

PHI 1700: Global Ethics

Baruch College, Fall 2018

time: Tuesday/Thursday 9:00-10:25am

section: BTRA, **credits:** 3.0, **room:** TBA

course website: bit.ly/phi1700f18

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office hours: Tuesday/Thursday 1-2:30pm

Ethics, or more generally, *moral philosophy*, is an investigation of human behavior along evaluative dimensions such as good/bad, right/wrong, permissible/impermissible, etc.

This class will introduce some of the major themes and ongoing debates in three branches of ethics: meta-, normative, and applied. You'll learn new vocabulary and concepts that can help you

- 1) make sense of the moral conflicts you encounter in your everyday life,
- and 2) articulate your own ideas on these matters in constructive discourse with others.

PHI 1700 satisfies the Flexible Core *Individual & Society* requirement (and your thirst for knowledge).

course objectives

Students will:

- learn concepts developed by philosophers to help us decide how to act ethically and understand the nature of morality
- practice adopting perspectives other than one's own and interpreting others' arguments charitably, to better understand sites of enduring interpersonal disagreement about morality
- cultivate reading comprehension, interpretation, critical thinking & reasoning skills
- improve the clarity & persuasiveness of written & spoken arguments, and develop confidence in expressing oneself through these media

course topics & theme questions

meta-ethics (moral epistemology, psychology, & metaphysics)

- *Do we have an innate "moral sense", or do we learn right & wrong only through experience?* (**nativism vs. empiricism**)
- *Are there moral facts? If so, where do they come from?* (**realism vs. anti-realism**)
- *Are moral values universal?* (**universalism vs. relativism**)
- *What parts of our minds are involved in moral decision-making?* (**rationalism vs. sentimentalism**)
- *Under what conditions are we morally responsible for our actions?* (**compatibilism vs. incompatibilism**)

normative ethics

- *virtue ethics*
- *consequentialism*
- *contractualism*
- *egoism*
- *deontology*
- *care ethics*

applied ethics

- *How do beliefs about morality shape political systems?*
- *How can governments & other systems of power shape our moral outlook & behavior?*
- other topics TBD, based on your interests

requirements & grading

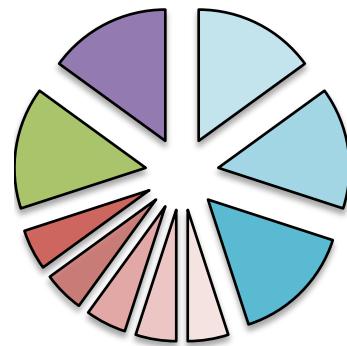
To complete this course, you will:

- **attend each class session and participate in class activities**
 - Recommended readings for each sessions are posted to the course website as PDFs.
 - You don't need to speak up in front of the whole class each session (though participating in discussions is highly recommended). However, you should demonstrate *an ongoing commitment to engaging seriously with the course material while you're in the classroom* (e.g., responding to free-writing prompts, collaborating with classmates during small-group work).
- **write 5 reading responses to assigned texts**
 - Prompted by specific questions, you'll practice expressing and organizing your thoughts in writing, in response to brief articles meant to complement the lecture topics & recommended readings.
 - These will be submitted online via Google Forms. They are due by the start of class on the due date.
- **complete 3 take-home exams**
 - You'll use the lecture slides to complete matching, fill-in-the-blank, multiple-choice, and short essay questions. These are designed to be like problem sets, meant to help you master the material by applying and synthesizing principles and concepts discussed in class.
 - These will be submitted either in class or via email by the start of class on the due date.
- **debate a controversial ethical problem with classmates**
 - We will vote on debate topics and form teams based on topic interest later in the semester.
 - You will research your topic and coordinate with your teammates to devise argumentative strategies and assign responsibilities for different portions of the debate.
 - After the debate, you will submit a brief report about the debate experience via Google Forms.

Grades are calculated as follows (using Baruch's grading scale: see bit.ly/baruchgrades)

- **take-home exams: 45%** (3 x 15% each)
- **reading responses: 25%** (5 x 5% each)
- **debate: 15%** (10% team performance, 5% report)
- **participation/attendance/conduct: 15%**

Extra Credit opportunities may be offered at the instructor's discretion.



policies

- **Check your email regularly for course updates.**
I will email the class in the event of any changes to the course schedule.
- **Feel free to email me** if you have questions or concerns about the course. Please read assignments thoroughly before emailing with questions. **Please include "PHI 1700" in the subject line of your message.**
I will do my best to respond promptly to emails.
- **Submitting exams, reading responses or the debate report late will result in deductions from your grade:**
5% off if submitted *up to two calendar days* after the due date, 10% if *three days or more*.

attendance

- **Regular attendance is expected.** I will not take attendance every class; however, I will occasionally collect materials from in-class activities that will serve as a record of your attendance.
- Per Baruch policy, any student who misses more than 4 class sessions will be given a grade of 'WU' (Unofficial Withdrawal) – equivalent to an F in GPA calculations.
- **You are responsible for all course material,** including that covered in lectures you miss. Refer to the Powerpoint slides and consult your classmates about material covered in any lectures you're unable to attend. I recommend that you identify at least one classmate who you trust to take good notes and exchange contact information with them. If you ask a fellow student for help catching up, you should be willing to return the favor for that student on another occasion.

accessibility

- I strive to ensure that every student can succeed in this course. Though I've made an effort to design the course so as to provide equal access to the immense benefits of studying philosophy, it's very possible that some students will need additional accommodations for the best possible experience in this course. I encourage any student encountering difficulties in getting the most out of the course to come talk to me: together, we can develop some strategies for success.
- The Office of Services for Students with Disabilities (OSSD: VC 2-272, Vertical Campus) can provide "reasonable accommodations" for students who register for services. The OSSD provides an "Accommodation Letter" that informs your instructors what services you need, while maintaining confidentiality about the basis for accommodation. For information on the OSSD, see baruch.cuny.edu/studentaffairs/ossd/disabilityServices.htm.

classroom etiquette

- **Please arrive on time and ready to take notes.** If you arrive late, please do so quietly.
- **Eating and drinking are permitted** in class if done quietly and courteously.
- **Laptops and tablets are permitted** for note-taking – *unless* it is distracting to you, me, or anyone around you. I reserve the right to ask you to put these devices away if I can tell that you're abusing the privilege.
- **Please silence cell phones and keep them in your bag during class.**

conduct

- **You must respect the views of your classmates** during full-class and small-group discussions, no matter how drastically they may differ from your own. Disrespectful, disparaging, or hateful speech will not be tolerated. Please take care to ensure that your language conveys appreciation & support for your fellow students' efforts.
- **Harassment of any kind will not be tolerated.** All contact with your classmates and professor should be courteous and professional. Protip: If you sense that you ought to preface what you intend to say or do with a "sorry", that's probably a good indicator that what you were about to say is inappropriate in this context.
- There is **zero tolerance for cheating and/or plagiarism** in my course (and at Baruch College in general). Confirmed instances of cheating/plagiarism will result in a zero for the assignment in question – and possibly for the entire course. Suspected instances will result in a hold on your grade for the course until the issue is resolved with the Dean's Office.

TUESDAY		THURSDAY	
1	August 28 th	2	August 30th
Intro to Moral Philosophy		Evaluating Arguments "All About Arguments"	
3	September 4 th	September 6th <i>NO CLASS (Classes on a Monday schedule)</i>	
METAETHICS: Moral Epistemology, Moral Metaphysics Harman , Gilbert. "Ethics and Observation"		4	September 13 th RR #1 DUE
September 11th <i>NO CLASS (Baruch closed)</i>		METAETHICS: Universalism vs. Relativism Rachels , James. "The Challenge of Cultural Relativism" RR (Choose 1): – Rovane , Carol. "Moral Dispute or Cultural Diff.?" – Rosenberg , Alex. "Can Moral Disputes Be Resolved?"	
September 18th <i>NO CLASS (Baruch closed)</i>		5	September 20th
METAETHICS: Moral Responsibility Strawson , Galen. "Your Move: The Maze of Free Will" Churchland , Patricia. "The Big Questions: Do We Have Free Will?"		METAETHICS: Rationalism vs. Sentimentalism Smith , Adam. <i>A Theory of Moral Sentiments</i> (excerpts) Bloom , Paul. "The Baby in the Well"	
6	September 25 th	7	September 27 th RR #2 DUE
METAETHICS: Moral Responsibility Strawson , Galen. "Your Move: The Maze of Free Will" Churchland , Patricia. "The Big Questions: Do We Have Free Will?"		METAETHICS: Situationism Milgram , Stanley. <i>Obedience to Authority</i> (excerpts) RR (Choose 1): – Irwin , William. "How to Live a Lie" – May , Todd. "The Stories We Tell Ourselves"	
8	October 2 nd	9	October 4 th EXAM #1 DUE
NORMATIVE ETHICS: Virtue Ethics Aristotle . <i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> (excerpts)		NORMATIVE ETHICS: Virtue Ethics (cont.) Vitrano , Christine. "Happiness and Morality" Annas , Julia. "Virtue Ethics and the Charge of Egoism"	
10	October 9 th	11	October 11 th RR #3 DUE
NORMATIVE ETHICS: Consequentialism Mill, John Stuart . <i>Utilitarianism</i> (excerpts) Nozick , Robert. "The Experience Machine"		NORMATIVE ETHICS: Consequentialism (cont.) Singer , Peter. "Famine, Affluence, and Morality" – RR: Rini , Regina. "Enhanced Consequentialism...?"	
12	October 16 th	13	October 18 th
NORMATIVE ETHICS: Deontology O'Neill , Onora. "A Simplified Account of Kant's Ethics"		NORMATIVE ETHICS: Deontology (cont.) Foot , Philippa. "Morality as a System of Hypothetical Imperatives"	

14	October 23 rd	RR #4 DUE	15	October 25 th
NORMATIVE ETHICS: Comparing Ethical Systems			NORMATIVE ETHICS: Comparing Ethical Systems (cont.)	
Thomson , Judith Jarvis. "Killing, Letting Die, and the Trolley Problem" – RR: Dworkin , Gerald. "How You Justified 10 Lies.." –			Anscombe , G. Elizabeth M. "Modern Moral Philosophy" (excerpts) Nietzsche , Friedrich. <i>On the Genealogy of Morality</i> (excerpts)	
16	October 30 th	EXAM #2 DUE	17	November 1 st
APPLIED ETHICS: Ethics & Governments,			APPLIED ETHICS: Ethics & Governments (cont.)	
Hobbes , Thomas. <i>The Leviathan</i> (excerpts) & Rousseau , Jean Jacques. "Discourse on the Origin of Inequality"			Held , Virginia. "Non-Contractual Society: A Feminist View"	
18	November 6 th		19	November 8 th
APPLIED ETHICS: Justice & Injustice			APPLIED ETHICS: Justice & Injustice (cont.)	
Rawls , John. <i>A Theory of Justice</i> (excerpts)			Nussbaum , Martha. "Capabilities and Human Rights" – RR: Gutting , Gary and Anderson , Elizabeth. "What's Wrong with Inequality?"	
20	November 13 th		21	November 15 th
APPLIED ETHICS: Oppression & Resistance			APPLIED ETHICS: Oppression & Resistance (cont.)	
King Jr. , Martin Luther. "Letter from Birmingham Jail" Young , Iris Marion. "Five Faces of Oppression"			Du Bois , W.E.B. "Of Our Spiritual Strivings" (from <i>The Souls of Black Folk</i>) Young , Iris Marion. "Political Responsibility and Structural Injustice"	
22	November 20 th		November 22nd NO CLASS - Happy Thanksgiving!	
Applied Ethics Debate Demo				
TBA				
23	November 27 th	EXAM #3 DUE	24	November 29 th
In-Class Debate Prep Session			DEBATE #1	
TBA			TBA	
25	December 4 th		26	December 6 th
DEBATE #2			DEBATE #3	
TBA			TBA	
27	December 11 th		28	December 13 th
DEBATE #4			DEBATE #5	
TBA			TBA	