

**PHIL 181: Ethics**

**John Felice Rome Center**

Spring 2022

Tuesdays & Thursdays | 5:15-6:30pm

Dr. Moreno Rocchi

Email: [mroccoli1@luc.edu](mailto:mroccoli1@luc.edu)

Office Hours: Tue./Thu., 2:00-3:00pm (by appointment)

**Course Description**

The aim of this course is to lead students toward an autonomous judgment of fundamental issues related to the human society and ethical decision making, with special reference to happiness, justice, fairness, adherence to norms and civil disobedience, rules and duties, cultural and social influences. This will provide students with the basic critical skills for recognizing different ethical approaches and for judging their feasibility and correctness.

The course is divided into three parts.

We will first familiarize ourselves with the importance of ethics in everyday life by discussing a number of moral dilemmas. We will then clarify our field by analyzing moral relativism, the relation between ethics and religion, and the relation between ethics and legality.

In the second and largest part of the course we will compare two different theories on the universal criterion for moral judgment: Kant's theory and utilitarianism.

Both of these theories will be applied to contemporary issues. To make an example, we will deal with Kant's argument for the "right to universal hospitality" and then analyze the way in which Benhabib recently modified it in light of the complexities of our globalized world.

Finally, the criticism of such universalistic approaches by feminist ethics will allow us to analyze the so-called "virtue ethics", a recent renewal of ancient Greek ethics.

We will occasionally return to the original dilemmas as we move through these ethical frameworks.

**Learning Outcomes**

On completion of the course students should be able to demonstrate an understanding of the major philosophical questions in the area of ethics with attention to the historical and conceptual development of these questions, and be able to articulate some of the major problems and responses central to this area of philosophy.

This course should also enable students to:

- (a) appreciate the profound issues involved in social relations, such as dignity and diversity;
- (b) engage in dialogue with great philosophers, paying close attention to their meaning, their reasons, their concerns, their vision;
- (c) insert their own reflections into the dialogue;
- (d) examine the way different philosophically defended views challenge each other, and how they also challenge unexamined presuppositions in our own culture;
- (e) recognize the need for ethical judgment;
- (f) distinguish alternative courses of action;
- (g) articulate the relevant ethical values, principles, rights, and virtues from the point of view of each stakeholder;
- (h) formulate and support an ethical judgment;
- (i) recognize the premises for a given conclusion or viewpoint, identify unexamined presuppositions, appreciate astute insights, expose vulnerabilities in established positions;
- (j) compare and contrast ethical theories and evaluate them in terms of strengths and weaknesses;
- (k) differentiate among historical and contemporary perspectives about the world with a view to fashioning a humane and just world;

- (l) understand the relationships among cultural, economic, political, and social forces, and their impact on human behavior;
- (m) assess how moral principles are conditioned by one's involvement in (and responsibilities toward) the socially organized community in which one lives.

### **Required Texts/Materials**

James Rachels, *The Elements of Moral Philosophy*, McGraw-Hill, 9<sup>th</sup> edition (but 8<sup>th</sup> or 7<sup>th</sup> is fine too);  
Immanuel Kant, *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals* (available online);  
John Stuart Mill, *Utilitarianism* (available online);  
Assigned readings posted on Sakai.

### **Attendance Policy**

In accordance with the JFRC mission to promote a higher level of academic rigor, all courses adhere to the following absence policy. Prompt attendance, preparation and active participation in course discussions are expected from every student.

- For all classes meeting once a week, students cannot incur more than one unexcused absence.
- For all classes meeting twice a week, students cannot incur more than two unexcused absences.
- For all classes meeting three times a week, students cannot incur more than two unexcused absences.

This course meets twice a week, thus a total of two unexcused absences will be permitted. **Unexcused absences beyond these will result in 1% lowering of the final course grade, for every absence after the “approved limit”.**

If, however, you are ill, do not attend class (your absence will be excused).

### **Assessment Components**

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|--------------------------------------|------|
| • Midterm Exam (in-class test)       | 35 % |
| • Final Exam (take-home paper)       | 40 % |
| • Presentation(s) and Participation* | 25 % |

\*Students will be required to give one or two presentations. They will also occasionally be required to write short reflections on topics discussed in class.

### **Grading**

94-100: A  
90-93: A-  
87-89: B+  
84-86: B  
80-83: B-  
77-79: C+  
74-76: C  
70-73: C-  
67-69: D+  
60-66: D  
59 or lower: F

### **Academic Honesty**

Plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty are unacceptable at the JFRC and will be dealt with in accordance with Loyola University Chicago's guidelines. Please familiarize yourself with Loyola's standards here: [http://www.luc.edu/academics/catalog/undergrad/reg\\_academicintegrity.shtml](http://www.luc.edu/academics/catalog/undergrad/reg_academicintegrity.shtml).

You are responsible to comply with the LUC Student Handbook.

### **Late or Missed Assignments**

Late or missed assignments will not be accepted for grading without the authorization of the instructor.

### **Accessibility Accommodations**

Students registered with the Student Accessibility Center requiring academic accommodations should contact the Office of the Dean at the John Felice Rome Center, the first week of classes.

### **Course Schedule**

<u>Date</u>	<u>Topic</u>	<u>Assignment</u>
Tue. 01/18	Introduction to the course	
Thu. 01/20	Some moral dilemmas	Rachels, Ch. 1
Tue. 01/25	The challenge of moral relativism	Rachels, Ch. 2
Thu. 01/27	Ethics and religion	Rachels, Ch. 4
Tue. 02/01	Ethics and civil law	Rachels, Ch. 6.1, 6.3, 6.4, 6.5; M.L. King, «Letter from Birmingham Jail»
Thu. 02/03	Introduction to Kant	
Tue. 02/08	Kant	<i>Groundwork</i> , Section 1 (part I)
Thu. 02/10	Kant	<i>Groundwork</i> , Section 1 (part II)
Tue. 02/15	Kant	<i>Groundwork</i> , Section 2 (part I)
Thu. 02/17	Kant	<i>Groundwork</i> , Section 2 (part II)
Tue. 02/22	Kantian applications 1	O'Neill, «Between Consenting Adults»
Thu. 02/24	Review	
<b>Tue. 03/01</b>	<b>Midterm Exam</b>	
Thu. 03/03	Kantian applications 2	Jonas, <i>The Imperative of Responsibility</i> (excerpts)



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Date	Topic	Assignment
<b>SPRING BREAK</b>		
Tue. 03/15	Kantian applications 3	Kant, <i>Perpetual Peace</i> (excerpt); Benhabib, <i>The Rights of Others</i> (excerpt)
Thu. 03/17	On-site class on Migration	
<u>Fri. 03/18</u>	Introduction to Utilitarianism	Rachels, Ch. 7; Mill, <i>Utilitarianism</i> , Ch. 1
Tue. 03/22	Mill	<i>Utilitarianism</i> , Ch. 2
Thu. 03/24	Mill	<i>Utilitarianism</i> , Ch. 3-4
Tue. 03/29	Mill: Wrap-up	
Thu. 03/31	Movie day	
Tue. 04/05	The shortcomings of Utilitarianism I	Rachels, Ch. 8 + 9.1
Thu. 04/07	The shortcomings of Utilitarianism II	Walzer, «Political Action: The Problem of Dirty Hands»
Tue. 04/12	The shortcomings of Utilitarianism III	Singer, «Famine, Affluence and Morality»
Tue. 04/19	An alternative view on famine	Nussbaum, <i>Creating Capabilities</i> , Ch. 2
Thu. 04/21	Universalistic ethics vs. ethics of Care	Rachels, Ch. 11; Elshtain, «Antigone's Daughters»
Tue. 04/26	Virtue ethics	Rachels, Ch. 12
Thu. 04/28	Class debates	
Tue. 05/03	Study day	
<b>Thu. 05/05</b>	<b>Final exam</b> (= take-home paper deadline)	