

Phil 1120 Social Ethics

Course Description

In this course, we will think critically about contemporary moral issues. First, we'll consider various meta ethical questions: Is ethics subjective; do the right answers to moral questions depend on the sentiments of individuals? Is ethics culturally relative; do the answers to ethical questions vary from one culture to the next? Does ethics come from the commands of God?

Next, we'll discuss objective moral theories. Is utilitarianism true; should we make ethical decisions based on what achieves the greatest good for the greatest number? Is deontology true; does the moral status of an action depend on the intentions of the person performing it? Is virtue theory true; ought morality to be a matter of developing certain traits of character? Is care ethics true; do our moral obligations arise out of the care relationships that we take on?

Finally (and for the majority of the course) we'll discuss some of the most pressing social issues of our day. This course is, in many ways, "ripped from the headlines." We'll discuss issues that we all have to make moral decisions about in the here and now. Issues this semester will include: our obligations to the global poor, the ethics of war, terror and torture, animal ethics, and ethics and technology.

Course Objectives

By the end of this course, you will be able to:

- 1. Work through moral issues in nuanced and thoughtful ways.
- 2. Identify, understand, and reasonably respond to the points of view of people with whom you disagree.
- 3. Articulate the major moral theories in a way that indicates familiarity with some of the history of moral thought.



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Office: Old Main 224

Office Hours: Wednesday, 2:30-3:30.

Course Resources

Textbook:

- Jonathan Wolf (2018). Readings in Moral Philosophy First Edition.. New York: W.W Norton and Company. *This book is available by clicking "Bookshelf" on the Navigation list on the left hand side of the screen.*
- Other readings are available here on Canvas.

1. Course Requirements

Each student will:

- Attend class regularly (100 points)
- Complete weekly reading responses (200 points, 20% of the course grade).
- Take two exams, a midterm (200 points, 20% of the course grade) and a final (200 points, 20% of the course grade).
 - Midterm Exam available on Canvas February 24th-March 1st.
 - Final Exam available on Canvas April 10th-April 21st
- 30% Ethics Bowl. (300 points) Students will engage in a project that culminates in a series of debates at the end of the semester. This assignment has several components:
- o a) Attendance (40 points, 10 each). Students are required to attend all debates.
- b) Three Online assignments on Canvas (120 points, 40 each) designed to help students prepare their cases.
- c) Participation in the Ethics Bowl debate itself (140 points). The debates will be held on April 11th, 14th. 16th and 21st.

Evaluation Methods and Criteria

Rubrics will be available for each assignment so students can get a sense of how they will be graded.



Grade Scheme

The following grading scheme will be used in this class:

Grade	Range
A	100 % to 93.0%
A-	< 93.0 % to 90.0%
B+	< 90.0 % to 87.0%
В	< 87.0 % to 83.0%
B-	< 83.0 % to 80.0%
C+	< 80.0 % to 77.0%
С	< 77.0 % to 73.0%
C-	< 73.0 % to 70.0%
D+	< 70.0 % to 67.0%
D	< 67.0 % to 60.0%
F	< 59.0 % to 0.0%

Course Schedule/Outline

PART ONE: METAETHICS AND NORMATIVE ETHICS

Week One:

Introduction to Ethics. The big questions for this week are: What are ethics? How do ethics differ from ettiquette? How do they differ from law? How do they differ from religion? What is normativity and why does it matter?

Reading(s):

For Wednesday: Right and Wrong by Thomas Nagel in Readings in Moral Philosophy (RMP).

Week Two:

Metaethics: Subjectivism, Relativism. The big questions for this week are: Are ethical questions resolved by taste or sentiment? Do ethics vary from one culture to another? Or, instead, are ethics *objective*?

Reading(s):



For Monday: Patterns of Culture by Ruth Benedict in RMP

For Wednesday: Trying Out One's New Sword by Mary Midgley in RMP.

Week Three:

Virtue Ethics and Improving One's Moral Character. The big questions for this week are: What have the major ethical theories been throughout history? What does it mean to have a good moral character? What is the best way to develop good traits of character?

Reading(s):

For Monday: Selection from *Nicomachean Ethics* by Aristotle in RMP.

For Wednesday: Passage from *The Enchiridion* by Epictetus posted on Canvas.

Week Four:

Deontology. The big questions for this week are: What reasons do we have for thinking that intentions are relevant to ethics? What is *universaliazability* and why does it matter? What does it mean to make an exception of oneself? What is the relationship between morality and autonomy?

Reading(s):

For Monday: The Categorical Imperative by Immanuel Kant (from his work Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals) in RMP.

Week Five:

Utilitarianism. The big questions for the week are: What is the relationship between consequences and ethics? What kinds of consequences matter? Does ethics require impartiality? If so, why?

Reading(s):

For Monday: An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation by Jeremy Bentham in RMP

For Wednesday: Utilitarianism by John Stuart Mill in RMP.



Care Ethics and the African Ethic of Ubuntu. The big questions for the week are: What role do our relationships play in our moral obligations? What is care? What is the relationship between care and ethics?

Reading(s):

For Monday: The Caring Person by Virginia Held in RMP.

For Wednesday: The African Ethic of Ubuntu

(https://1000wordphilosophy.com/2019/09/08/the-african-ethic-of-ubuntu/)

Week Seven: Review and Exam

Reading(s): No new readings.

PART TWO: APPLIED ETHICS

Week Eight

Economic Injustice. The big questions for this week are: What does a just and fair distribution of resources look like? Are societies with large wealth gaps just societies? What sort of government structures should we have in place to protect economic fairness?

Reading(s):

A Theory of Justice by John Rawls in RMP.

The Entitlement Theory of Justice by Robert Nozick in RMP.

Political Responsibility and Structural Injustice by Iris Marion Young in RMP.

Week Nine

World Hunger and Foreign Aid. The big questions for this week are: What should we do about global poverty? What obligations do the richest countries in the world have to end global problems such as lack of access to food, reliable shelter, clean drinking water, and basic medical care?

Reading(s):

Famine, Affluence, and Morality by Peter Singer in RMP.

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Dead Aid by Dambisa Moyo in RMP.

Ending World Hunger by Onora O'Neill in RMP

Week Ten:

Animal Ethics. The big questions for this week are: What characteristics does a being need to have in order for it to be deserving of moral consideration? What is the difference between saying that non-human animals have rights and saying that we should care about the welfare of non-human animals? What should we think about practices such as using animals for food, entertainment, clothing, and research?

Reading(s):

All Animals are Equal by Peter Singer in RMP.

The Radical Egalitarian Case for Animal Rights by Tom Regan posted on Canvas.

Care Ethical Approaches to Animal Ethics by Carol J Adams Posted on Canvas.

Week Eleven:

War. The big questions for the week are: When, if ever, is war justified? Is it possible for war to be fought justly? If so, what are the circumstances under which war is fought justly? What technology is consistent with fighting a just war?

Reading(s):

50 Years After Hiroshima by John Rawls in RMP.

War and Massacre by Thomas Nagel in RMP.

Week Twelve:

Free Speech and the Internet.

The big questions for this week are: What are our obligations to the global poor? What arguments exist in favor of providing considerably more assistance to the global poor than we currently do? What arguments exist against that idea?

Reading(s):

TBA

Week Thirteen: **Ethics and Technology.** The big questions for this week are: How has the nature of our moral obligations changed as technology has developed? What kinds of technology present challenging new moral questions? How might trolley problems inform our decision making when it

comes to making decisions involving new technologies? How ought we to program self-driving cars? Should they always favor the driver? Should they benefit the greatest number?

Reading(s):

<u>The Trolley Problem by Judith Jarvis Thomson</u>
(https://usu.instructure.com/courses/770960/files/95006814/preview)

<u>Turning the Trolley by Judith Jarvis Thomson</u>
(https://usu.instructure.com/courses/770960/files/95006815/preview)

Why Ethics Matters for Autonomous Cars by Patrick Lin (https://usu.instructure.com/courses/770960/files/95006817/preview)

Week Fourteen: Ethics Bowl Debates

Week Fifteen: Ethics Bowl Debates

Week Sixteen: Ethics Bowl Debates

Library Services

All USU students attending classes in Logan, at our Regional Campuses, or online can access all databases, e-journals, and e-books regardless of location. Additionally, the library will mail printed books to students, at no charge to them. Students can also borrow books from any Utah academic library. Take advantage of all library services and learn more at libguides.usu.edu/statewide. (http://libguides.usu.edu/statewide)

Classroom Civility

Utah State University supports the principle of freedom of expression for both faculty and students. The University respects the rights of faculty to teach and students to learn. Maintenance of these rights requires classroom conditions that do not impede the learning process. Disruptive classroom behavior will not be tolerated. An individual engaging in such behavior may be subject to disciplinary

② ction. Read Student Code Article V Section V-3 →

(https://studentconduct.usu.edu/studentcode/article5) for more information.

University Policies & Procedures

Appropriate Use of Canvas and Other IT Resources

Canvas and all other course technologies are information technology services provided as tools to further the mission of the university. By using these services, users agree to comply with USU Policy
550: Appropriate Use of Computing, Networking, and Information Resources (https://www.usu.edu/policies/550/) and the accompanying Terms of use for USU IT
(https://www.usu.edu/policies/550/) and the accompanying Terms of use for USU IT
(https://usu.service-now.com/aggies?id=kb_article_view&sysparm_article=KB0015388) resources, as well as Article V-3.B.25.c (https://www.usu.edu/student-conduct/student-code/article5) of the USU Student Code. Using course technologies in ways that are inconsistent with the university's mission or are disruptive will not be tolerated. Disruptive behavior includes any activity that interferes with either the faculty member's ability to conduct the class or the ability of other students to profit from the instructional program.

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Academic Freedom and Professional Responsibilities

Academic freedom is the right to teach, study, discuss, investigate, discover, create, and publish freely. Academic freedom protects the rights of faculty members in teaching and of students in learning. Freedom in research is fundamental to the advancement of truth. Faculty members are entitled to full freedom in teaching, research, and creative activities, subject to the limitations imposed by professional responsibility. Policy 4002: Academic Freedom and Professional Responsibility

[https://www.usu.edu/policies/4002/) further defines academic freedom and professional responsibilities.

Academic Integrity – "The Honor System"

Each student has the right and duty to pursue his or her academic experience free of dishonesty. To enhance the learning environment at Utah State University and to develop student academic integrity, each student agrees to the following Honor Pledge:

"I pledge, on my honor, to conduct myself with the foremost level of academic integrity."

A student who lives by the Honor Pledge is a student who does more than not cheat, falsify, or plagiarize. A student who lives by the Honor Pledge:

- Espouses academic integrity as an underlying and essential principle of the Utah State University community;
- Understands that each act of academic dishonesty devalues every degree that is awarded by this institution; and
- Is a welcomed and valued member of Utah State University.

Academic Dishonesty

The instructor of this course will take appropriate actions in response to Academic Dishonesty, as defined the University's Student Code. Acts of academic dishonesty include but are not limited to:

- Cheating: using, attempting to use, or providing others with any unauthorized assistance in taking quizzes, tests, examinations, or in any other academic exercise or activity. Unauthorized assistance includes:
 - Working in a group when the instructor has designated that the quiz, test, examination, or any other academic exercise or activity be done "individually;"
 - Depending on the aid of sources beyond those authorized by the instructor in writing papers, preparing reports, solving problems, or carrying out other assignments;
 - Substituting for another student, or permitting another student to substitute for oneself, in taking an examination or preparing academic work;
 - Acquiring tests or other academic material belonging to a faculty member, staff member, or another student without express permission;
 - Continuing to write after time has been called on a quiz, test, examination, or any other academic exercise or activity;
 - Submitting substantially the same work for credit in more than one class, except with prior approval of the instructor; or engaging in any form of research fraud.
- Falsification: altering or fabricating any information or citation in an academic exercise or activity.
- Plagiarism: representing, by paraphrase or direct quotation, the published or unpublished work of another person as one's own in any academic exercise or activity without full and clear acknowledgment. It also includes using materials prepared by another person or by an agency engaged in the sale of term papers or other academic materials.

For additional information go to: <u>ARTICLE VI. University Regulations Regarding Academic Integrity</u> (https://www.usu.edu/student-conduct/student-code/article6)

Discrimination and Sexual Misconduct

General Overview

USU strives to provide an environment for students and employees that is free from <u>discrimination</u>

(https://www.usu.edu/equity/non-discrimination) and <u>sexual misconduct</u>

<u>https://www.usu.edu/equity/sexual-misconduct/Sexual-Misconduct-Terms</u>). If you experience sexual misconduct or discrimination at any point during the semester inside or outside of class, you are encouraged to contact the USU Title IX Coordinator via Distance Education room 400 in Logan, 435-

797-1266, titleix@usu.edu (mailto:titleix@usu.edu), or at equity.usu.edu/report (https://www.usu.edu/equity/report). You can learn more about the USU resources available for individuals who have experienced sexual misconduct at sexualrespect.usu.edu (https://www.usu.edu/sexual-respect/). Resources for individuals who have experienced discrimination are listed at equity.usu.edu/resources (https://www.usu.edu/equity/resources).

Required Reporting of Sexual Misconduct and Threats of Harm

USU cares about our students and provides a number of resources and supportive measures to students who may be experiencing thoughts of self-harm or who have experienced sexual misconduct. To ensure students are informed about resources and services available to them, including available grievance or criminal processes for incidents of sexual misconduct, USU has implemented reporting-policies and practices (https://www.usu.edu/policies/340/) that require designated employees to report any information they receive about incidents of sexual misconduct. This reporting policy also assists USU with its efforts to prevent sexual misconduct and keep our campus community safe.

Under USU's sexual misconduct reporting policy, I am designated as a "reporting employee (https://www.usu.edu/equity/sexual-misconduct/employees.php)." This means that if you share information with me about incidents of sexual misconduct (https://www.usu.edu/equity/sexual-misconduct/Sexual-Misconduct-Terms.php) (sexual harassment, sexual assault, relationship violence, or sex-based stalking), including within a course assignment, , I will report that information to the USU Title IX Coordinator (https://www.usu.edu/equity/sexual-misconduct/Title-IX-Coordinator.php). I will also share with you information about designated confidential resources (https://www.usu.edu/equity/sexual-misconduct/confidential-resources), supportive measures (https://www.usu.edu/equity/Supportive-Measures.php), and how you can file a report (https://www.usu.edu/equity/report.php) with the USU Title IX Coordinator.

Self-disclosures about sexual misconduct that you experienced are not required for your course work.

Similarly, if you disclose thoughts of harm to self or a threat to others to me, including within a course assignment, I will report the information to the appropriate campus administrators. I will also share with you information about the mental health and wellness resources (https://www.usu.edu/aggiewellness/caps/) available to you.

Withdrawal Policy and "I" Grade Policy

Students are required to complete all courses for which they are registered by the end of the semester. In some cases, a student may be unable to complete all of the coursework because of extenuating circumstances, but not due to poor performance or to retain financial aid. The term extenuating' circumstances includes: (1) incapacitating illness which prevents a student from attending classes for a minimum period of two weeks, (2) a death in the immediate family, (3) financial responsibilities requiring a student to alter a work schedule to secure employment, (4)

change in work schedule as required by an employer, or (5) other emergencies deemed appropriate by the instructor.

Students with Disabilities

USU welcomes students with disabilities. If you have, or suspect you may have, a physical, mental health, or learning disability that may require accommodations in this course, please contact the Disability Resource Center (DRC) (http://www.usu.edu/drc/) as early in the semester as possible (University Inn # 101, (435) 797-2444, drc@usu.edu (mailto:drc@usu.edu)). All disability related accommodations must be approved by the DRC. Once approved, the DRC will coordinate with faculty to provide accommodations.

Students Who are Pregnant or Have a Pregnancy-Related Condition

If you need academic accommodations related to pregnancy, childbirth, false pregnancy, termination of pregnancy, recovery, or other pregnancy related conditions, please contact the Office of Equity as early as possible. All accommodations related to pregnancy must be approved by the Office of Equity. The Office of Equity will then coordinate with instructors to provide accommodations. The University will not exclude a student from participating in any part of an educational program based on the student's pregnancy or pregnancy related conditions.

Office of Equity: Distance Education, Room 400, Logan Campus, 435-797-1266, Office of Equity:

Pregnancy and Pregnancy Related Conditions

(https://www.usu.edu/equity/pregnancy-accommodations).

Inclusive Excellence

USU provides resources to help all students feel included as part of the campus and broader USU community. To learn more about the resources available and how to access them, visit the Inclusive-excellence.

Excellence Office (https://www.usu.edu/inclusive-excellence/).

Grievance Process

Students who feel they have been unfairly treated may file a grievance through the channels and procedures described in the <u>Academic Grievances section of the Course Catalog</u> (https://catalog.usu.edu/content.php?catoid=39&navoid=30452).

Full details for USU Academic Policies and Procedures

- Acceptable Use of University Computing Resources (https://www.usu.edu/policies/550/)
- Academic Policies and Practices (USU Catalog) → (https://catalog.usu.edu/content.php?
 catoid=39&navoid=29998)
- Student Conduct (http://www.usu.edu/studentconduct)
 - Student Code (https://www.usu.edu/student-conduct/student-code/)

 (https://catalog.usu.edu/content.php?catoid=38&navoid=28932) Academic Freedom and Professional Responsibility Policy (https://www.usu.edu/policies/403/)

Emergency Procedures

In the case of a drill or real emergency, classes will be notified to evacuate the building via USU official communication channels. Those channels will be: an audible alarm, such as a fire alarm; an Aggie Alert notification; or notification by a USU representative. In the event of a disaster that does not permit enough time for notifications, evacuate as the situation dictates (i.e., when shaking ceases in an earthquake; immediately when a fire is discovered or in the event of other immediate life safety concerns). If it does not inhibit safety, turn off computers and take any personal items with you. Elevators should not be used; instead, use the closest stairs. See USU Emergency Management (https://www.usu.edu/dps/emergency/) for more information.

General Health Protocols

The cold, flu, COVID-19, and other illnesses can have an impact on the health of our university community. USU welcomes the wearing of masks in all university buildings and encourages taking measures to mitigate risk as recommended by federal and state public health officials: getting vaccinated, staying home if you are sick, and frequent hand washing.

Mental Health

Mental health is critically important for the success of USU students. As a student, you may experience a range of issues that can cause barriers to learning, such as strained relationships, increased anxiety, alcohol/drug problems, feeling down, difficulty concentrating and/or lack of motivation. These mental health concerns or stressful events may lead to diminished academic performance or reduce your ability to participate in daily activities. Utah State University provides free services for students to assist them with addressing these and other concerns. You can learn more about the broad range of confidential mental health services available on campus at COUNSELING (CAPS) (https://counseling.usu.edu).

Students are also encouraged to download the <u>"SafeUT App"</u> (https://safeut.org/) to their smartphones. The SafeUT application is a 24/7 statewide crisis text and tip service that provides real-time crisis intervention to students through texting and a confidential tip program that can help anyone with emotional crises, bullying, relationship problems, mental health, or suicide related issue.

USU Course Policies:

ppropriate Use of Canvas and Other IT Resources (https://www.usu.edu/teach/helptopics/teaching-tips/syllabus-resources#appropriate)

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Withdrawal Policy and "I" Grade Policy
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Inclusive Excellence
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General Health Protocols
Mental Health ☐ (https://www.usu.edu/teach/help-topics/teaching-tips/syllabus-resources#mental)

Course Summary:

Date	Details	Due
Tue Apr 30, 2024	Ethics Bowl Debate Participation (https://usu.instructure.com/courses/770960/assignments/4	due by 11:59pm 752614)

Date	Details	Due
Fri Jan 10, 2025	Reading Assignment One due by 11:59 (https://usu.instructure.com/courses/770960/assignments/4752627)	9pm
Fri Jan 17, 2025	Reading Assignment Two (https://usu.instructure.com/courses/770960/assignments/4752634)	9pm
Fri Jan 24, 2025	Reading Assignment Three (https://usu.instructure.com/courses/770960/assignments/4752633)	9pm
Fri Jan 31, 2025	Reading Assignment Four (https://usu.instructure.com/courses/770960/assignments/4752624)	9pm
Fri Feb 7, 2025	Reading Assignment Five due by 11:59 (https://usu.instructure.com/courses/770960/assignments/4752622)	9pm
Fri Feb 14, 2025	Reading Assignment Six (https://usu.instructure.com/courses/770960/assignments/4752630)	9pm
Fri Feb 21, 2025	Reading Assignment Seven (https://usu.instructure.com/courses/770960/assignments/4752628)	9pm
Sun Mar 2, 2025	Social Ethics Exam One due by 11:59 (https://usu.instructure.com/courses/770960/assignments/4752601)	9pm
Mon Mar 3, 2025	Ethics Bowl Debate Assignment One due by 11:59 (https://usu.instructure.com/courses/770960/assignments/4752610)	9pm
Fri Mar 7, 2025	Reading Assignment Eight (https://usu.instructure.com/courses/770960/assignments/4752621)	9pm
Mon Mar 17, 2025	Ethics Bowl Debate Assignment Two due by 11:59 (https://usu.instructure.com/courses/770960/assignments/4752613)	9pm
Mon Mar 24, 2025	Ethics Bowl Debate Assignment Three due by 11:59 (https://usu.instructure.com/courses/770960/assignments/4752612)	9pm
? THU Apr 17, 2025	Extra Credit (https://usu.instructure.com/courses/770960/assignments/4752616)	9pm

Date	Details	Due
	Extra Credit Three due by https://usu.instructure.com/courses/770960/assignments/4752617)	11:59pm
	Extra Credit Two due by (https://usu.instructure.com/courses/770960/assignments/4752618)	11:59pm
	Ethics Bowl Attendance due by https://usu.instructure.com/courses/770960/assignments/4752609)	11:59pm
Fri Apr 18, 2025	Reading Assignment Nine due by (https://usu.instructure.com/courses/770960/assignments/4752625)	11:59pm
	Reading Assignment Ten (https://usu.instructure.com/courses/770960/assignments/4752632)	11:59pm
Mon Apr 21, 2025	Social Ethics Final due by (https://usu.instructure.com/courses/770960/assignments/4752599)	11:59pm
Wed Apr 23, 2025	Attendance due by (https://usu.instructure.com/courses/770960/assignments/4752608)	11:59pm
	Idea Center Course Evaluation (https://usu.instructure.com/courses/770960/assignments/4752620)	

