

Philosophy 236: Ethics

Instructor: Chris DeMarco

Office: McDivitt Hall, Room 211A (conveniently located inside of Room 211)

Office Hours: 8:00 am – 9:30 am, Monday thru Thursday
1:00 pm – 3:00 pm, Monday and Wednesday
and by appointment

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Texts: Russ Shafer-Landau, *The Fundamentals of Ethics*, 3rd ed.
Russ Shafer-Landau, ed., *The Ethical Life*, 3rd ed.

General Summary

The course will involve examining various issues in ethics. We will begin by considering various accounts of what makes a good life. Following that, we will examine various accounts of how we determine what is right and wrong (“normative ethics”). Finally, we will examine various accounts of what moral judgments actually are, or if they are even possible (“metaethics”). Your grade will be determined on the basis of your ability to understand and make use of these various accounts.

Grading

Exams: We will have three exams, each containing a variety of short answer and mini-essay questions (around a page each). You will be given the essay questions prior to each exam. The exams make up 80% of your grade.

Quizzes: You will be given short quizzes throughout the semester, usually over topics that will be announced in advance. These will be graded on a pass/fail basis, and will make up 20% of your grade. Quizzes can not be made up, but you can drop one-fifth of your quiz scores.

Grading scale:

90% – 4.0	82% – 3.5	74% – 3.0	66% – 2.5
58% – 2.0	50% – 1.5	42% – 1.0	34% – 0.5

Attendance Policy

You are expected to attend class regularly. Quizzes will be given frequently throughout the semester, and they cannot be made up. Tests will be held at the dates shown below, and cannot be made up except in extreme circumstances.

Test Dates:

Test I – Thursday, October 6

Test II – Thursday, November 10

Test III – Thursday, December 22

TENTATIVE READING LIST

Part I: Value Theory

Hedonism

Fundamentals: Chapter 1, “Hedonism” (pp. 23-31)

Ethical Life: Chapter 1, Epicurus, “Letter to Menoecus” (pp. 11-16)

Fundamentals: Chapter 2, “Is Happiness All That Matters?” (pp. 32-43)

Ethical Life: Chapter 3, Robert Nozick, “The Experience Machine” (pp. 27-30)

Desire Theory

Fundamentals: Chapter 3, “Getting What You Want” (pp. 44-50)

Ethical Life: Chapter 4, Chris Heathwood, “Faring Well and Getting What You Want” (pp. 31-42)

Fundamentals: Chapter 4: “Problems for the Desire Theory” (pp. 51-60)

Ethical Life: Chapter 5, Jean Kazez, “Necessities” (pp. 43-54)

Part II: Normative Ethics

Morality and Religion

Fundamentals: Chapter 5, “Morality and Religion” (pp. 63-75)

Ethical Life: Chapter 6, Plato, “Euthyphro” (pp. 57-65)

Natural Law Theory

Fundamentals: Chapter 6, “Natural Law” (pp. 76-90)

Ethical Life: Chapter 7, Philippa Foot, “Natural Goodness” (pp. 66-76)

Egoism

Fundamentals: Chapter 7, “Psychological Egoism” (pp. 91-105)

Fundamentals: Chapter 8, “Ethical Egoism” (pp. 106-118)

Consequentialism

Fundamentals: Chapter 9, “Consequentialism – Its Nature and Attractions” (pp. 119-137)

Fundamentals: Chapter 10, “Consequentialism – Its Difficulties” (pp. 138-158)

Ethical Life: Chapter 8, J.J.C. Smart, “Extreme and Restricted Utilitarianism” (pp. 77-86)

Kantian Ethics

Fundamentals: Chapter 11, “The Kantian Perspective – Fairness and Justice” (pp. 159-172)

Fundamentals: Chapter 12, “The Kantian Perspective – Autonomy and Respect” (pp. 173-191)

Ethical Life: Chapter 9, Immanuel Kant, “The Good Will and the Categorical Imperative” (pp. 87-99)

Social Contract Theory

Fundamentals: Chapter 13, “The Social Contract Tradition – The Theory and Its Attractions” (pp. 192-205)

Ethical Life: Chapter 10, Thomas Hobbes, “Leviathan” (pp. 100-110)

Fundamentals: Chapter 14, “The Social Contract Tradition – Problems and Prospects (pp. 206-218)

Ethical Pluralism

Fundamentals: Chapter 15, “Ethical Pluralism and Absolute Moral Rules” (pp. 219-236)

Fundamentals: Chapter 16, “Ethical Pluralism – *Prima Facie* Duties and Ethical Particularism” (pp. 237-253)

Ethical Life: Chapter 11, W.D. Ross, “What Makes Right Acts Right?” (pp. 111-122)

Virtue Ethics

Fundamentals: Chapter 17, “Virtue Ethics” (pp. 254-273)

Ethical Life: Chapter 12, Aristotle, “Nicomachean Ethics” (pp. 123-134)

Feminist Ethics

Fundamentals: Chapter 18, “Feminist Ethics” (pp. 274-288)

Ethical Life: Chapter 13, Hilde Lindemann, “What Is Feminist Ethics?” (pp. 135-147)

Part III: Metaethics

Ethical Relativism

Fundamentals: Chapter 19, “Ethical Relativism” (pp. 291-307)

Ethical Life: Chapter 14, David Hume, “Moral Distinctions Not Derived from Reason” (pp. 151-160)

Ethical Life: Chapter 17, Harry Gensler, “Cultural Relativism” (pp. 183-191)

Moral Nihilism

Fundamentals: Chapter 20, “Moral Nihilism” (pp. 308-321)

Ethical Life: Chapter 15, A.J. Ayer, “A Critique of Ethics” (pp. 161-173)

Ethical Life: Chapter 16, J.L. Mackie, “The Subjectivity of Values” (pp. 174-182)

Responses to Relativism

Fundamentals: Chapter 21, “Ten Arguments against Moral Objectivity” (pp. 322-341)

Ethical Life: Chapter 18, David Enoch, “Why I Am an Objectivist about Ethics (And Why You Are Too)” (pp. 192-205)