Introduction to Ethics
PHIL 2306.641
Fall 2020

Dr. Owen M. Smith
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OFFICE: Paul L. Boynton Building 208B (BO 208B)
OFFICE HOURS:
M 3:00 - 4:00 p.m. ONLINE
T 7:00 - 8:30 p.m. ONLINE
W 11:00 a.m. - 12:00 noon ONLINE
R 1:30 - 3:00 p.m. ONLINE
and by appointment
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Course Meeting Time and Place: Owing to the COVID-19 pandemic, this course will be taught as a hybrid of online course lectures and weekly discussion sessions conducted by means of the Zoom application.

Prerequisites for Course: None

Course Description:
Explanation of ethical theories regarding both what actions are right and wrong and what makes people of good and bad moral character; application of ethical theories to contemporary moral issues

Required Textbook: NONE
NOTE: This course is being taught using Open Source textual resources. All materials and reading assignments will be available on the Brightspace/D2L site for the course free of charge to students.

Course Requirements:
• Quizzes – Five quizzes totaling 55% of final course grade
• Issue Discussions – Two issue discussions totaling 30% of final course grade
• Dropbox Essays – Three short essays totaling 15% of final course grade
**Program Learning Outcomes:**
This is a general education core curriculum course and no specific program learning outcomes for this major are addressed in this course.

**General Education Core Curriculum:**
PHI 2306 is part of the university's Core Curriculum. As such, the work assigned in this course recognizes the general goals of the core and the specific objectives attached to those classes designated for inclusion in the Language, Philosophy, and Culture Foundational Component Area as defined by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board.

**Student Learning Outcomes:**
1. Students will gain a more detailed understanding of basic ethical distinctions and terminology.
2. Students will gain a more detailed understanding of basic ethical principles and theories through the application of these principles and theories to contemporary moral problems.
3. Students will recognize the importance of basic ethical distinctions and principles in their own lives and will more effectively analyze and evaluate the choices they make regarding ethical issues.

**Course Policies:**
1. **Student Conduct:** Classroom behavior should not interfere with the instructor's ability to conduct the class or the ability of other students to learn from the instructional program (cf. Student Conduct Code, Policy D-34.1). Unacceptable or disruptive behavior will not be tolerated. Students who disrupt the learning environment may be asked to leave class and may be subject to judicial, academic or other penalties. This prohibition applies to all instructional forums, including electronic, classroom, labs, discussion groups, field trips, etc. The instructor shall have full discretion over what behavior is appropriate/inappropriate in the classroom. Students who do not attend class regularly or who perform poorly on course requirements may be referred to the iCare: Early Alert Program. This program provides students with recommendations for resources or other assistance that is available to help SFA students succeed.

2. **Office Hours**
   a. Unless extraordinary circumstances arise, the instructor will not be available for face-to-face meetings with students. If such circumstances arise, students must wear masks (cloth face coverings) over the nose and mouth at all times and appropriate physical distancing must be observed. These requirements may necessitate scheduling a meeting outside the instructor’s office. If a student does not wear an appropriate mask and/or does not observe appropriate physical distancing, the meeting will be terminated immediately. All incidents of not wearing a mask and/or not observing appropriate physical distancing will be reported to the Office of Student Rights and Responsibilities. Students who are reported for multiple infractions of not wearing a mask and/or not observing appropriate physical distancing may be subject to disciplinary actions.
   b. The instructor will hold his online office hours by means of the Zoom application. Students will be provided with all necessary information to access these meetings.
   c. Students who wish to meet with the instructor outside of regularly-scheduled office hours must make an appointment with the instructor ahead of time. Appointments can be made by email at the instructor's university email address(omsmith@sfasu.edu) or through the email or pager functions of Brightspace/D2L.
3. **Section Quizzes**
   a. Following each major section of the course, students will be required to take an open-book quiz to demonstrate their understanding of the theoretical material contained in the unit readings and course lectures.
   b. The Section Quizzes in this course will vary in value; the value of each Section Quiz will be announced to students when the quiz becomes available. Each Section Quiz will typically consist of a combination of multiple-choice and true/false questions.
   c. Section Quizzes will be available through the Course Tools menu on the D2L website for the course.
   d. Students may attempt each Section Quiz a maximum of two (2) times. A student’s grade on this quiz will be the higher of the two scores earned on these attempts.
   e. At his discretion, the instructor may grant an extension to a student who cannot take a Section Quiz during the designated period owing to technical (internet) limitations, serious illness or another similarly compelling reason. Any student who wishes an extension on a Thinking Skills Quiz must submit a written request to the instructor and provide some form of credible written documentation for the reason cited by the student for missing the deadline for the quiz.

4. **Issue Discussions**
   a. During the course of the semester, students will be required to participate in issue discussions to explore the course material in greater detail. The instructor will post a Discussion Instructions document on the Desire2Learn (D2L) site for the course; this document will govern the issue discussions. Issue discussions will be available through the Course Tools menu on the D2L website for the course.
   b. Each issue discussion will have its own assignment sheet. Student participation in issue discussions will be graded on a ten (10) point scale. Students will be graded on the clarity, thoughtfulness, and collegiality of their discussion posts as well as on the number of their discussion posts and their distribution throughout the discussion period. In their posts, students must demonstrate their understanding of the theoretical material covered during the course. In general, each student must post a minimum of four substantial (reflective) on-topic posts, including at least three that respond directly to posts made by classmates.
   c. Students may increase their score on online exercises by posting more frequently, more thoughtfully, and more collegially (i.e., demonstrating a consideration for the ideas of classmates in constructing a position).
   d. Permissible responses include agreements and disagreements with classmates’ posts, provided that the responses include the reasoning behind these agreements and disagreements, elaboration of one’s own ideas or ideas presented by others, and posts that include properly credited ideas drawn from a variety of sources, including life experiences, material learned in other courses, and concepts encountered outside of class while reading or viewing a variety of media.
   e. Impermissible responses include simple agreements or disagreements with classmates’ posts without justification or expansion, irrelevant responses, responses that attack or mock classmates, and responses that contain expletives or other offensive language.
   f. Because student contributions to group discussions must be made in a timely manner, no extensions will be granted by the instructor regarding participation in a group discussion.

5. **Dropbox Essays**
   a. On three occasions during the course of the semester, students must write a short reflection essay addressing one of the major ethical theories addressed during the course. Two of the essays will address moral dilemmas, presenting the resolution of a dilemma from a specific theoretical perspective and justifying that resolution. The third essay will involve the interpretation of a classic didactic story from the perspective of Taoist virtue ethics. NONE OF THE ESSAYS IS A RESEARCH ASSIGNMENT. Essays will be submitted to a dedicated dropbox on the Brightspace/D2L site for the course.
   b. Each essay will have its own assignment sheet. Essays will be graded on a five (5) point scale according to the requirements listed on the assignment sheet.
   c. At his discretion, the instructor may grant an extension to a student who cannot complete a dropbox essay during the designated period owing to technical (internet) limitations, serious illness or another similarly compelling reason. Any student who wishes an extension on a dropbox essay must submit a written request to the instructor and provide some form of credible written documentation for the reason cited by the student for missing the deadline for the assignment.
6. **Accommodations:** To obtain disability related accommodations, alternate formats and/or auxiliary aids, students with disabilities must contact the Office of Disability Services (ODS), Human Services Building, and Room 325, 468-3004 / 468-1004 (TDD) as early as possible in the semester. Once verified, ODS will notify the course instructor and outline the accommodation and/or auxiliary aids to be provided. Failure to request services in a timely manner may delay your accommodations. For additional information, go to [http://www.sfasu.edu/disabilityservices/](http://www.sfasu.edu/disabilityservices/).

7. **Academic Integrity**
   a. Academic integrity is a responsibility of all university faculty and students. Faculty members promote academic integrity in multiple ways including instruction on the components of academic honesty, as well as abiding by university policy on penalties for cheating and plagiarism.
   b. **Definition of Academic Dishonesty:** Academic dishonesty includes both cheating and plagiarism. Cheating includes but is not limited to (1) using or attempting to use unauthorized materials to aid in achieving a better grade on a component of a class; (2) the falsification or invention of any information, including citations, on an assigned exercise; and/or (3) helping or attempting to help another in an act of cheating or plagiarism. Plagiarism is presenting the words or ideas of another person as if they were one’s own. Examples of plagiarism are (1) submitting an assignment as if it were one’s own work when, in fact, it is at least partly the work of another; (2) submitting a work that has been purchased or otherwise obtained from an Internet source or another source; and (3) incorporating the words or ideas of an author into one's paper without giving the author due credit. The complete university policy on academic dishonesty may be found at [http://www.sfasu.edu/policies/academic_integrity.asp](http://www.sfasu.edu/policies/academic_integrity.asp).
   c. Please note that quoting or closely paraphrasing the textbook or course lecture without citation is plagiarism and will be penalized.
   d. Students are required to be familiar with all items they submit in fulfillment of course requirements. If in the instructor’s opinion, a student does not demonstrate sufficient familiarity with any such item, the instructor may reject the item and assign the student a score of zero (0.0) for that item.
   e. Students in this course are required to adhere to the highest standards of academic integrity. Any student who commits an act of cheating or plagiarism in this course is subject to receiving a final course grade of “F.” Moreover, the student will be required to meet with the instructor to discuss the incident, and a formal Report of Academic Dishonesty will be submitted to the student’s personal file.
   f. A student who considers the instructor’s determination of academic dishonesty to be in error may take advantage of an appeals process; this process is described in full at [http://www.sfasu.edu/policies/academic-appeals-by-students.pdf](http://www.sfasu.edu/policies/academic-appeals-by-students.pdf).

8. **Grades**
   a. As course requirements are graded, the instructor will publish student grades to the D2L site for the course; if a grade has not been published on the D2L site for the course, the grade is not yet available. The instructor does not generally respond to requests to specify the date by which a particular course requirement will be graded, to provide unpublished grades to students, or compute current course averages for students.
   b. In accordance with university policy, students will be assigned a midterm grade in this course. This grade will be based upon all course requirements completed prior to midterm. A student’s midterm grade is no guarantee of the student’s final course grade. A student with a passing midterm grade may still fail the course; a student with a failing midterm grade may still pass the course.
   c. Withheld Grades: Ordinarily, at the discretion of the instructor of record and with the approval of the academic chair/director, a grade of WH will be assigned only if the student cannot complete the course work because of unavoidable circumstances. Students must complete the work within one calendar year from the end of the semester in which they receive a WH, or the grade automatically becomes an F. If students register for the same course in future terms the WH will automatically become an F and will be counted as a repeated course for the purpose of computing the grade point average.
9. Use of the Zoom Application
   a. Zoom flexibility is intended to support students in many situations. Especially now, in our virtual learning space, with many children learning from home and schools facing sudden closures, I expect children to be present during Zoom sessions such as office hours or other meetings from time to time. I also understand that students may be caring for other family members who need assistance, such as siblings or parents.
   b. There is no requirement for any student to be visible during Zoom office hours or other Zoom meetings related to the class, and students do not need to state a reason for preferring to turn off their video.
   c. Breastfeeding babies and children of all ages are welcome during office hours and other meetings and may be visible on screen even when other students are present. Alternatively, parents and caregivers may turn the camera off when more privacy is required.
   d. Stepping away momentarily for family care reasons is completely understandable and expected. Simply mute and/or turn off your camera as necessary and rejoin when you are able.
   e. Students are prohibited from recording any still images, audio, or video of any children on screen. Students who do so are subject to censure.
   f. All students participating in a Zoom session are encouraged to support and respect caregivers as they mute and/or turn off their video and use the chat function as needed.
   g. Please consider disclosing your student-caregiver status to me. This is the first step in my being able to accommodate any special needs that arise. While I maintain the same high expectations for all students in my classes, I am happy to discuss challenges with you in a way that supports you as you strive for school-caregiver balance.

Tentative Course Schedule:
Unit One: Foundations (August 24 - September 02)

Unit Two: Two Metaethical Stances (September 03 - September 11)
   • Moral Realism
   • Moral Relativism: Three factors to which moral judgments can be relative
   • FIRST SECTION QUIZ

Unit Three: Relativistic Normative Ethical Theories (September 14 - September 18)
   • Cultural Ethical Relativism (CER)
   • Individual Ethical Relativism (IER)
   • Ontological Relativism (OR)
   • SECOND SECTION QUIZ

Unit Four: Deontology (September 21 – October 09)
   • Meaning of Moral Terms: Kant's Three Propositions of Morality
   • Procedure for Making Moral Judgments, Part I: Kant's Categorical Imperative
   • Procedure for Making Moral Judgments, Part II: The Principle of Voluntary Informed Consent
   • THIRD SECTION QUIZ
   • FIRST DROPBOX ESSAY (MORAL DILEMMA)
   • DISCUSSION ISSUE: TORTURE

Unit Five: Utilitarianism (October 12 – November 13)
   • Meaning of Moral Terms: Bentham's consequentialist hedonism and Mill's revisionist hedonism
   • Procedure for Making Moral Judgments: The Utilitarian Happiness Calculus
   • Evolution of Utilitarian Ethics
   • FOURTH SECTION QUIZ
   • SECOND DROPBOX ESSAY (MORAL DILEMMA)
   • DISCUSSION ISSUE: VEGETARIANISM (USE OF ANIMAL PRODUCTS)

Unit Six: Virtue Ethics and Taoism (November 16 – December 04)
   • Taoist Philosophical Principles: The Bipolarity of Nature, Tao, and Te
   • Central Taoist Ethical Principles
   • Taoist Rules of Conduct
   • THIRD DROPBOX ESSAY (SHORT DIDACTIC STORY)
   • FIFTH SECTION QUIZ