Ethical Theory  
(Philosophy 3323:001)

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Spring 2024  
Meets: TR 2-3:15pm in  
Liberal Arts, Rm. 374  
Office Hrs: M&W: 1-2pm  
& TR: 12:30-2pm.

SYLLABUS

I.  **Texts:** 3 total*


* There is also a piece we will read that I will provide electronically.

II. **Introduction**

Welcome to Philosophy 323, Ethical Theory. Philosophy is the activity of finding reasonable beliefs. Ethics, as a branch of philosophy, is the activity of finding reasonable beliefs regarding both the rightness and wrongness of actions *and* what makes persons morally good and bad. Ethical theory, then, is the attempt to provide a rational framework that both explains the nature of what is good and bad, right and wrong, and also provides a means to negotiate moral conflict. Our class will investigate some of the major ethical theories that have been proposed, both in their classical formulations and in their more recent developments.

III. **Student Wellness and Well-being**

SFASU values students’ mental health and the role it plays in academic and overall student success. SFA provides a variety of resources to support student’s mental health and wellness. Many of these resources are free, and all of them are confidential.

**On-campus Resources:**
SFASU Counseling Services • [www.sfasu.edu/counselingservices](http://www.sfasu.edu/counselingservices)  
Health and Wellness Hub (corner of E. College and Raguet) • 936-468-2401
Crisis Resources:
Burke 24-hour crisis line 1(800) 392-8343
Suicide Prevention Lifeline 1(800) 273-TALK (8255)
Crisis Text Line: Text HELLO to 741-741

IV. General Education Core Curriculum Objectives/Outcomes

Students will demonstrate awareness of the scope and variety of texts dealing with various philosophical issues. Students will demonstrate an understanding of the historical and social contexts of philosophical movements. Students will demonstrate an ability to respond critically to works in philosophy. Students will have participated in assignments requiring them to formulate, express, and support their opinions on the philosophical issues covered in the course. Students will have acquired knowledge of the cross-cultural influence of philosophy.

A. How the Core Objectives Will Be Addressed

The Core Objectives will be assessed in an assigned paper.

V. Program Learning Outcomes

The student should be able to analyze an ethical theory assigned by the instructor, identifying its fundamental principles and explaining how they should be applied to obtain a recommended course of action.

VI. Exemplary Educational Objectives

1. Awareness of the scope and variety of texts dealing with ethical issues.
2. Understanding of the historical and social contexts of philosophical movements in ethics.
3. Ability to respond critically to works in philosophy.
4. Ability to formulate, express, and support arguments on ethical issues.
5. Knowledge of the cross-cultural influence of philosophy.

VII. Student Learning Outcomes

1. Arguments for: moral considerability, differing kinds of value, and decision procedures.
   a. Students will acquire knowledge of theories regarding moral considerability, differing kinds of value and how ethicists otherwise go about problem-solving moral conflicts.
   b. Students will acquire familiarity with critiques of these theories.
   c. Students will acquire facility in the practical application of these theories.
2. Students will recognize the importance of basic ethical principles and distinctions in their own lives and will analyze and evaluate the choices they make regarding ethical issues.

VIII. **Credit Hour Justification**

Typically meets twice each week (Tuesday/Thursday) in 75-minute segments for 15 weeks, and also meets for a 2-hour final examination. Students have significant weekly reading assignments and typically compose three 5-6 page essays. These activities average a minimum of 6 hours of work per week to prepare outside of classroom hours.

IX. **Acceptable Student Behavior**

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 (see the 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 class projects/exams may be referred to the Early Alert Program. This program provides students with recommendations for resources or other assistance that is available to help SFA students succeed.

X. **Attendance/Participation**

An important part of doing philosophy is participating in an exchange of ideas. Several things follow from this: (1) In order to participate in class discussion, you must do the readings assigned (you will find a tentative course calendar on the pages that follow)—your responsibility is to make sure you have already read the material we will discuss in class for each of our particular meetings. (2) In order to participate in class, you obviously have to be present in class. Thus, you will only be allowed two unexcused absences during the semester without having your grade affected. **Beginning with your third such absence, you will have four points taken away from your overall point total each time you are absent.** So please, don’t miss class!

XI. **Academic Integrity**

The Code of Student Conduct and Academic Integrity outlines the prohibited conduct by any student enrolled in a course at SFA. It is the responsibility of all members of all faculty, staff, and students to adhere to and uphold this policy.
Articles IV, VI, and VII of the new Code of Student Conduct and Academic Integrity outline the violations and procedures concerning academic conduct, including cheating, plagiarism, collusion, and misrepresentation. Cheating includes, but is not limited to: (1) Copying from the test paper (or other assignment) of another student, (2) Possession and/or use during a test of materials that are not authorized by the person giving the test, (3) Using, obtaining, or attempting to obtain by any means the whole or any part of a non-administered test, test key, homework solution, or computer program, or using a test that has been administered in prior classes or semesters without permission of the Faculty member, (4) Substituting for another person, or permitting another person to substitute for one’s self, to take a test, (5) Falsifying research data, laboratory reports, and/or other records or academic work offered for credit, (6) Using any sort of unauthorized resources or technology in completion of educational activities.

Plagiarism is the appropriation of material that is attributable in whole or in part to another source or the use of one’s own previous work in another context without citing that it was used previously, without any indication of the original source, including words, ideas, illustrations, structure, computer code, and other expression or media, and presenting that material as one’s own academic work being offered for credit or in conjunction with a program course or degree requirements.

Collusion is the unauthorized collaboration with another person in preparing academic assignments offered for credit or collaboration with another person to commit a violation of any provision of the rules on academic dishonesty, including disclosing and/or distributing the contents of an exam.

Misrepresentation is providing false grades or résumés; providing false or misleading information in an effort to receive a postponement or an extension on a test, quiz, or other assignment for the purpose of obtaining an academic or financial benefit for oneself or another individual or to injure another student academically or financially.

XII. Withheld Grades (Semester Grades Policy 5.5)

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 coursework 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 to compute the grade point average. For additional information, go to https://www.sfasu.edu/policies/course-grades-5.5.pdf.

XIII. Students with Disabilities

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 promptly may delay your accommodations. For additional information, go to http://www.sfasu.edu/disabilityservices/.

XIV. **Grading Policy: Papers**

There will be 3 essays (5-6 pages in length and each worth 1/3 of your grade). Your papers are to be word processed with citations. With respect to the first two papers, everyone will write on the same topics; the third and final paper is a research paper to be done on an agreed upon topic. Regarding the first two papers, I will assign each paper at least two weeks before the paper is due. You may always do drafts for me to look over. However, for the first paper, everyone will do a draft, so that we may fulfill the writing enhanced requirements for the course. Any drafts will tentatively be due a week after the day I assign it (again, drafts of the last two papers are voluntary). Note that you are always to proofread your papers carefully before submitting them, even when submitting a draft. Indeed, I encourage you to consult the University’s Writing Lab via the AARC for help regarding issues of grammar and style.

*If at the end of the term your point total puts you on the borderline between two grades, your frequent class participation will give you the higher grade.

XV. **Tentative Course Calendar**

Week 1: January 18-19  

Week 2: Jan. 22-26  
A. Timmons: pp. 7-21, “An Introduction to Moral Theory”

Week 3: Jan. 29-Feb. 2  
A. Kant: pp. 1-17  
B. Kant: pp. 19-37

Week 4: Feb. 5-9  
A. Kant: pp. 38-48  
B. Timmons: pp. 205-218, “Kant’s Moral Theory”

Week 5: Feb. 12-16 (First Paper Assigned on Feb. 15th)  
A. Timmons: pp. 218-232, “Kant’s Moral Theory”  
B. Timmons: pp. 232-240

Week 6: Feb. 19-23 (First Draft Due September 22nd)  
A. Mill: Chapter I
B. Mill: Chapter II

Week 7: Feb. 26-Mar. 1 (First Paper Due on the 29th)
A. Mill: Chapters III & IV
B. Mill: Chapter V

Week 8: Mar. 4-8
A. Timmons: pp. 111-126, Consequentialism I: “Classical Utilitarianism”
B. Timmons: pp. 126-140, Consequentialism I: “Classical Utilitarianism”

Week 9: Mar. 11-15 No classes, Spring Break

Week 10: Mar. 18-22 (Second Paper Assigned on the 21st)
A. Timmons: pp. 143-157, Consequentialism II: “Contemporary Developments”
B. Timmons: pp. 157-172, Consequentialism II: “Contemporary Developments”

Week 11: Mar. 25-27th No classes on March 28th & 29th, Easter Holiday

Week 12: April 1-5
A. Timmons: pp. 269-281, “Virtue Ethics”

Week 13: April 8-12 (Second Paper Due on the 11th)
A. Timmons: pp. 245-255, “Moral Pluralism”
B. Timmons: pp. 256-265, “Moral Pluralism”

Week 14: Apr. 15-19 (Third Paper Discussed on April 18th)
A. Timmons: pp. 245-255, “Moral Particularism”

Week 15: Apr. 22-26
B. Timmons: pp. 30-37, “Divine Command Theory”

Week 15: Apr. 29-May 3
OPEN

Your third paper is to be handed in during our university-scheduled final exam meeting day on Tuesday, May 7th by 11:59 that evening.