

**PHIL 1C: Ethics**

COURSE SYLLABUS

### **Dr. Vadim Keyser**

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(Please use Canvas messaging center through our course shell)

### **Fall 2023**

**Online Meeting Time and Place**:

Recorded online videos and recorded, *optional* extra lectures (these dates announced via Canvas)

**Office Hrs**:

Wed 5pm

## 1. Course Description

This course examines key ethical theories, and includes application of theories to contemporary

moral problems. ADVISORIES: English 1A or 1AH. (A, CSU-GE, UC, I) (C-ID PHIL 120)

## 2. What to expect each week

* All learning materials are accessible via Canvas.
* **Posted each week (Monday)** you will have a list of things to do for that week, and where to go to do them. As soon as you log into Canvas you will see the **a weekly content folder that is titled ‘Modules’**, which provides all directions, readings, and any additional video module content for the week. Keep track of this folder very closely.
* Lectures are **recorded videos** that you can watch, rewind, and have plenty of time with. A lot of my work is in animation and video-editing, so this should make things simple for everyone. I will **also** have **live sessions that will be optional and recorded**. That way, you can come interact; but you are not required to in order to get the full content. This way, you have full material and you aren’t stressed by time conflicts. We will coordinate these live sessions, so stay tuned.

**This course has strict participation and activity requirements**, including engagement with the course material on a weekly basis. Students who do NOT:

1. Log in to the course at least once each week during the first week

2. Engage actively in coursework for at least one hour each week for the first week

3. Submit discussions during the first week

Failing to perform 1-3 will be considered to have abandoned the course and *may be administratively dropped by the instructor*. *Re-enrolment will not be permitted.*

## 3. Learning Outcomes and Objectives:

## Course Objectives:

1. Consider the strengths and weaknesses of major moral theories, and analyze and critically evaluate these theories.

2. Critically evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of various applications of ethical theory to contemporary moral problems.

3. Apply knowledge of major ethical theories to contemporary moral problems.

4. Analyze, compare, and contrast major ethical theories, including Kantian deontological ethics, utilitarianism, and virtue ethics.

5. Create, evaluate, and revise arguments about major ethical theories, as well as about contemporary moral issues.

6. Compare and contrast major moral philosophers' attempts to answer key moral questions, such as, How should we live?, What is a good life?, What makes an action morally right?, and What is happiness?

## CSLOs:

PHIL-1C SLO1: apply knowledge of major ethical theories to contemporary moral problems.

PHIL-1C SLO2: compare and contrast competing ethical theories, and subject them to critical analysis and evaluation.

PHIL-1C SLO3: create and revise arguments about moral theories, and on various contemporary moral issues.

PHIL-1C SLO4: demonstrate knowledge of major ethical theories, including Kantian deontology, utilitarianism, and virtue ethics.

## 4. Assignments

**Your grade in this course will be based on:**

**A. Test:** there are 2 tests (**25% each for a total of 50%**):

* **See date on the final page of the calendar**.
* You can start these tests whenever you would like starting *when the week begins*.
* For the test, you are **allowed to use your notes as well as the readings and any additional modules**.
* The test will be any combination of *multiple choice, short, and long response*. You will have a *2-hour time limit for the test*. The questions are directed toward conceptual application. This means that most of the questions will require you to synthesize, extrapolate, and apply information. Specifically, you will not be asked to merely re-state a fact, directly. Rather, you will be asked to *e.g., compare and contrast concepts, analyze the features of theories, and analyze scenarios using theoretical frameworks*—among other question-types that focus on your *use* of the concepts and theories. To prepare you for these tests, I will be giving you specific discussion activities.
* You will have **from the start of each Week (Monday 6am) to Sunday 11:59pm** to find the right window for you to take the tests, but once you open, 2 hrs starts and **cannot be paused**. After 2 hrs, the test closes, and you cannot edit any of it. ***For any given test trial, you cannot re-take the test, even if you open it and then close it or if you experience a computer error.*** *That means, once it is submitted, it is submitted. That sounds really scary, but see the \*\*****VERY IMPORTANT****\*\* comment below. If you are worried about your Internet connection, please use the computers on campus (If you cannot, and are worried about the internet connection, please email me and I will make alternative plans).*
* ***VERY IMPORTANT: For the first test, you will have 2 trials (i.e. 2 opportunities to take it).***
* The test content will be everything up to the test, including the previous units.
* **Do not work in groups**. You will see why when we talk about methods: **sometimes two heads are actually less reliable than 1 and I will show you why.**

**B. Essay**: There is one, it is **worth 25%**

* **See date on the final page of the calendar**.
* The essay is 1000 words.
* The essays are straightforward. There is an analytical question that you have to answer within an essay form: intro, body, conclusion.
* Essay length should be 1000 words—you can go over this limit. I have seen essays that are concise and effective and ones that are elaborate complex and effective. The thing to remember is to read the directions carefully and ANALYZE, rather than stating or claiming.

**C. Weekly Reflective Discussion posts**: **25% total.** Super easy points. There will be weekly discussions.

(This is really easy but important work because it is your primary engagement with the material for that week, and it requires collaboration with classmates.)

* I will be posting application-based discussion questions when the week opens.
* \*\***You will have to (A) post a discussion post as well as (B) respond to 2 other people to get the *full credit* each week**. \*\*
  + Each discussion is worth 5 points. You will receive a **2/5** if you just post a perfect discussion and no responses. You will receive a **3.5/5** if you respond to only one classmate. You will be rated on completeness, accuracy, and content in the initial post as well as your responses two classmates.
  + See specific directions below.

**Things to keep in mind for discussions:**

* The *necessary condition* with any post is that you are respectful to your classmates.
* These responses should *not* be trite, generic, and half-baked. Rather, they will be an attempt to think about these things for real and to begin forming a representation of the concepts, theories, and examples used. The purpose of these discussions is to generate an initial representation and engagement with the material.

**(A) Discussions Details About YOUR initial post:** (Remember,You will receive a **2/5** if you just post a perfect discussion and no responses)

You will **record a video or type up** **at least a 300 word original reflective post** corresponding to the discussion question for the week. You will copy and paste this into the discussion or upload this as a PDF document within the discussion forum post. Your answer will contain the following:

* 1. *Ordered and complete content*: Your answer must be in your own words and should be structured. The structure is up to you. You do not have to number your response. But you can.
  2. *Understandable and clear content*: All sentences should be understandable to other classmates.
  3. *Precision/Accuracy*: Be as detailed and correct as possible about the concepts. Do not step far into creative boundaries. This exercise is about getting the details right.
     1. Think about the text perspective our classmates will be using to analyze your content. Make it as accessible as possible using clear sentences and word choice.
     2. Proofread your posts before you post them to make sure that the structure and content are presentable.

**(B) How to respond to two classmates once you’ve posted:**

Remember, each week you will be expected to **respond to 2 other classmates in 100 words**. You must try to respond to classmates that are lacking in responses. So, if you see someone with 2 responses already, respond to another person. We want these to be distributed.

Your response should not be a criticism, but rather an exploration of ideas or a constructive suggestion on formatting, theme, concept, examples, etc. You can point out something interesting about the classmate’s response, suggest an example, take the discussion a bit further, suggest an alternative view, introduce a different way of organizing that would also be effective, etc. The response is collaborative rather than competitive. The goal is to use these discussion responses as brainstorming ideas for projects as well as review for each week.

**Structured suggestions for all discussion responses:**

1. You must try to respond to classmates that are lacking in responses. So, if you see someone with 2 responses already, respond to another person. We want these to be distributed.
2. Your response should not be a criticism, but rather an exploration of ideas. You can point out something interesting about the classmate’s response, suggest an example, take the discussion a bit further, or suggest an alternative view, introduce new organization/structure, etc. The response is collaborative rather than competitive. The goal is to use these discussion responses as brainstorming ideas for projects as well as review for each week.
3. Responses must be **100 words**. Responses under that will receive half points for each response automatically (3/5 total).
4. The main element that a response should have is engagement with the research. I am looking to see if you are processing the information rather than just putting in a couple of key words.

\*\*All assignments will have to be turned in via Canvas only.

## Extra Credit

If there is a need for extra credit, I will make it available. If you’re really worried about your grade, please check in with me via email way ahead of the end of the class.

# 5. Grading Scale

A = 90-100%

B = 80-89 %

C = 70-79%

D = 60-69%

F = < 60%

*There will be no rounding of fractional points*. You and only you are responsible for monitoring your performance in this course. Be sure to pay close attention to the drop deadline.

**6. Late Work**

*No late work will be accepted* without documented emergency proof, which will be reviewed by the instructor and discussed with the student. Once proof is accepted the student will have a one-week un-penalized extension. **Work that is submitted past the assigned deadline will receive a 0. This means that you have to make sure you leave room for error when submitting an assignment (e.g., loading error, internet connection error, extended rendering time, etc.). If an assignment is due at/by 11:59pm, a submission of 12:00am means that it is late. Deadlines will be strictly enforced.**

**This is very important: If you are having a hard time keeping up with deadlines and/or you predict that you will have a hard time given the difficulty of your schedule, please email me ahead of time (at least 5 days before the assignment is due) and I will work with you to make sure that you turn it in in a timely fashion.**

# 7. Writing Guidelines:

Please make sure to read the first week’s document on HOW to take notes.

## 8. Preparation

Make sure you take responsibility for every aspect of this course. If you work steadily through the material, you will feel confident about the progression. If not, it’ll be very difficult to catch up again. Keep up with the reading and give yourself lots of time to do it. Philosophy is very demanding of your time and attention. Most students find they need to read philosophical writing several times before they have understood it.

## 9. Academic Honesty

You are free to study together. \*\* **It is imperative that you do not complete the essay and tests together. If the tests or presentations look relevantly similar, you will receive a 0 and you will be reported for plagiarism.**

Cheating, plagiarism and collusion in dishonest activities erode the college’s educational and social role in the community.

Cheating is the act of deception by which a student misleadingly demonstrates that she/he has mastered information on an academic exercise. Examples include but are not limited to:

* Copying from another’s work, supplying one’s work to another or giving or receiving copies of examinations without an instructor’s permission.
* Using or displaying notes or devices inappropriate to the conditions of the examination
* Taking a test for someone else or permitting someone to take a test for you.

Plagiarism is a specific form of cheating and is the use of another’s words or ideas without identifying them as such or giving credit to the source. Plagiarism may include but is not limited to:

* Failing to provide complete citations and references for all work that draws on the ideas, words, or work of others.
* Failing to identify the contributors to work done in collaboration, submitting duplicate work to be evaluated in different courses without the knowledge or consent of the instructors involved, or encouraging, permitting, or assisting another to do any act that could subject him or her to discipline.

Disciplinary Procedures When a faculty member discovers a violation of the cheating or plagiarism policy, the faculty member:

* Will arrange a conference with the student and at that time advise the student of the allegations.
* Will notify the dean of the division in writing that an act of dishonesty has occurred. This report will become a part of the student’s permanent record. A copy will be mailed or given to the student.
* May give the student an ‘F’ for the assignment and/or for the course, depending upon the seriousness of the infraction. If the student’s permanent record indicates more than one occurrence of cheating or plagiarism, the student may be placed on probation, suspended or expelled by the Dean of Students.

A student may appeal to the Academic Standards Committee any sanctions employed based on an allegation of dishonesty. Such an appeal must be made within fifteen (15) days after notification is mailed or given to the student.

## 10. Course Materials

## No required text. All readings will be posted in pdf on Canvas in order to be of a little bit of ease.

**11. Instructor Availability**

The instructor will be available by email and will normally respond to all questions within 24 hours. Students who do not receive timely responses should resend their email in case I overlooked it. **The instructor will be available on email during weekends but may take 48 hrs to respond.**

## 12. Universal Accessibility/Accommodations

Reedley College is committed to creating accessible learning environments consistent with federal and state law. To obtain academic adjustments or auxiliary aids, students must be registered with the DSP&S office on campus. DSP&S can be reached at (559) 638-3332. If you are already registered with the DSP&S office, please provide your Notice of Accommodation form as soon as possible.

**[Reading Schedule on Next Page]**

## Reading Schedule:

* All readings to-do will be summarized on Canvas every Monday.
* All readings will be in pdf or word doc format.
* Each week covers all Learning Specific Outcomes

**PHIL 1C- Reading/Assignment Schedule**

There is no textbook for the course. All readings will be made available on Canvas. Please do not exchange any readings outside of the class. As an additional resource there is the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, available at <http://plato.stanford.edu>.

**Readings may change at the discretion of the professor.**

**Below, the date, week, unit type, and unit title are provided—in addition to detailed directions for the week.**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| WK | TOPIC | | DT | | READING | NOTES |
| Part I: Basic Distinctions, Theories, and Applications in Ethics and Moral Reasoning | | | | | | |
| 1 | Intro Week:  Building Blocks for Ethical Theory | | 8/7 | | **Intro**  Purpose: To introduce the course but also to introduce the building blocks for various ethics theories. |  |
| 2 | Consequentialist and Deontological Foundations & Application to Accuracy, Privacy, and Autonomy | | 8/14 | | **Accuracy, Privacy, and Autonomy**  Purpose: These topics implicitly introduce key ethical distinctions between deontological concerns and consequentialist concerns. We will make such distinctions explicit. We will also spend quite a bit of time thinking about information control and autonomy. Finally, we are setting up key relations between human agents and technology. Organize these relations. | * **Weekly Discussions Begin** |
| 3 | Moral Judgment | | 8/21 | | **Moral Judgment: Repugnance: Emotion and Reason**  Purpose: We analyze the complexity of judgment and moral reason in the topic of moral repugnance. As we see, moral judgment can include moral reasons, moral emotions, and moral information.  Weijers, D. and Keyser, V. (2016) “The Varieties and Dynamics of Moral Repugnance: Prediction Markets and Betting on Matters of Life and Death”, The Humanities and Technology Review, 35 |  |
| 4 | Personhood | | 8/28 | | **Personhood and free will in our ethical interaction**  Purpose: This topic sets up the complexity of the person. Next week we will look at how persons change as a mater of their relations.  Harry G. Frankfurt, "Freedom of the Will and the Concept of a Person", The Journal of Philosophy, Vol. 68, No.1 (Jan 14, 1971), 5-7 | * The test is open note. It is multiple choice. * Do not work with others. * **Test 1 due Sunday 11:59pm** |
| 5 | Egoism | | 9/4 | | **Egoism**  Purpose: We review for the test. Then we ask a broader question, related to questions about autonomy: Are we selfishly motivated? Should we be?  Harris, Tristan. (2016). Is Technology Amplifying Human Potential, or Amusing Ourselves to Death?; |  |
| 6 | Moral Duty vs. Moral Luck | | 9/11 | | **Moral Duty vs. Moral Luck**  Purpose: This week we bring many parts together: deontology, consequences, virtues, autonomy, and personhood. Kant had a specific thought: what is right is what is determined by rational inquiry and intention. But Nagel thinks that we are judged for things beyond our control; and what is beyond our control is how moral scenarios turn out but also who we are as moral persons. He calls this 'moral luck'.  Nagel, T. Moral Luck |  |
| Part II: Complex Ethical Relations | | | | | | |
| 7 | Moral Dilemmas | | 9/18 | | **Moral Dilemmas:**  Purpose: We describe some traditional moral dilemmas, such as the Trolley Problem, in order to brainstorm necessary ethical components for a robust ethical theory.  Reading TBA |  |
| 8 | Ethical Relations | | 9/25 | | **Ethical Relations in a Modern World:**  Purpose: Last week we discussed how judgments change as a function of changing contexts and relations. This week we try to understand our complicated relations within a technological world. Why is it so difficult to maintain autonomy? Is technology really offering ‘new’ ethical concerns?  Verbeek, “Subject to technology: on autonomic computing and human autonomy”: in Law, human agency, and autonomic computing (2011), Hildebrandt, Mireille and Rouvroy, Antoinette, eds. |  |
| Part III: Ethics and Application   |  |  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | | 9 | Ethics of the Future | 10/2 | **Virtuality**  Purpose:We push deontological and consequentialist reasoning to discuss ourselves as data. Pay particular attention to how the *relations* between humans and technology get flipped in this week’s reading.  Technology, “Virtuality and utopia: governmentality in an age of autonomic computing page”: in *Law, human agency, and autonomic computing* (2011), Hildebrandt, Mireille and Rouvroy, Antoinette, eds. |  | | 10 | Activity | 10/16 | Digital Activity; Essay directions and guidelines   * No further reading | * **Essay topic assigned** | | 14 | Work on Essay | 10/23 | No reading; No other work |  | | 12 | Moral Emotions and AI | 10/30 | **Moral Emotion Application**  **Purpose:** This week we switch gears, majorly, to set up the rest of the lectures in this course. We have focused on moral reasons, consequences, judgments, and character. But we have not said anything about moral existence. In the next three weeks we set up the distinction between the third person philosophical ‘view from nowhere’ vs. the subjective view from within. What better way to do this then to discuss the emergence of consciousness in AI? This week we discuss what it means for consciousness to “emerge”; and how we respond to robots that *appear* to have agency.  Scheutz, “The Inherent Dangers of Unidirectional Emotional Bonds Between Humans and Social Robots” |  |   Part IV: Complex Critical Reasoning Methods | | | | | | |
| 13 | Moral Luck Applied | 11/6 | | | **Moral Luck Application (Social Change)**  **Purpose:** This week we bring many parts together: deontology, consequences, virtues, autonomy, and personhood. Kant had a specific thought: what is right is what is determined by rational inquiry and intention. But Nagel thinks that we are judged for things beyond our control; and what is beyond our control is how moral scenarios turn out but also who we are as moral persons. He calls this 'moral luck'. Let’s apply the concept.  Horner, T. (2010). Moral luck and computer ethics: Gauguin in cyberspace. *Ethics and Information Technology* 12(4):299-312 |  |
| 14 | Qualia | 11/13 | | | **What-it’s-likeness and Qualia**  Purpose: This week we set up an important topic: Subjective properties. We've discussed personhood, egoism, how we judge, what we are judged for; but one thing is missing. What is it like to BE something. Nagel thinks that no matter how advanced our technology is, we will never know what it is like to be something.  Nagel, Thomas (1974). "What Is It Like to Be a Bat?". The Philosophical Review. 83 (4): 435–450. |  |
| 15 | Intro To Existentialist Considerations | 11/20 and 11/27 | | | **Identity and Absurdity**  Purpose: We end the course with some existentialist concerns. We began this course by discussing the coherence required for personhood. But we should entertain the fact that technology is making us fragmented. That is, technology may be creating a discrepancy between the seriousness with which we take our identities and the doubt we have about those identities. We ask a final question: How can we choose to exist within our complex digital world?  Nagel, excerpt “The Absurd”  Camus, excerpt from Myth of Sisyphus  (Note, Camus was not an ‘existentialist’. He labeled himself as an artist. I think it’s more accurate, too) | Thanksgiving 11/24 (no discussion for the week of the 21st) |
| **Finals Week 12/4** | | | | **No reading** | | **Final Test** is released at the beginning of the week and **due 12/6 11:59pm**  **Essay Due 12/6 11:59pm** |