EDT, i.e. Syracuse timezone).

**Participation:** This requires responsiveness to emails.

**Readings** are required to be done beforehand; they are important for ‘participation’ during classes. (See below for reading schedule.)

## Schedule: quick look

- **Every day:** a *required reading*, a set of *slides*, and a *video* recording available.
- **Every other week:** a *quiz*—assigned on ..., usually due on coming ...
- **Every other week:** a *homework*—assigned on ..., due on coming ...
- **Sixth week:** *Essay 1* assigned—due ...
- **Twelfth week:** *Essay 2* assigned—due ...
- **Final exam:** ...

See Detailed Schedule below.

## Policies

**Missed exams:** Proper documentation is required to have a makeup exam scheduled.

**Academic Integrity:** Syracuse University’s Academic Integrity Policy reflects the high value that we, as a university community, place on honesty in academic work. The policy defines our expectations for academic honesty and holds students accountable for the integrity of all work they submit. Students should understand that it is their responsibility to learn about course-specific expectations, as well as about university-wide academic integrity expectations. The policy governs appropriate citation and use of sources, the integrity of work submitted in exams and assignments, and the veracity of signatures on attendance sheets and other verification of participation in class activities. The policy also prohibits students from submitting the same work in more than one class without receiving written authorization in advance from both instructors. Under the policy, students found in violation are subject to grade sanctions determined by the course instructor and non-grade sanctions determined by the School or College where the course is offered as described in the Violation and Sanction Classification Rubric. SU students are required to read an online summary of the University’s academic integrity expectations and provide an electronic signature agreeing to abide by them twice a year during pre-term check-in on MySlice.

**Accommodations:** Students who are in need of disability-related academic accommodations should register with the Office of Disability Services (ODS), [disabilityservices.syr.edu](http://disabilityservices.syr.edu), 804 University Avenue, Room 309, 315.443.4498. Please provide me with a current Accommodation Authorization Letter from ODS so I am aware of your accommodations. Planning for accommodations as early as possible is best. I’d be happy to meet with you to discuss how I can help.

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## Detailed Schedule: Topics, Readings, Quizzes, and Assignments

The schedule of topics and readings is *tentative*. Changes will be announced in lectures and emails, and updated to this Syllabus on Blackboard. *Required readings* are expected to be done beforehand.

### - - - Week 1-2 - - -

**Day 1** : Introduction to our Course

- Required reading: this syllabus.

**Day 2** : Reading and reasoning about moral issues

- ‘Arguments and How to Evaluate Them’ (provided on first day)
- ‘Simplifying Examples, Analogies and Crafting Plausible Principles’ (excerpt from the *Norton Introduction to Philosophy* available on Blackboard)

**Day 3** : Normative Systems and Divine Command

- Required: Plato. Excerpt of ‘Euthyphro’
- Recommended: Shafer-Landau. Sections D and E, Ch. 1 of ‘Living Ethics’: ‘What is Morality?’

**Day 4** : Skepticism

- Required: Shafer-Landau. Chapter 3 of ‘Living Ethics’

**Quiz 1** available — Due on

**Homework 1 assigned** — Due on

- - - **Week 3-4** - - -

**Day 5** : Well-Being and Normative Theories

- Required reading: Chapter 4 of ‘Living Ethics’: ‘The Good Life’

**Day 6** : Well-being: Hedonism

- Required reading: John Stuart Mill. Excerpt of ‘Utilitarianism’
- Required reading: Robert Nozick. ‘The Experience Machine’

**Day 7** : Well-being: The Desire Fulfillment View

- Required reading: Chris Heathwood. ‘Faring Well and Getting What You Want’

**Day 8** : Well-being: Beyond Pleasures and Satisfactions

- Required reading: Susan Wolf. ‘Happiness and Meaning: Two Aspects of the Good Life’

**Quiz 2** available — Due on

**Homework 2 assigned** — Due on

- - - **Week 5-6** - - -

**Day 9** : Consequentialism

- Required reading: Mill. Excerpt of ‘Utilitarianism’
- Recommended: Shafer-Landau. The Fundamentals of Ethics. Chapter 9

**Day 10** : Consequentialism (cont.)

- Required reading: Bentham. Excerpt of ‘An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation’ (on Blackboard)

**Day 11** : Famine (Applied Ethics)

- Required reading: ‘Singer. Famine, Affluence, and Morality’

**Day 12** : Consequentialism: difficulties

- Required reading: Timmerman. “Sometimes there is nothing wrong with letting a child drown”
- Recommended: Shafer-Landau. The Fundamentals of Ethics. Chapter 10

**Quiz 3****Homework 3 assigned** —**Essay 1** — Due on ...

Extra, recommended reading: J. Pryor. “Guidelines on Writing a Philosophy Paper”

- - - **Week 7-8** - - -

**Day 13** : Kantian Ethics

- Required reading: Chapter 6 of ‘Living Ethics’: ‘Kantian Ethics’

**Day 14** : Kantian Ethics (cont.)

- Required reading: Immanuel Kant. Excerpts from ‘Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals’

**Day 15** : Famine (Applied)

- Required reading: Onora O’Neil. ‘The Moral Perplexities of Famine and World Hunger’

**Day 16** : Kantian Ethics: difficulties

- Required: Kant. ‘On a Supposed Right to Lie from Altruistic Motives’ (excerpt)
- Extra: Korsgaard. ‘The Right to Lie: Kant on Dealing with Evil’

**Quiz 4** available — Due on**Homework 4** — On Kantian Ethics: due on

- - - **Week 11-12** - - -

**Day 17** : Abortion (Applied)

- Required reading: Foot. ‘The Problem of Abortion and the Doctrine of Double Effect’

**Day 18** : Abortion (Applied)

- Required reading: Thomson. ‘A Defense of Abortion’

**Day 19** : Animals (Applied)

- Required reading: Norcross. ‘Puppies, Pigs, and Persons’

**Day 20** : Animals (Applied)

- Required reading: Korsgaard. Excerpt of ‘Fellow Creatures’

**Quiz 5** available, due on

**Essay 2** — Due on

- - - **Week 13-14** - - -

**Day 21** : Virtue Ethics: The Aristotelian Approach

- Required reading: Excerpt from Aristotle’s ‘Nicomachean Ethics’
- Recommended: Living Ethics Chapter 10

**Day 22** : Virtue Ethics: objections

- Required reading: Hursthouse. ‘Right Action’

**Day 23** : Genetic Engineering (Applied)

- Required reading: Sandel. ‘The Case against Perfection’
- Recommended: *Unnatural Selection* (Netflix Docuseries)

**Day 24** : Genetic Engineering (Applied)

- Required reading: Savulescu, Julian. “Procreative Beneficence: Why We Should Select the Best Children.”

**Quiz 6** available, due on

- - - **Week 15-16** - - -

**Day 25** — Social Contract Theory

- Required reading: Hobbes. Excerpt from *Leviathan*

- Recommended: Chapter 7 of *Living Ethics*

**Day 26** — Economic Justice and Economic Inequality

- Required reading: Rawls. Excerpt of *A Theory of Justice*.

**Day 27** — Environmental (Applied)

- Required: Sinnott-Armstrong. ‘It’s Not My Fault: Global Warming and Individual Moral Obligations’

**Day 28** — Environmental (Applied)

- Required: Hursthouse. ‘Environmental Virtue Ethics’