

# **Ethics and Society**

## **Philosophy 3306**

### **Fall 2016 Syllabus**

Instructor: **Joanna Smolenski**  
Email: **jms2170@caa.columbia.edu**  
Classroom: **Whitehead 404**  
Meeting time: **Mondays and Wednesdays 12:50pm – 2:05pm**  
Section: **MW12 Code: 14112 Credits: 3**

Office hours: **Wednesdays 12:10pm – 12:40pm and by appointment.**  
Office hours location: **3316 Boylan Hall**  
Philosophy Department: **3308 Boylan Hall**

#### **Introduction**

This is a philosophy course, the focus of which is on the study and application of ethics. Students will be exposed to several ethical theories, which she/he may utilize in her/his assessment of various ethical issues that arise in the world. Some topics that we will be examining are: abortion, medical ethics, capital punishment, etc. Though we will begin in this fashion, proceeding from theory to practice, we will also do the opposite--that is, by looking at various issues that arise in the world, we also may assess the plausibility of various ethical theories by seeing how well they stand up in such concrete contexts.

#### **Course Objectives**

- 1) Students will develop their critical reasoning skills. This includes developing skills of explaining, critically examining, and responding to theories, uses, and claims in various areas in ethics.
- 2) Students will be able to formulate an argument in support or in opposition of a claim, in general – and specifically, in relation to the key philosophical questions with regard to the moral issues examined in the course.
- 3) Students will be able to evaluate (by providing reasons) the validity and/or cogency of an argument, in general – and specifically, in relation to the key philosophical questions with regard to the moral issues examined in the course.
- 4) Students will become informed about the key philosophical questions and theories with regard to the moral issues examined in the course – as well as the answers to these questions and the problems with these answers that make the issues an object of ongoing debate.

## Required Text

The readings for this course will be posted by the instructor on Blackboard no later than the session before which they are expected to have been read (though typically earlier). Please note that the readings on the syllabus are tentative and subject to change! I may add, subtract, or change readings throughout the semester. If I do, I will provide ample notice to the class and post an updated syllabus reflecting the changes to Blackboard.

In addition, there is one textbook that will supply many of the readings for this course as well as material for class discussion and exams. It is also at large retail bookstores, and Internet bookstores (Amazon, Barnes & Noble, etc). Please make sure to get the correct edition of the text (3<sup>rd</sup> edition), as older versions will contain different material.

Cahn, Steven M. *Exploring Ethics: An Introductory Anthology*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition. Oxford University Press. ISBN 978-0-19-994658-7.

## Course Requirements and Grading

**Daily Quizzes: 20%.** These quizzes will be given in the first 5 minutes of each class. Each quiz will be a short answer or multiple choice question that should be very easy if you've completed the reading for that class and are familiar with the policies of the course. Each quiz will be worth 3 points: 1 point for writing your name, 1 point for answering the question, and 1 point for answering the question correctly. Your 4 lowest quiz grades will be dropped at the end of the semester. If you arrive late for class and miss the quiz, I will record your name, but you will automatically miss the 2 points available for answering the question and doing so correctly. If you are more than 20 minutes late for class, your name will not be recorded and you will be considered absent.

While coming in late is disruptive and can interrupt lecture, in-class discussion, or the presentations of your classmates, the same is true of leaving early. As a result, the same way that you won't get credit for having taken the quiz if you arrive late, you will not get credit for the day's attendance quiz if you leave early (i.e., you will receive only 1 point out of a possible 3). If you have a special circumstance, just grab me before class and let me know. Please be advised that I do not allow make-ups for these quizzes.

**In-Class Debate and Preparation: 15%.** We will be considering many real-world case studies throughout this course. You will sign up for a position in one of these cases, and prepare a presentation for an in-class debate with others impacted by the case. Your debate will take place on the day we are discussing your case in class, and it is **your responsibility** to make sure you have this date on your calendar. You will explain how the case impacted you, and convince the class that your position is justified in a ***10 MINUTE presentation***.

For example, suppose that Jimmy had his wallet stolen by John. If you are assigned the position of Jimmy, you must explain how your missing wallet has impacted you, and why John should be punished for robbing you. If you are assigned the position of John, you must explain how your theft of the wallet has impacted you, and why you were justified in stealing it from Jimmy.

At the end of the debate, the class will vote on who had the more compelling argument. The winner will have his or her 5<sup>th</sup> lowest daily quiz grade dropped. The debate will not receive a letter

grade, but will be graded on a pass or fail basis. Unacceptable presentations – which **INCLUDE** presentations that do not meet the time requirement – will not receive credit, but those who fail *may* write a paper (750 words, +/- 100 words, double-spaced) on the topic of their presentation and resubmit it for credit the following week. If you choose to submit the alternate assignment, you will be required to include the word count of your paper in your submission.

**Writing Assignment: 25%** You are required to submit a paper (**1300 words**, +/- 150 words, double-spaced) that critically engages with one of the issues we've encountered in class. You will be assigned a topic and position in advance. You are expected to summarize and contextualize any relevant reading, provide your own argument(s) for or against the conclusions, and include a word count, internal citations and a formal bibliography as the final page of your submission.

Internal citations should be in parenthesis at the end of each quote, and include both the author's last name and the quote's page number. Papers lacking a word count, internal citations and a bibliography will be penalized up to three full letters (for example, an A paper lacking all three would receive a D. An A paper with a word count and internal citations but no bibliography would receive a B. An A paper with a bibliography but no word count or internal citations would receive a C). Your paper must be submitted in class and online, unless you have made arrangements with me in advance and your circumstances are VERY extenuating (however, please make sure that you retain an electronic copy of your paper until you receive your grade). Late papers will not be accepted, unless there is a special circumstance and you provide proper documentation.

**Exams: 40%.** There will be 2 exams, 1 which will take place during class and 1 which will take place during finals week. The exams will focus on the material we go over in class, and will be based on the readings. They will be closed-book, closed-note exams with a combination of short essay questions and either multiple choice, true/false, or identification questions. I will provide you with a study guide at least a week before each exam. Each exam will be worth 20% of your final grade.

**Class Participation and Attendance:** Attendance will be taken at the start of each class by means of the daily quizzes. Attendance is important, not only because it has an impact on your grade but also because this material can be difficult! Please do not email missed assignments or ask about make-up quizzes; **I will not accept them.**

## Course Expectations

To do well in this course, you are expected to attend class, do all the readings, participate in the in-class debate, take the exams, and complete all of the writing assignments.

You are strongly encouraged to participate in class discussions, and to bring questions or comments on the readings. I will go over the reading material in lecture.

Your final grade for this course will be calculated according to the percentages listed above and will not be based on a curve. Be aware that I do not anticipate offering or accepting additional extra credit assignments, though I will include extra credit questions on each exam.

If you arrive late to class, please be discreet and try to minimize the disruption. Excessive lateness **will not** be tolerated (don't forget about your daily quizzes!). Eating and drinking during class is permitted if done quietly, but try to be courteous to those around you.

You are entitled to 3 unexcused absences without penalty. If you have extenuating circumstances (illness, funeral, etc.), you must provide legitimate documentation to have your absence excused. Each unexcused absence afterward will reduce your paper grade by one full letter (for example, an A paper would receive a B). Do not forget that lateness by more than 20 minutes is considered an absence. **Please note** that late papers will not be accepted without documentation.

Cell phones **must** be silenced and put away during class. Computers and tablets are allowed provided they are used for note-taking. If **at any point** I determine that your computer/tablet use is a distraction to either another student or myself, I reserve the right to ask you to put away your computer and I will revoke your computer privilege for the remainder of the semester.

Finally, many of the topics we will discuss are controversial. Often you'll find that you disagree with the views expressed by a number of your peers. It is **crucial** that we respect each other if we are to have a productive discussion. This classroom is a *safe space* for everyone to express their informed view, backed up by reasons. This means that I will expect all of us to regard each other's statements as open to critique, but *not* personal attack or name-calling. Comments such as "that's just stupid" or "only a moron would believe that", etc., are **not** appropriate responses. Continued and aggravated personal attacks will be grounds for your dismissal from that day's class, or longer.

### Reading Schedule

This list is only **tentative** and it is your responsibility to keep up with any changes. It is expected that you will have completed the reading by the date listed. All of the readings listed below will be posted to Blackboard.

8/29/2016	Syllabus Review
8/31/2016	<b>*** Last Day to Add a Class ***</b> Introduction to course
9/5/2016	<b>LABOR DAY – NO CLASS</b>
9/7/2016	Moral Theory #1: Utilitarianism Reading: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Jeremy Bentham, Chapters 1-5, <i>An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation</i></li> </ul>
9/12/2016	Moral Theory #1: Utilitarianism, con't. Reading: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>John Stuart Mill, Chapter 2: What Utilitarianism Is, <i>Utilitarianism</i></li> </ul>
9/14/2016	<b>*** LAST DAY TO DROP A COURSE WITHOUT A GRADE ***</b> Moral Theory #2: Deontology

	<p>Reading:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Immanuel Kant, Chapter 12: The Categorical Imperative, <i>Exploring Ethics: An Introductory Anthology, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition</i> (ed. Steven M. Cahn)</li> <li>• Onora O’Neill, Chapter 13: A Simplified Account of Kant’s Ethics, <i>Exploring Ethics: An Introductory Anthology, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition</i> (ed. Steven M. Cahn)</li> </ul>
9/15/2016	<b>*** Last Day to Apply for Fall 2016 Graduation ***</b>
9/19/2016	<p>Moral Theory #3: Virtue Ethics</p> <p>Reading:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Aristotle, Chapter 16: The Nature of Virtue, <i>Exploring Ethics: An Introductory Anthology, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition</i> (ed. Steven M. Cahn)</li> <li>• Bernard Mayo, Chapter 17: Virtue Ethics, <i>Exploring Ethics: An Introductory Anthology, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition</i> (ed. Steven M. Cahn)</li> </ul>
9/21/2016	<p>Moral Theory #4: Care Ethics</p> <p>Reading:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Virginia Held, Chapter 18: The Ethics of Care, <i>Exploring Ethics: An Introductory Anthology, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition</i> (ed. Steven M. Cahn)</li> </ul>
9/26/2016	Moral Theory Review
9/28/2016	<p>Moral Relativism</p> <p>Reading:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gilbert Harman, “Moral Relativism Explained”</li> </ul>
10/3/2016	<b>NO CLASSES SCHEDULED – NO CLASS</b>
10/5/2016	<p>Morality and History: A Critique of Moral Values</p> <p>Reading:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Friedrich Nietzsche, First Essay, <i>On the Genealogy of Morality</i></li> </ul>
10/6/2016	<p><b>*** Conversion Day – Classes Follow a Monday Schedule ***</b></p> <p>Moral Decision-Making: Moral Intuitions</p> <p>Reading:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Jonathan Haidt, “The Emotional Dog and its Rational Tail: A Social Intuitionist Approach to Moral Judgment”</li> </ul>
10/10/2016	<b>COLUMBUS DAY – NO CLASS</b>

10/12/2016	<b>NO CLASSES SCHEDULED – NO CLASS</b>
10/17/2016	<b>MIDTERM EXAM</b>
10/19/2016	Moral Issue #1: Life and Death Reading: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Judith Jarvis Thomson, “The Trolley Problem”</li> </ul>
10/24/2016	Moral Issue #2: Cyberethics Dark Net: Episode 4 - CTRL Reading: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Helen Nissenbaum, “A Contextual Approach to Privacy Online”</li> </ul> Watch: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>“The Internet’s Own Boy: The Story of Aaron Swartz” (available for free on YouTube: <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gpvcc9C8SbM">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gpvcc9C8SbM</a>)</li> </ul>
10/26/2016	Moral Issue #3: Animal Rights Reading: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Tom Regan, Chapter 35: The Case for Animal Rights, <i>Exploring Ethics: An Introductory Anthology, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition</i> (ed. Steven M. Cahn)</li> </ul>
10/31/2016	Moral Issue #3: Animal Rights, con’t. Presentation from Rachel Atcheson, The Humane League
11/2/2016	Moral Issue #4: Ethical Business Practices and the Ethics of Capitalism Begin Enron: The Smartest Guys in the Room Reading: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Karl Marx, <i>Manifesto of the Communist Party</i></li> <li>Richard Hattwick, “The Ethics of Capitalism”</li> </ul>
11/7/2016	Moral Issue #4: Ethical Business Practices and the Ethics of Capitalism, con’t. Enron: The Smartest Guys in the Room Reading: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pgs. 148 – 151 from Joseph DesJardins, <i>An Introduction to Business Ethics, 5<sup>th</sup> Edition</i></li> </ul>
11/9/2016	Moral Issue #4: Ethical Business Practices and the Ethics of Capitalism, con’t. Finish Enron: The Smartest Guys in the Room

11/10/2016	*** <b><i>LAST DAY TO APPLY FOR WITHDRAWAL FROM A COURSE WITH A "W" (NON-PENALTY) GRADE</i></b> ***
11/14/2016	<b>PAPER DUE</b> , Moral Issue #5: Abortion Reading: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Judith Jarvis Thomson, "A Defense of Abortion"</li> </ul>
11/16/2016	Moral Issue #5: Abortion, con't. Reading: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pope John Paul II, "The Unspeakable Crime of Abortion"</li> </ul>
11/21/2016	Moral Issue #6: Ethics and Policing Dark Net: Episode 8 - Revolt Reading: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lee Sigelman, et al, "Police Brutality and Public Perceptions of Racial Discrimination: A Tale of Two Beatings"</li> <li>Michelle Alexander, Chapter 1: The Rebirth of Caste, <i>The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness</i></li> </ul>
11/23/2016	Moral Issue #6: Ethics and Policing, con't. Reading: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Michelle Alexander, Chapter 3: The Color of Justice, <i>The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness</i></li> </ul>
11/28/2016	Moral Issue #7: Ethics and Sex and Gender Reading: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sally Haslanger, "Gender and Race: (What) Are They? (What) Do We Want Them to Be?"</li> </ul>
11/30/2016	Moral Issue #7: Ethics and Sex and Gender, con't. Reading: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Paisley Currah, "Gender Pluralisms under the Transgender Umbrella"</li> </ul>
12/5/2016	Moral Issue #8: End-of-life Decision-Making Reading: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Dan W. Brock, "Voluntary Active Euthanasia"</li> </ul>
12/7/2016	Moral Issue #9: Ethics of Transhumanism, Artificial Intelligence, and Enhancement

	Reading: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nick Bostrom and Eliezer Yudkowsky, “The Ethics of Artificial Intelligence”</li> <li>• S. Matthew Liao, Anders Sandberg, and Rebecca Roache, “Human Engineering and Climate Change”</li> </ul>
12/12/2016	Moral Issue #10: Ethics and Medical Technology Reading: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ledford, Heidi, “CRISPR, The Disruptor”</li> <li>• Edward Lanphier, Fyodor Urnov, Sarah Ehlen Haecker, Michael Werner, Joanna Smolenski, “Don’t Edit the Human Germ Line”</li> <li>• Smolenski, Joanna, “CRISPR/Cas9 and Germline Modification: New Difficulties in Obtaining Informed Consent”</li> </ul> Course Wrap-up and Exam Review
12/13/2016	<b>Reading Day</b>
12/14/2016	<b>FINAL EXAM, 1:00pm – 3:00pm</b>

## CUNY POLICIES

### Policy on Academic Integrity

The faculty and administration of Brooklyn College support an environment free from cheating and plagiarism. Each student is responsible for being aware of what constitutes cheating and plagiarism and for avoiding both. The complete text of the CUNY Academic Integrity Policy and the Brooklyn College procedure for implementing that policy can be found at this site: <http://www.brooklyn.cuny.edu/bc/policies>. If a faculty member suspects a violation of academic integrity and, upon investigation, confirms that violation, or if the student admits that violation, the faculty member **MUST** report the violation.

**DON'T CHEAT OR PLAGIARIZE. FOR YOUR OWN SAKE.**

**AS PART OF THIS POLICY, HAVING A TEXTBOOK, PHONE, TABLET, OR LAPTOP OUT DURING AN EXAM WILL NOT BE TOLERATED.**

### Policy on Disability Services

In order to receive disability-related academic accommodations, students must first be registered with the Center for Student Disability Services (CSDS). Students who have a documented disability or suspect they may have a disability are invited to set up an appointment with the Director of the Center for Student Disability Services, Ms. Valerie Stewart-Lovell, at 718-951-5538. If you have already registered with the Center for Student Disability Services, please provide me with the course



accommodation form and discuss your specific accommodation with me as soon as possible and at an appropriate time.

### **Policy on Religious Absences**

Please be aware of the NY State Education Law, which provides that:

1. Any student in an institution of higher education who is unable, because of their religious beliefs, to attend classes on a particular day or days shall, because of such absence on the particular day or days, be excused from any examination or any study or work requirements.
2. It shall be the responsibility of the faculty to make available to each student who is absent from school, because of religious beliefs, an equivalent opportunity to make up any examination, study or work requirements which they may have missed because of such absence on any particular day or days.
3. Any student who is aggrieved by the alleged failure of any faculty or administrative officials to comply in good faith shall be entitled to maintain an action or proceeding in the supreme court of the county in which such institution of higher education is located for the enforcement of their rights.