

## Moral and Social Problems

Philosophy 103, MWF, 10-10:50, Eddy 200  
CSU Syllabus - Spring, 2023

### **INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION:**

Instructor: Josh Brekel (He/Him/His)

Office: Eddy 232

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Office Hours: M—11-Noon, W—1-2, F—9-10am. Also available by appointment.

### **REQUIRED TEXTS:**

Lafollette, Hugh. *Ethics in Practice: An Anthology*, 5th Edition.

### **COURSE DESCRIPTION:**

This course aims to analyze relevant moral and social problems in service of introducing students to the academic study of philosophy. The course will begin with an overview of how philosophical methods can be used as tools for clear-thinking. Then, we will consider some popular ethical theories, which will provide students with the tools needed to contemplate the nature of key moral and social problems. Finally, we will apply philosophical methods and ethical theories to various moral issues, with the goal of understanding the nuances of the debates around those moral issues. It is my hope that careful analysis of these issues can provide students with the tools they need to consider the moral issues that arise in their lives.

### **LEARNING OUTCOMES:**

Students will examine the details of various ethical issues, all of which are relevant to their lives (in some way). Furthermore, students will develop an understanding of the nature of the philosophical arguments in favor of various positions on those ethical issues. Study of academic philosophy cultivates other valuable skills as well. During every class session this semester, we will carefully examine philosophical arguments and texts. By engaging in close-reading of complex works, students will hone their ability to retain information and gain understanding via reading. Throughout the semester, students will also practice the craft of argumentative writing. Many of the assignments listed below give students the opportunity to refine their ability to write in a clear, charitable, and persuasive manner.

### **DIVERSITY STATEMENT & RESPECT OF OTHERS:**

To provide the most benefit possible, philosophical inquiry requires diversity in perspectives. In this class, the perspective of each student matters, regardless of the student's race, gender, sexual

orientation, abilities, ancestry, and religious or political views. If something another student says offends you, then please let me know so that we can work together to resolve the issue.

As you can tell by the course name, we will consider contentious issues. Not only is it your right to be passionate about these issues, but it can be philosophically commendable to approach these issues with some degree of intensity. However, philosophical contemplation requires open-mindedness as well as consideration of opinions that you disagree with. Not only will disagreements occur—they are welcome in this class. Please keep your fellow *classmates* in mind and engage in disagreements in a respectful manner. You are welcome to fervently disagree with the opinions of others, but it is not acceptable to disrespect the *people* who hold those opinions. **Remember, Rams Take Care of Rams.**

As your instructor, part of my job is to put pressure on your opinions and help you consider the value in the opinions with which you disagree. By considering ways in which your long-held, passionate opinions (whatever those happen to be) might be mistaken, you will (hopefully) gain more respect for the gravity of the issues, the perspectives of others, as well as a better understanding of the ways to bolster your own views.

### **EXPECTATIONS & ACADEMIC INTEGRITY:**

Academic credits are expected to meet the federal credit hour definition of 2-3 hours of work outside of class for every hour of time spent in class. Other basic class expectations are the following:

- Come to class,
- Carefully read the listed readings *prior* to class,
- Be willing to engage in class discussion, and
- Complete listed assignments by/on the listed due dates.

Academic integrity is taken seriously in this course. It is expected that students will maintain a high standard of academic integrity—cheating will not be tolerated. This course will adhere to the CSU Academic Integrity Policy as found on the Student's Responsibilities page of the CSU General Catalog and in the Student Conduct Code. (2/2/2023 Update: CSU has determined that the use of ChatGPT is considered a violation of the Student Conduct Code. See <https://tilt.colostate.edu/ai-and-the-csu-student-conduct-code/> for more info). At an absolute minimum, violations will result in a grading penalty in this course and a report to the Office of Student Resolution Center. Please talk to the instructor if you have questions about academic integrity.

### **GRADING SCHEME:**

This course will use traditional +/- grades. The graded work is described in the table below.

| Category                          | Description  | Final Grade Allocation |
|-----------------------------------|--|------------------------|
| <b>Skill-Building Assignments</b> | Throughout the semester, there will be <b>5</b> low-stakes assignments designed to build your philosophical skills. These assignments will be given in class and due either at the end of class or at the start of a later class.  | 3% each                |
| <b>Papers</b>                     | You will be required to write <b>2</b> short papers (650-900 words). The paper topics will be given out approximately two weeks before the paper's due date. Paper topics focus on clear and accurate presentation of class readings. Each paper grade will constitute 20% of your final course grade. <b><u>To pass the course, you MUST complete BOTH paper assignments; in other words, failure to submit a paper results in a failing grade.</u></b>                                   | 20% each               |
| <b>Midterm Exam</b>               | There will be one closed-book midterm exam. The exam consists of four short-answer questions and one essay question. The midterm exam will count for 15% of your final grade. <b><u>To pass the course, you MUST take the midterm exam; failure to do so will result in a failing grade.</u></b>   | 15%                    |
| <b>Final Exam</b>                 | There will be a closed-book, cumulative final exam. The exam consists of six short-answer questions and one long-essay question. The final exam will test your understanding of the course material and your ability to connect that material to the larger story of the course. The final exam will count for 25% of your final grade. <b><u>To pass the course, you MUST take the final exam; failure to do so will result in a failing grade.</u></b>                                   | 25%                    |
| <b>Class Participation</b>        | The final 5% of your grade will be based on class participation. Each day, an attendance sheet will be passed around for you to sign. I do not expect or require perfect attendance, but regular attendance is vital to attaining success in the class. Frequent participation will improve this aspect of your final grade. Participation includes (but is not limited to): in-class discussion, office hour attendance, or digital communication about non-administrative course topics. | 5%                     |

**LATE-WORK AND ATTENDANCE POLICIES:**

Late work will be subject to a grade penalty unless:

- You have prior permission (from the instructor) to turn work in late, or

- Extraordinary circumstances prevent you from completing the assignment on time, and you make the instructor aware of the legitimacy of those circumstances.

If University-sanctioned extracurricular/co-curricular activities or religious holidays prevent a student from attending class, then it is the responsibility of that student to notify the instructor prior to the anticipated absence. In the case of religious holidays, notification should come via the CSU Religious Accommodation Request Form. Furthermore, it is the student's responsibility to take the initiative to make-up missed work in a timely fashion. In other words, let the instructor know about any absences or conflicts before they occur so that we can work together to find a solution.

### TENTATIVE SCHEDULE:

| Date    | Class Meeting | Topic                                  | Readings (complete before class!)                   | Assignments Due              |
|---------|---------------|--|---|------------------------------|
| 1/18/23 | 1             | <del>Syllabus Day</del> Snow Day       |   |                              |
| 1/20/23 | 2             | Syllabus Day                           | Syllabus  |                              |
| 1/23/23 | 3             | The Nature (and Danger?) of Philosophy |   |                              |
| 1/25/23 | 4             | Reading Philosophy Workshop            | Jeffrey Kaplan video on reading philosophy (Canvas) |                              |
| 1/27/23 | 5             | Divine Command Theory                  | Plato – <i>Euthyphro</i> (Canvas)                   |                              |
| 1/30/23 | 6             | Moral Relativism                       | Westacott – “Moral Relativism” (Canvas)             | Skill-Building Assignment #1 |
| 2/1/23  | 7             | Consequentialism                       | Shaw – “Consequentialism” (#1)                      |                              |
| 2/3/23  | 8             | Consequentialism (cont.)               | Bentham – “The Principle of Utility” (Canvas)       |                              |
| 2/6/23  | 9             | Deontology                             | McNaughton and Rawling – “Deontology” (#2)          |                              |

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| 2/8/23  | 10 | Deontology (cont.)<br>Writing, ChatGPT, College | Kant – “Groundwork”<br>No New Reading  |                                 |
| 2/10/23 | 11 | Writing Workshop 1                              | Lafollette – “Writing a<br>Philosophy Paper”   | Skill-Building<br>Assignment #2 |
| 2/13/23 | 12 | Rights Theories                                 | Rainbolt – “Rights”<br>(#3)  |                                 |
| 2/15/23 | 13 | Virtue Theory                                   | Hursthouse – “Virtue<br>Theory” (#4)   |                                 |
| 2/17/23 | 14 | Free Speech                                     | Arthur – “Sticks and<br>Stones” (#35)  |                                 |
| 2/20/23 | 15 | Free Speech (cont.)                             | No New Reading   | Paper #1                        |
| 2/22/23 | 16 | Free Speech (cont.)                             | Altman – “Speech<br>Codes and Expressive<br>Harm” (#36)  |                                 |
| 2/24/23 | 17 | Racism and Policing                             | Moody-Adams –<br>“Racism as an Ethical<br>Issue” (#37)   |                                 |
| 2/27/23 | 18 | Racism and Policing (cont.)                     | Kleinig – “To Protect<br>and Serve: What is<br>Wrong with the<br>Policing of Minorities<br>in the US?” (#54) |                                 |
| 3/1/23  | 19 | Death Penalty                                   | Pojman – “In Defense<br>of the Death Penalty”<br>(#51)   | Skill-Building<br>Assignment #3 |
| 3/3/23  | 20 | Death Penalty (cont.)                           | Reiman – “Against the<br>Death Penalty” (#52)  |                                 |
| 3/6/23  | 21 | Theories of Justice                             | Rawls – “A Theory of<br>Justice” (#55)   |                                 |
| 3/8/23  | 22 | Theories of Justice (cont.)                     | Nozick – “The<br>Entitlement Theory of<br>Justice” (#56)   |                                 |

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| 3/10/23   | 23 | Midterm Exam                      |   | Midterm Exam                    |
| 3/11/23-3/19/23 – Have a Morally Virtuous Spring Break! |    |                                   |   |                                 |
| 3/20/23   | 24 | Euthanasia and Suicide            | Beauchamp –<br>“Justifying Physician-<br>Assisted Deaths” (#5)                            |                                 |
| 3/22/23   | 25 | Euthanasia and Suicide<br>(cont.) | Velleman – “Against<br>the Right to Die” (#6)   |                                 |
| 3/24/23   | 26 | Euthanasia and Suicide<br>(cont.) | Hardwig – “Dying at<br>the Right Time:<br>Reflections on<br>(Un)assisted Suicide”<br>(#8) |                                 |
| 3/27/23   | 27 | Euthanasia and Suicide<br>(cont.) |   |                                 |
| 3/29/23   | 28 | Abortion                          | Thomson – “A<br>Defense of Abortion”<br>(#10)   |                                 |
| 3/31/23   | 29 | Abortion (cont.)                  | Warren – “On the<br>Moral and Legal Status<br>of Abortion” (#11)                          |                                 |
| 4/3/23  | 30 | Abortion (cont.)                  | Marquis – “An<br>Argument that<br>Abortion is Wrong”<br>(#12)                             |                                 |
| 4/5/23  | 31 | Abortion (cont.)                  | Little – “The Moral<br>Permissibility of<br>Abortion” (#13)                               |                                 |
| 4/7/23  | 32 | Abortion (cont.)                  |   |                                 |
| 4/10/23   | 33 | Writing Workshop 2                |   | Skill-Building<br>Assignment #4 |
| 4/12/23   | 34 | Animal Rights                     | Regan – “The Case for<br>Animal Rights” (#17)   |                                 |

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| 4/14/23 | 35 | Animal Rights (cont.)        | Singer – “All Animals Are Equal” (#15)  |              |
| 4/17/23 | 36 | Animal Rights (cont.)        | Fox – “The Vegetarian Imperative” (#18)   |              |
| 4/19/23 | 37 | Environmental Ethics         | Rolston – “Animal Welfare and Environmental Ethics” (Canvas)  | Paper #2 Due |
| 4/21/23 | 38 | Environmental Ethics (cont.) | Sandler – “The Value of Nature” (#23)   |              |
| 4/24/23 | 39 | Environmental Ethics (cont.) | Gardiner – “A Perfect Moral Storm: Climate Change, Intergenerational Ethics, and the Problem of Moral Corruption” (#26) |              |
| 4/26/23 | 40 | Poverty                      | Singer – “Famine, Affluence, and Morality” (#61)  |              |
| 4/28/23 | 41 | Poverty (cont.)              | Rolston – “Feeding People Versus Saving Nature” (Canvas)  |              |
| 5/1/23  | 42 | Poverty (cont.)              | Pogge – “Eradicating Systemic Poverty: Brief for a Global Resources Dividend” (#63)                                     |              |
| 5/3/23  | 43 | Catch-up Day / Review        | <del>Cohen – “A Bleeding Heart Libertarian View of Inequality” (#58)</del><br>No new reading                            |              |

|         |    |  |     |                                 |
|---------|----|--|-----|---------------------------------|
| 5/5/23  | 44 | Overview of the Course:<br>What's the point? | TBA | Skill-Building<br>Assignment #5 |
| 5/11/23 | 45 | Final Exam (11:50-1:50)                      |     | Final Exam                      |

**NOTE:**

*COURSE CONTENT NOTE: CSU's Discrimination, Harassment, Sexual Harassment, Sexual Misconduct, Domestic Violence, Dating Violence, Stalking, and Retaliation policy designates faculty and employees of the University as "Responsible Employees." This designation is consistent with federal law and guidance, and requires faculty to report information regarding students who may have experienced any form of sexual harassment, sexual misconduct, relationship violence, stalking or retaliation. This includes information shared with faculty in person, electronic communications or in class assignments. As "Responsible Employees," faculty may refer students to campus resources (see below), together with informing the Office of Support and Safety Assessment to help ensure student safety and welfare. Information regarding sexual harassment, sexual misconduct, relationship violence, stalking and retaliation is treated with the greatest degree of confidentiality possible while also ensuring student and campus safety.*

*Any student who may be the victim of sexual harassment, sexual misconduct, relationship violence, stalking or retaliation is encouraged to report to CSU through one or more of the following resources:*

- Emergency Response 911
- Deputy Title IX Coordinator/Office of Support and Safety Assessment (970) 491-1350
- Colorado State University Police Department (non-emergency) (970) 491-6425

*For counseling support and assistance, please see the CSU Health Network, which includes a variety of counseling services that can be accessed at: <http://www.health.colostate.edu/>. And, the Sexual Assault Victim Assistance Team is a confidential student resource that does not have a reporting requirement and that can be of great help to students who have experienced sexual assault. The web address is <https://wgac.colostate.edu/support/sexual-assault/>.*

**GT-PATHWAYS INFORMATION:**

The Colorado Commission on Higher Education has approved PHIL103 for inclusion in the Guaranteed Transfer (GT) Pathways program in the GT-AH3 category. For transferring students, successful completion with a minimum C- grade guarantees transfer and application of credit in this GT Pathways category. For more information on the GT Pathways program, go to <http://higher.ed.colorado.gov/academics/transfers/gtpathways/curriculum.html>.

To this end, it is expected that students will be able to:

**Respond analytically and critically to ways of thinking, by addressing one or more of the following:**

1. Logic
2. Ethics



3. The different questions dealt with by leading philosophers and/or theologians and their positions on those questions.

**And**

**Explain an Issue**

- a. Use information to describe a problem or issue and/or articulate a question related to the topic.

**Utilize Context**

1. Evaluate the relevance of context when presenting a position.
2. Identify the assumptions.
3. Analyze one's own and others' assumptions.

**Understand Implications and Make Conclusions**

- a. Establish a conclusion that is tied to the range of information presented.

**COVID-19 INFORMATION**

**All students are directed to report any COVID-19 symptoms to the university immediately, as well as exposures or positive test results from a medical provider or home test.**

- If you suspect you have symptoms, or if you know you have been exposed to a positive person or have tested positive for COVID (even with a home test), you are directed to fill out the [COVID Reporter](#).
- If you know or believe you have been exposed, including living with someone known to be COVID positive, or are symptomatic, it is important for the health of yourself and others that you complete the online [COVID Reporter](#). Do not ask your instructor to report for you.
- If you do not have internet access to fill out the online [COVID-19 Reporter](#), please call (970) 491-4600.
- You may also report concerns in your academic or living spaces regarding COVID exposures through the [COVID Reporter](#). You will not be penalized in any way for reporting.
- When you complete the [COVID Reporter](#) for any reason, the CSU Public Health Office is notified. Students who report symptoms or a positive antigen test through the [COVID Reporter](#) may be directed to get a PCR test through the CSU Health Network's medical services for students.

For the latest information about the university's COVID resources and information, please visit the CSU COVID-19 site (<https://covid.colostate.edu/>).