

## **Moral & Social Problems**

### **Philosophy 103 – CSU Syllabus – Spring 2024**

#### **INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION:**

Instructor: Josh Brekel (He/Him/His)

Office: Eddy 232

Email: josh.brekel@colostate.edu

Office Hours: Mondays—Noon-1pm, Wednesdays—9:00-9:50am, and by appointment.

#### **GRADUATE TEACHING ASSISTANT (GTA) INFORMATION:**

Instructor: Caleb Hall (He/Him/His)

Office: Eddy 229

Email: Caleb.Hall@colostate.edu

Office Hours: Tuesdays & Thursdays—2-3pm, and by appointment.

#### **SECTION INFORMATION:**

Section 008: MWF, 10:00-10:50am, Military Sciences Room 200

Section 011: MWF, 11:00-11:50am, Clark C358

#### **REQUIRED TEXTS:**

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

#### **COURSE DESCRIPTION:**

This course aims to analyze relevant moral and social problems in the 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 issues. Finally, we will apply philosophical methods and ethical theories to various moral and social problems, with the goal of understanding the nuances of the debates around those moral and social problems. 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.

#### **DIVERSITY & 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. Not only is it your right to be passionate about the issues considered in this course, it can be philosophically commendable to approach these issues with some degree of intensity. However, philosophical contemplation requires open-mindedness. 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 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 support your own views.

Disagreements are welcome in this class, but always 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 **never** acceptable to disrespect the *people* who hold those opinions. Remember: **RAMS TAKE CARE OF RAMS**. If something I or another student says offends you, then let me know so that we can work together to resolve the issue.

### 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 course assignments give students the opportunity to refine their ability to write in a clear, charitable, and persuasive manner. The three overarching goals of this course are to:

1. Improve student reading comprehension,
2. Improve student argumentative writing,
3. Demonstrate the value provided by close study of philosophy and philosophical ethics.

### EXPECTATIONS:

Academic credits are expected to meet the federal credit hour definition of **2-3 hours** (minimum) of work outside of class **for every hour** of time spent in class. For a 3-credit course such as this, that means that you should expect to be spending a minimum of **5-7 hours per week** working on this course (outside of regular class time). To get the most out of that time, meet these class expectations:

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

### COURSE ASSIGNMENTS:

The course assignments are described in the table below.

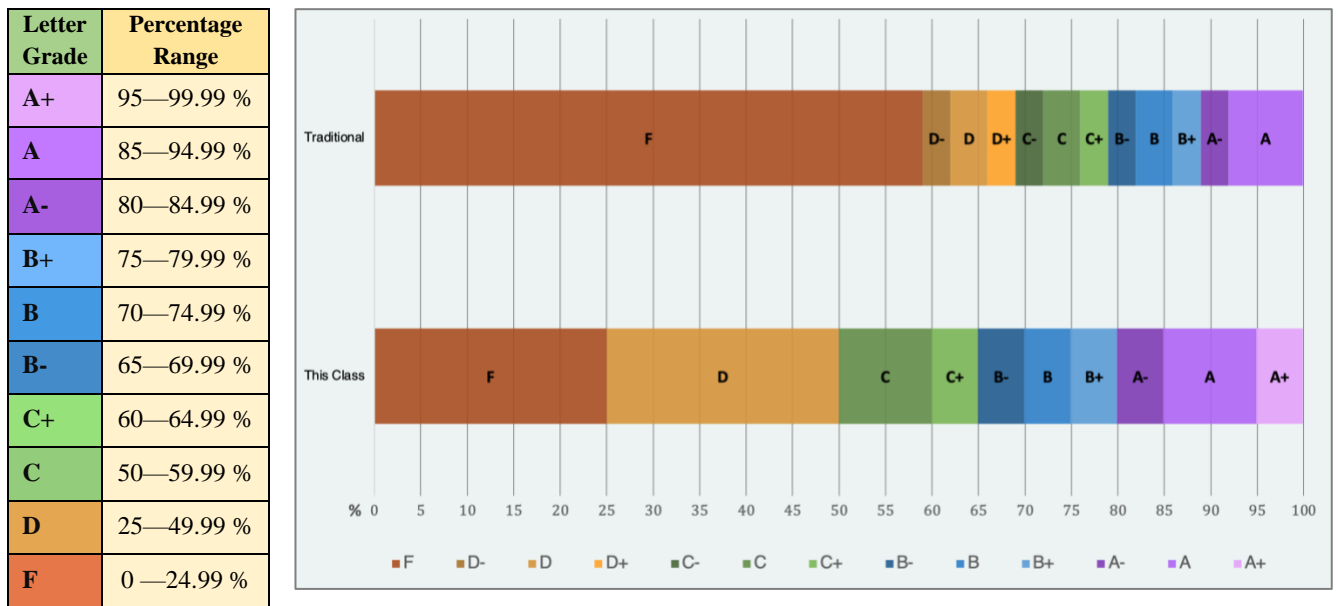
Category	Description	Overall Course Grade Allocation
<b>Skill-Building Assignments</b>	5 low-stakes assignments designed to build philosophical skills. Each skill-building assignment (SBA) is worth 4% of the overall course grade.	<b>20%</b>
<b>Reading Questions</b>	<p>Prior to each class with an assigned reading, students are expected to complete a Reading Question Assignment (see Canvas for detailed RQA instructions). Reading Question Assignments will be <b>collected 15 times</b> randomly throughout the semester.</p> <p>Individual Reading Question Assignment Grading Criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ⊗ : No submission.</li> <li>• ✓ : Inadequate submission indicating a lack of effort or failure to engage with and/or complete the reading.</li> <li>• ✓✓ : Satisfactory submission demonstrating thoughtful engagement with the material.</li> </ul> <p>Semester-long RQA performance is assessed out of 150 points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 0-14 ✓s: 0 points (Non-existent engagement)</li> <li>• 15-16 ✓s: 25 points (Poor reading engagement)</li> <li>• 17-19 ✓s: 50 points (Minimal reading engagement)</li> <li>• 20-23 ✓s: 100 points (Satisfactory engagement)</li> <li>• 24+ ✓s: 150 points (High-quality engagement)</li> </ul> <p>Reading Question Assignments are an integral part of your overall course grade. <i>Be prepared for the ROAs to be collected at the beginning of any given class day.</i></p>	<b>15%</b>
<b>Papers</b>	<p>2 short papers. Each paper is worth 15% of the overall course grade.</p> <p>The paper topics will be given out approximately two weeks before the paper's due date. Papers focus on clear and accurate presentation of class readings and are graded by assigning a <b><i>letter grade</i></b> that corresponds to the quality of the submitted work.</p>	<b>30%</b>
<b>Exams</b>	<p>One closed-book <b>midterm exam</b> which will count for 15% of the overall course grade. One closed-book, cumulative <b>final exam</b>, which will count for 20% of the overall course grade.</p> <p>There is a chance that there will be small extra credit opportunities on the exam(s). All extra credit opportunities are up to the instructor's discretion.</p>	<b>35%</b>

With the exception of the randomly assigned Reading Question Assignments, all other assignment due dates are provided in the table below:

Assignment	Due Date
SBA #1 (Syllabus Quiz)	1/22/24
SBA #2 (Paper Writing)	2/7/24
Paper #1	2/16/24
SBA #3 (Exam Studying)	2/28/24
Midterm Exam	3/6/24
SBA #4 (Paper Writing)	4/8/24
Paper #2	4/15/24
SBA #5 (Semester Reflection)	4/29/24
Final Exam	See CSU Final Exam Schedule

**GRADING SCHEME:**

This course uses letter grades corresponding to the grading scheme specified in the table to the bottom left. For the sake of clarity, I also created a graphic that contrasts this course’s grading scale with the grading scale you are (probably) most familiar with. The grading scale that you are familiar with is titled “Traditional” and this course’s grading scale is titled “This Class” in the chart below.



For the final overall course grade, the instructor will calculate each student’s average letter grade weighted by the assignments listed in Course Assignments section. Then, the instructor will report the nearest allowed letter grade to the CSU Registrar’s Office. Note that the University only records letter grades for use on Transcripts and GPA calculations. For that reason, receiving a 67.5% in this course (a B-) is no different (from the perspective of the University) from receiving an 81% (a B-) in a course that uses a “Traditional” grading scale. You should not infer your letter grade from the percentage you see in Canvas—doing so will mislead you. Canvas will also display letter grade based on the grading scale above. Rely on the letter grade to determine your standing in the course.

Note that most philosophical work is best graded using qualitative assessment of the work. For that reason, percentages are not utilized while grading papers—instead, the percentages are there to provide a mechanism for translating a qualitative assessment of work (i.e., the letter grade) into a quantitative assessment of work (i.e., the percentage grade). Please do not email us asking why we took off X number of “points” on a paper. Unfortunately, Canvas requires instructors to use points/percentages to some degree, but note that we typically assess work by assigning letter grades. For reference, an A paper can typically be summarized by saying, “This is an excellent paper overall, but I could nitpick it to find ways to improve it,” while a B- paper is an “average” paper.

### **LATE-WORK POLICY:**

Except for Reading Question Assignments, all late work will be subject to penalty of **5% per day late** for 14 days after the assignment is due. After **14 calendar days**, late assignments will no longer be accepted. Reading Question Assignments will not be accepted late. No assignments will be accepted after the Wednesday of Finals Week.

**Assignment extensions** will not be granted unless: The student provides official documentation (from the university or a legitimate medical institution) that sufficiently explains why the assignment must be turned in late. Note that pictures of at-home COVID-19 (or similar) diagnostic tests do not count as official documentation. Extensions can be granted after the assignment due date (within reason), provided that the student offers sufficient justification for the lack of prior notice. 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. 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.

There are **no exceptions** to these policies. This course uses a generous grading scheme and late policy in recognition of the difficulty of balancing college with other aspects of life. However, success in college requires a certain level of dedication and commitment from students. For those reasons, official documentation is the only way to avoid being penalized for late work. It is the student’s responsibility to take the initiative to make-up missed work in a timely fashion.

### **ACADEMIC INTEGRITY:**

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. Unless written permission is given by the instructor, the use of

ChatGPT, Google Bard, or other Large-Language Models (LLM) is strictly prohibited and will be treated as academic misconduct. At an absolute minimum, instances of academic misconduct will result in a substantial grade penalty on the assignment. Often, academic misconduct is grounds for a failing grade in the course and a report to the Student Resolution Center. Talk to the instructor if you have questions about academic integrity.

### ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE & PAPER ASSIGNMENTS:

For **paper assignments**, a genuine honor pledge must be included in the student's submission. The honor pledge must also specify whether generative artificial intelligence (AI; i.e., large-language models such as ChatGPT) were used in the process of writing the paper.

- If a student chooses to use AI on their paper (not advised), then the student must obtain **approval** from the instructor **in writing** before submitting the paper. The student must also provide all AI conversations to demonstrate that they used the tool in the proper manner.
- If a student chooses not to use AI on their paper (strongly advised), then the student should specify in their honor pledge that AI was not used in the writing process.

If a student's paper does not include an honor pledge, then **the paper will not be graded until one is provided**. If a student's honor pledge is provided late, then that student's paper is considered late and thus will receive the late penalty specified in the syllabus. If a student's honor pledge (on a paper assignment) fails to mention AI, then that paper submission will receive a full letter grade penalty. If a student used AI and did not follow the steps mentioned above, then they will receive a failing grade in the course. The instructor reserves the right to use oral exams to test whether students used AI.

### ATTENDANCE POLICY:

Attendance is **expected** for this class. You must attend class to submit any Reading Question Assignments or to take in-class exams. **If you miss class:** do not email the instructor or GTA. If you are worried about what you missed, then please contact a classmate for assistance.

### TENTATIVE SCHEDULE:

This is an extremely tentative plan for the semester. As the semester proceeds, it may become necessary to check Canvas for updates to the reading schedule. If you have questions about the reading schedule, then ask those questions in class, office hours, or via email. It is the student's responsibility to ensure that they are staying up-to-date with the course readings and assignments.

Week	Date	Class Meeting	Topic	Readings
1	1/17/24	1	Syllabus	Syllabus!
	1/19/24	2	Moral & Social Problem: Trolley Problem	Schur, "Introduction" from <i>How to Be Perfect</i> (Canvas)

## Brekel Syllabus 7

2	1/22/24	3	Moral & Social Problem: The Nature (and Danger?) of Philosophy	Vaughn, <i>Deciding What's Right</i> , pp. 1-9 (Canvas)
	1/24/24	4	Moral & Social Problem: Lying to catch a criminal?	Simon, selection from <i>Homicide: Life on the Killing Streets</i> (Canvas)
	1/26/24	5	Tools of the Trade: Logic and Reading	Kaplan, "How to Read Philosophy" (Video, Canvas)
3	1/29/24	6	Tools of the Trade: Logic and Reading	Vaughn, <i>Deciding What's Right</i> , pp. 35-52 (Canvas)
	1/31/24	7	Threat 1: Moral Skepticism	Morrow, <i>Moral Reasoning</i> , "Chapter 9: Skepticism, Subjectivism, and Relativism" (Canvas)
	2/2/24	8	Threat 1: Moral Skepticism	Removed—Reread Morrow
4	2/5/24	9	Tools of the Trade: Writing	
	2/7/24	10	Threat 2: Religion & Morality	Plato, <i>Euthyphro</i> (Canvas)
	2/9/24	11	Threat 2: Religion & Morality	Various Selections on Divine Command Theory (Canvas)
5	2/12/24	12	Tools of the Trade: Consequentialism	Shaw, "Consequentialism" (A#1)
	2/14/24	13	Tools of the Trade: Consequentialism	Schur, <i>How to Be Perfect</i> , pages 48-51 (Canvas)
	2/16/24	14	Tools of the Trade: Deontology	McNaughton and Rawling, "Deontology" (A#2)
6	2/19/24	15	Tools of the Trade: Deontology	Shafer-Landau, <i>The Fundamentals of Ethics</i> , pp. 159-169 & 173-180
	2/21/24	16	Tools of the Trade: Virtue Ethics	Hursthouse, "Virtue Theory" (A#4)
	2/23/24	17	Tools of the Trade: Theory Review	
7	2/26/24	18	Moral & Social Problem: Death Penalty	Pojman, "In Defense of the Death Penalty" (A#51)
	2/28/24	19	Moral & Social Problem: Death Penalty	Reiman, "Against the Death Penalty" (A#52)
	3/1/24	20	Moral & Social Problem: Death Penalty	Metz, "African Values and Capital Punishment" (Canvas)
8	3/4/24	21	Review	
	3/6/24	22	Midterm	
	3/8/24	23	Moral & Social Problem: Euthanasia	Beauchamp, "Justifying Physician-Assisted Deaths" (A#5)
9	3/11/24		Spring Break	
	3/13/24		Spring Break	
	3/15/24		Spring Break	
10	3/18/24	24	Class Cancelled	Class Cancelled
	3/20/24	25	Moral & Social Problem: Euthanasia	Velleman, "Against the Right to Die" (A#6)
	3/22/24	26	Moral & Social Problem: Euthanasia	Hardwig, "Dying at the Right Time: Reflections on (Un)assisted Suicide" (A#8)
11	3/25/24	27	Moral & Social Problem: Euthanasia	Ackerman, "For Now I Have My Death: 'The Duty to Die' Versus the Duty to Help the Ill Stay Alive" (A#9)
	3/27/24	28	Moral & Social Problem: Euthanasia	



	3/29/24	29	Tools of the Trade: Writing	
12	4/1/24	30	Moral & Social Problem: Abortion	Thomson, "A Defense of Abortion" (A#10)
	4/3/24	31	Moral & Social Problem: Abortion	Marquis, "An Argument that Abortion is Wrong" (A#12)
	4/5/24	32	Moral & Social Problem: Abortion	Little, "The Moral Permissibility of Abortion" (A#13)
13	4/8/24	33	Moral & Social Problem: Abortion	Hursthouse, "Virtue Theory and Abortion" (A#14)
	4/10/24	34	Moral & Social Problem: Abortion	
	4/12/24	35	Moral & Social Problem: Animals	Singer, "All Animals Are Equal" (A#15)
14	4/15/24	36	Moral & Social Problem: Animals	Regan, "The Case for Animal Rights" (A#17)
	4/17/24	37	Moral & Social Problem: Animals	Rolston, "Animal Welfare and Environmental Ethics" (Canvas)
	4/19/24	38	Moral & Social Problem: Environment	Sandler, "The Value of Nature" (A#23)
15	4/22/24	39	Moral & Social Problem: Environment	Gardiner, "A Perfect Moral Storm: Climate Change, Intergenerational Ethics, and the Problem of Moral Corruption" (A#26)
	4/24/24	40	Moral & Social Problem: Environment	
	4/26/24	41	Moral & Social Problem: Poverty	Singer, "Famine, Affluence, and Morality" (A#61)
16	4/29/24	42	Moral & Social Problem: Poverty	Woollard, "Saving Strangers: What Does Morality Demand?" (Canvas)
	5/1/24	43	Moral & Social Problem: Poverty	
	5/3/24	44	Review	
17	Finals Week		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://highered.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.