

# PHL3090: MORAL PHILOSOPHY

## (Fall 2019)



**Class meetings** Mondays & Wednesdays 2:30-3:45, building 5, room 124

**Instructor** Michael Cholbi

**E-mail** [mjcholbi@cpc.edu](mailto:mjcholbi@cpc.edu) **Phone** 909.869.3845 (*Never call!*)

**Office hours, fall 2019** Monday 4:00-5:00 and Wednesday 12:30-2:00

(building 1, room 319B – down the small corridor opposite the Philosophy Department office)

*Please do not hesitate to contact me to set up an appointment outside of these hours if necessary.*

### Description

Moral thought and judgment are ubiquitous parts of life. All of us accept, assert, and interrogate moral claims. These include claims about the moral qualities of actions (that they are right or wrong, say), policies or principles (that they are fair or unfair, etc.), and persons (that they acted well or badly or that they have good or bad moral character). Moral philosophy is the intellectual endeavor in which we attempt to systematize, analyze, and rationally evaluate these claims. For example, what (if anything) explains what makes various actions wrong? Can morality's requirements be captured by a rule (or set of rules)? What can morality legitimately ask of us? What is the relationship between moral character and right action?

Such questions are the province of *moral theory*, and it is through the study of three prominent traditions in moral theory that our inquiry in this course will be conducted. These traditions include consequentialism (utilitarianism more specifically), Kantianism, and virtue theory. We will elaborate and critically analyze these theories in light of both moral theory's theoretical aim (to identify the underlying features of acts, persons, and values that make them right or wrong, good or bad, etc.) and its practical aim (to identify a procedure that can properly guide moral deliberation and decision making). We will also strive to identify each theory's main advantages, the objections commonly leveled at them, as well as some characteristic replies to these objections provided by the theories' defenders.

## Course and program learning objectives

By the conclusion of the course, students should be able to

1. Explain the goals and motivations of philosophical theorizing about morality
2. Articulate the principal features of three prominent philosophical theories of morality
3. Critically analyze these theories, identifying their strengths and weaknesses in meeting the theoretical and practical aims of moral theories
4. Describe how these theories can be applied to evaluate the morality of actions, policies, or individuals

The Philosophy Department has as its learning outcomes for its programs that they will improve students' abilities in the following areas:

- [1] **Skills in Reasoning:** Ability to identify theses in other's work and one's own; identify and evaluate reasons relevant to theses; identify and evaluate background concepts, distinction, and assumptions; identify and evaluate objections; charity in interpreting others' positions.
- [2] **Skills in Written and Oral Presentation:** Clarity in overall organization of ideas; clarity at sentence/paragraph level of expression.
- [3] **Skills in Research:** Ability to distinguish between reliable and unreliable sources; ability to work with major research resources in philosophy; ability to work with library resources.
- [4] **Breadth of Content:** Familiarity with development of historical Western tradition; familiarity with various branches of philosophical investigation; familiarity with critical analyses of Western tradition; familiarity with variety of philosophical traditions or approaches.
- [5] **Depth of Content:** Ability to make connections across branches of philosophical investigation; proficiency with major primary sources; ability to produce creative work.

## Curricular role and prerequisites

- PHL3090 is an upper-division course required of all Philosophy majors at the university. It serves as a prerequisite for PHL4090, which is required of all students in the Law and Society option.
- In order to enroll to PHL3090, students must have completed at least one of PHL2010, PHL2030, PHL2040, or an equivalent.
- Non-majors are of course welcome to enroll. However, the course will be taught assuming students have some background in the main techniques and problems of philosophy. This is not an introductory philosophy course, and as such, course resources will not be specifically allocated to providing the requisite background. Nevertheless, I encourage students who are concerned about their readiness for this course to discuss this matter with me as soon as possible.

## Expectations of You (and Your Instructor)

*Reading* Philosophical readings are dense and difficult. I *assume* that you will arrive at each class meeting having made a sustained, sincere, and serious attempt to read and comprehend fully the assigned material. This is what is often called a "good faith effort." *I do not assume that you do comprehend that material fully* — in fact, I assume that you will have questions about the assigned material, questions that I am happy to address during class, by e-mail, or face to face. My expectation is that once we have the opportunity to discuss the assigned readings in class you will return to re-read materials with which you struggled. I encourage you to consult the 'Tips on reading philosophy' available in the 'Course Readings' area of Blackboard for further guidance.

*Workload* To give you a sense of the workload associated with this course: Recent research indicates that students most effectively develop the skills of critical thinking, logical reasoning, etc., in courses that require at least 30 pages of reading per week and 15 pages (about 6,000 words) of writing per term. This course will reflect such expectations. Furthermore, research indicates full-time students (those who spend 12 or more hours per week in the classroom) are maximally successful when they spend about 2 hours preparing and studying for every one hour they spend in the classroom. That means that for this class (which meets for 2.5 hours per week), you should set aside about 5 hours per week to prepare and study — about 45 minutes each day.

*Respect* This is a course in moral philosophy and one of the fundamental moral values upon which this course is based is respect. I will treat you with respect in this course, and expect you to do the same for me and your fellow students. What this means in practice is (at a minimum):

For me:

1. I will arrive on time and prepared for each class meeting scheduled on the syllabus.
2. I will adhere to the schedule of readings, assignments, etc., on our class syllabus. If for some reason changes to the syllabus are necessary, I will give you prior notification of these changes.
3. I will take student questions and comments seriously and attempt to address them as helpfully as I can within the constraints of class time.
4. I will keep my scheduled office hours, or provide advance notice if this is not possible.
5. I will grade and provide feedback on written assignments within a reasonable time (nearly always 5-7 days) and provide you an adequate explanation of your grade. If you request it, I will provide additional explanation of your grade(s) and how they might be improved.
6. I will treat you as an adult. Part of what this means is taking your philosophical opinions seriously. Taking your opinions seriously is not equivalent to endorsing them. I will assume that you have put some thought into your opinions, and so I will hold you accountable (both positively and negatively) for them, praising you and challenging you as appropriate.
7. I will respect your time and not give you “busy work” that does not enable you to progress toward meeting the course learning objectives.
8. I will respond to your communications in a timely manner in light of my other commitments and responsibilities.
9. I will welcome, acknowledge, thoughtfully consider, and (when feasible and warranted) act on feedback that you provide me concerning how the course can be changed to better meet your needs and better help you learn.

For you:

1. You will respect the opinions of your classmates, and respond to them with seriousness, courtesy, and charity.
2. You will show up to class regularly and on time. You recognize and take responsibility for the obstacles that erratic attendance presents for your own personal academic success.
3. You will read the material assigned for class prior to the meeting at which we are scheduled to discuss it.
4. You will take responsibility for turning in assigned work on time.
5. You will respect my time and the time of your fellow students by helping to make our time together as productive and conducive to learning as possible.

## Texts

We will engage in careful reading of our texts in class, so **please have them available**.

### *Required:*

These texts should be available in the university bookstore:

- Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (Hackett, 1999)
  - Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals* (Cambridge UP, 1998)
  - Mill, *Utilitarianism: With Related Remarks from Mill's Other Writings* (Hackett, 2017)
- Other required readings will be made available in class or via Blackboard (Course Readings). I recommend printing a copy of the Blackboard readings and placing these in a 3-ring binder.

**Diversity:** The Philosophy Department is committed to an inclusive educational environment that recognizes the contributions that individuals from a variety of backgrounds have made, and continue to make, to the philosophical enterprise. While this course is primarily a course in 'Western' philosophy, the readings have been selected with the aim of representing the diversity of individuals who have contributed to moral philosophy. Among the course readings, 31 percent are by women or persons of color.

## Electronic resources and in-class electronic device use

We will be using Blackboard (<https://blackboard.cpp.edu>) in conjunction with this course. In order to use Blackboard, you will need to know your university Intranet ID and password. You should be checking the Blackboard site several times weekly for updates on course activities, etc.

- There will be some in-class activities for which an Internet-enabled device (phone, laptop, tablet, etc.) will be extremely valuable. For instance, we will make use in class of an online tool, [mentimeter.com](http://www.mentimeter.com).
- Outside of these activities, however, I **very strongly discourage** the use of such devices in class (or encourage their use only with their WiFi capability disabled). There is ample evidence that (a) the use of such electronic devices is incompatible with your own learning (see <http://bit.ly/2Ti3XBA>), (b) nearly everyone overestimates their ability to 'multitask' with electronic devices (see <http://bit.ly/1ScqdoY>), and (c) the use of such devices is distracting to others and disrupts their efforts to learn (see <http://bit.ly/1Hf0ZzC>). I encourage you to keep these considerations in mind as you decide whether use of your devices is maximally conducive to the learning of yourself and others

## Learning groups

Students in this course will be randomly assigned to 3- or 4-person learning groups. These groups will be used for various in-class activities. You are also encouraged to use these groups to exchange drafts of papers, study for exams, etc.

## Evaluation and requirements

Your grade for this course will be determined by the following six components:

1. **PARTICIPATION:** Your grade for this component will be determined by the three other members of your learning group. They will *anonymously* evaluate you based on your level of participation, the relevance of your contributions, your preparedness to participate in class activities, and your engagement with others in the class. Students who either (a) do not complete their evaluations of other students, or (b) provide evaluations that (in your instructor's estimation) are lacking in detail will receive a zero for this component. (Note that

other students failing to evaluate your participation will not affect your grade for this component.) Your grade for this component will be determined by averaging the grades given to you by your student evaluators (however, I reserve the right to modify these grades in cases where there is a significant divergence, i.e., more than a full grade level difference between the grades). These evaluations are due to me via Blackboard by Monday, December 9, 5 pm. Please note that any attempts to identify or collude with your evaluators will result in a zero for this grade component. **(10% of semester grade)**

2. THEORY EVALUATION MATRIX: This assignment, now available on Blackboard, requires you to evaluate the three families of theories we investigate in this course according to six standards. The assignment is due via Blackboard by Thursday, December 12, 5 pm. **(14% of semester grade)**
  
3. THEORY APPLICATION ASSIGNMENT: This assignment, now available on Blackboard, requires you to consider how the three families of theories would approach and attempt to address an ethical issue of your choosing. The assignment is due via Blackboard by Friday, December 13, 5 pm. **(14% of semester grade)**
  
4. DEPTH OF KNOWLEDGE: Your depth of knowledge is evaluated based on a **term paper (30% of semester grade)** The requirements and process for this paper are as follows:
  - (a) Your paper must provide a reasoned defense of a substantive thesis in moral theory. For further details on what is expected in these papers, see ‘Paper requirements and resources’ on Blackboard. That area contains a number of other documents to help you in developing your papers, including examples of past student papers. All papers are to be submitted via Blackboard.
  - (b) Note that I have made a number of successful term papers from past iterations of this course available to you on Blackboard. I hope these prove useful in helping you grasp the expectations for the term paper and stimulating ideas for papers topics.
  - (c) I am pleased to provide feedback on drafts of your term paper. To receive feedback, please provide me a hard copy of your draft at one of our class meetings. I will provide you my feedback during my office hours or during an appointment.
  - (d) In order to receive a grade for your term paper, you are required to give a 6-minute oral presentation. The audience for your presentation will be your instructor and three other students. These presentations will occur on Monday, December 9 and Tuesday, December 10. Additional details about the schedule of presentations, as well as the expectations for these presentations, will be provided in mid-November.
  - (e) Final papers, to be revised in light of feedback from your oral presentation, will be due via Blackboard by Saturday, December 14, 5 pm.

5. BREADTH OF KNOWLEDGE:

Your breadth of knowledge will be evaluated based on the *unit exams*. Each unit exam addresses one of the three theoretical traditions we are addressing in this course.

Unit	Exam available	Exam period ends
Utilitarianism	Weds Sept 18	Mon Oct 14
Kantianism	Mo Oct 21	Mo Nov 18
Virtue ethics	Mo Nov 18	Fr Dec 6

In addition, the unit exams will be made available to you again from Monday, December 9 through Thursday, December 12, 5 pm, during which time you may choose to *re-take* one of the three unit exams conditional on your having taken the unit exam prior to the stated deadline above. A grading scale for the unit exams is available on Blackboard. **(30% of semester grade).**

6. SELF-EVALUATION: You are required to submit a self-evaluation. More details about this will be provided later, but in the self-evaluation, you will describe your progress in meeting the course learning objectives and (if you so desire) argue for the grade you believe you should receive for the course. The self-evaluation will be graded pass/fail, and will be due Sunday December 15, 5 pm. **(2% of semester grade)**

### Roundtables

In order to assist with the course material — especially the theory matrix assignment, the theory application assignment, and the unit exams, I will be holding three ‘roundtable’ meetings, one for each of the theory families. This will be an opportunity to get feedback on the matrix and applicaiton assignments, as well to prepare for the unit exams. These will be ‘open house,’ i.e., arrive when you can and depart when you need to. Schedule as follows:

- **Utilitarianism:** Th Oct 10, 12:30-3:30, 1-319B
- **Kantianism:** Th Nov 14, 12:30-3:30, 1-319B
- **Virtue ethics:** Tu Dec 3, 12:30-3:30, 1-319B

#### *Activities and deadlines for finals week*

	<b>Mon 9 Dec</b>	<b>Tues 10 Dec</b>	<b>Weds 11 Dec</b>	<b>Th 12 Dec</b>	<b>Fr 13 Dec</b>	<b>Sat 14 Dec</b>	<b>Sun 15 Dec</b>
<b>Activities and/or deadlines</b>	Unit exams made re-available  Oral presentations: Times TBD  5 pm: participation evaluations due	Oral presentations: Times TBD		Unit exam availability ends, 5 pm  Theory evaluation matrix due 5 pm	Theory application project due 5pm	Term paper due 5pm	Self-evaluation due 5 pm

#### **Varia**

- Plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty will be addressed according to Cal Poly policies, available at <http://www.cpp.edu/~studentconduct/academic-integrity-resources/academic-integrity.shtml>.

- The copyright for these course materials is held by the instructor; any attempt to distribute or sell this material without instructor authorization is in violation of that copyright and will be dealt with swiftly and without mercy.
- Students with learning or other disabilities are encouraged to contact the instructor as soon as possible to discuss their needs and possible accommodations.

**If *extraordinary* circumstances arise that make it unusually difficult for you to meet the class requirements, please contact me so we can discuss the possibility of alternative arrangements.**

### SCHEDULE OF COURSE TOPICS, EVENTS, AND ASSIGNMENTS

Please complete the readings for the class meetings listed below *before* the meeting.

- Bb refers to materials made available on Blackboard (Course Readings).
- Unless specific page numbers are indicated, you are responsible for the entirety of the assigned article or source.

<i>DATE</i>	<i>TOPIC(S)</i>	<i>REQUIRED READINGS</i>
Mo Aug 26	Course intro: Why moral philosophy?	• “How to Succeed in PHL 3090” (Bb)
We Aug 28	Introduction to utilitarianism	• Two selections from Utilitarianism Applications Bin (details provided in class Mo Aug 26)
Mo Sep 2	<i>No meeting – Labor Day (no office hours)</i>	
We Sep 4	Introduction to Kantianism	• Two selections from Kantianism Applications Bin (details provided in class We Aug 28)
Mo Sep 9	Introduction to virtue ethics	• Two selections from Virtue Ethics Applications Bin (details provided in class We Sep 4)
We Sep 11	How to theorize about morality	• Timmons, “Introduction to Moral Theory” (Bb)
Mo Sep 16	Utilitarianism, classical and otherwise	• Eggleston, “Utilitarianism,” pp. 452-56, 457-58
We Sep 18	Mill’s utilitarianism: Introduction  <b>Utilitarianism unit exam available</b>	• Mill, <i>Utilitarianism</i> , pp. 23-32
Mo Sep 23	Mill on pleasure and the nature of happiness (and some alternatives)	• Mill, <i>Utilitarianism</i> , pp. 32-42
We Sep 25	Mill and utilitarianism’s critics	• Mill, <i>Utilitarianism</i> , pp. 42-59

Mo Sep 30	Mill on morality's "sanctions"; Mill's "proof"	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mill, <i>Utilitarianism</i>, pp. 60-78</li> <li>• Singer, "Famine, affluence, and morality" (Bb)</li> </ul>
We Oct 2	Utilitarianism, rights, and justice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mill, <i>Utilitarianism</i>, pp. 79-84, 90-105</li> <li>• LeGuin, "The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas" (Bb)</li> </ul>
Mo Oct 7	Promises and special obligations; integrity and the separateness of persons	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ross, "What makes right acts right?" (Bb)</li> <li>• Williams, "A critique of utilitarianism" (Bb)</li> <li>• Rawls, "Classical utilitarianism" (Bb)</li> </ul>
We Oct 9	Utilitarianism wrap- up; Kant's <i>Groundwork</i> and the search for morality's supreme principle	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Kant, <i>Groundwork</i>, pp. 1-10</li> </ul>
Th Oct 10	<b>Utilitarianism roundtable, 12:30-3:30, 1-319B</b>	
Mo Oct 14	From the good will to the universal law  <b>Utilitarianism unit exam available until 10 pm</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Kant, <i>Groundwork</i>, pp. 10-18</li> <li>• Glasgow, "Kant's principle of universal law," pp. 152-156 (Bb)</li> </ul>
We Oct 16	Imperatives, <i>a</i> categorical imperative, and the Formula of Universal Law	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Kant, <i>Groundwork</i>, pp. 19-31</li> <li>• Glasgow, "Kant's principle of universal law," pp. 156-157 (Bb)</li> </ul>
Mo Oct 21	Putting the Formula of Universal Law to work  <b>Kantianism unit exam available</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Kant, <i>Groundwork</i>, pp. 31-37</li> <li>• Glasgow, "Kant's principle of universal law," pp. 158-161 (Bb)</li> <li>• Kleingeld, "Contradiction and Kant's formula of universal law" (Bb)</li> </ul>
We Oct 23	Challenges to the Formula of Universal Law	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Korsgaard, "The right to lie: Kant on dealing with evil" (Bb)</li> <li>• Glasgow, "Kant's principle of universal law," pp. 162-65 (Bb)</li> </ul>
Mo Oct 28	The Formula of Humanity as an End in Itself	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Kant, <i>Groundwork</i>, pp. 37-51</li> <li>• Baron, "Kantian ethics," pp. 10-16 (Bb)</li> </ul>
We Oct 30	Kant's system of duties	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Baron, "Kantian ethics," pp. 16-21 (Bb)</li> <li>• Cholbi, <i>Understanding Kant's Ethics</i>, pp. 49-62 (Bb)</li> </ul>
Mo Nov 4	Must morality rest on categorical imperatives?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Foot, "Morality as a system of hypothetical imperatives" (Bb)</li> </ul>
We Nov 6	Reason, emotion and integrity; moral status	<p>Read one or more of the following according to your interests:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Herman, "Integrity and impartiality" (Bb)</li> <li>• O'hagan, "Animals, agency, and obligation in Kantian ethics" (Bb)</li> </ul>



		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cholbi, <i>Understanding Kant's Ethics</i>, pp. 214-21 (Bb)</li> </ul>
Mo Nov 11	<i>No meeting — Veterans' Day (no office hours)</i>	
Tu Nov 12	<b>Kantianism roundtable, 3:00-6:00, 1-319B</b>	
We Nov 13	Aristotle's virtue ethics: The human good, virtue, and habituation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Aristotle, <i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Book I: chapters 1-5, 7-9, 13</li> <li>○ Book II: chapters 1-6</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
Mo Nov 18	<p>Aristotle's virtue ethics: The voluntary, the mean, and the virtues</p> <p><b>Virtue ethics unit exam available</b></p> <p><b>Kantianism unit exam available until 10 pm</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Aristotle, <i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Book II: chapters 7-9</li> <li>○ Book III: chapters 1, 5-7</li> <li>○ Books III.10-V: read so as to become familiar with at least <i>two</i> of the virtues discussed there</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
We Nov 20	Aristotle's virtue ethics: Incontinence and the highest good	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Aristotle, <i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Book VII: chapters 1-3, 8-9</li> <li>○ Book X: chapters 6-9</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p>(Note: VII.11 to X.5 largely concern friendship and pleasure – we won't discuss these but don't hesitate to read them anyway!)</p>
Mo Nov 25	Contemporary virtue ethics; The challenge of practical guidance, part 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Louden, "Some vices of virtue ethics" (Bb)</li> <li>• Hursthouse, "Virtue ethics, pp. 514-518 (Bb)</li> </ul>
We Nov 27	The challenge of practical guidance, part 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hursthouse, "Virtue ethics," pp. 518-24 (Bb)</li> <li>• Johnson, "Virtue and right," concentrate on pp. 810-25 (Bb)</li> </ul>
Mo Dec 2	The relativist and situationist challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nussbaum, "Non-relative virtues: An Aristotelian approach" (Bb)</li> <li>• Appiah, "The case against character" (Bb)</li> </ul>
Tu Dec 3	<b>Virtue ethics roundtable, 12:30-3:30, 1-319B</b>	
We Dec 4	Virtue ethics wrap up and course reflection: What can moral philosophy do for us?	<p><i>Read at least two of the following:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Breakey, "Why moral education should involve moral philosophy" (Bb)</li> <li>• Steinbauer, "Ethics versus morality" (Bb)</li> <li>• Garlikov, "The point of studying ethics" (Bb)</li> <li>• Batson, "Moral combat"(Bb)</li> </ul>

Fr Dec 6	<b>Virtue ethics unit exam available until 5 pm</b>	
Mo Dec 9	<b>Student oral presentations</b>  <b>Unit exams available</b>  <b>Participation evaluations due via Bb, 5 pm</b>	
Tu Dec 10	<b>Student oral presentations</b>	
Th Dec 12	<b>Unit exams available until 5 pm</b>  <b>Theory evaluation matrix, due 5 pm</b>	
Fr Dec 13	<b>Theory application project, due 5 pm</b>	
Sat Dec 14	<b>Term paper due 5 pm</b>	
Sun Dec 15	<b>Self-evaluations due 5 pm</b>	