



Ethics PHIL-2033-X10 Spring 2022

Instructor: Dr. Erik Baldwin
Office: NA
Office hours: By Appointment
Office phone: NA
E-mail: erik.baldwin@msutexas.edu

Course Description

What does it mean to live a good life? How ought I treat others, and what should I expect of them in return? These questions are at the heart of ethics; a philosophical approach to figuring out what is right and wrong. This course will explore historical responses to these questions from several different perspectives and consider possible objections to each view. Major themes of the course will be: the nature of human happiness and its relevance to the good life, the role of human freedom in morality, and the nature of our duties to self and others. Students will come away from the course equipped with conceptual tools that will enable them to think more deeply and critically about ethical issues they face in their daily private and professional lives.

Required Textbooks & Instructional Materials

Russ Shafer-Landau, *The Fundamentals of Ethics*, 5th ed. (OUP, 2018). [FE]

Russ Shafer-Landau, *The Ethical Life*, 5th ed. (OUP, 2018). [EL]

Michael Harvey, *The Nuts and Bolts of College Writing*, 3rd ed. (Hackett Publishing, 2020).

Student Handbook Refer to: [Student Handbook 2017-18](#)

Grading

You will be responsible for completing assignments in the following categories, each category being worth a percentage of your final grade.

Reading Discussion Questions (26) = 20% of final grade

Reading Journals (12) = 25% of final grade

Reading Quizzes (14) = 20% of final grade

Essays (5) = 35% of final grade

The Assignment categories will be broken down in the following way:

1. **Reading Discussion Questions:** Students are expected to study class notes and do assigned readings on daily basis. Reading questions will assess student understanding of philosophical theories and ideas to which students must provide short written responses. They will also help you to prepare for writing the essays. Each day a post is late there will be a 10% penalty. There are no make-up posts after a thread is closed. Reading Discussion Questions will be averaged into 25% of your final grade.

2. **Reading Journals:** Over the course of the semester, students will keep a reading journal to record their thoughts about the weekly readings assigned from Shafer-Landau *The Ethical Life, 5th Edition*. Write your journal on the readings that are assigned during the week the assignment is due. Each journal should be dated, include at least one in-text citation to the reading, and end with a bibliographic reference to all reading discussed in the entry. Students will be responsible for writing 13 entries. Each entry is worth about 10 points and must be about 250-300 words in length, contain an in-text citation in MLA format to the reading under consideration, contain a bibliographic reference in MLA format at the end of the entry to the reading under consideration, and all citation formatting must be correct. Entries should be written in Standard English without any grammatical mistakes or spelling errors. Reading responses will be averaged into 20% of your final grade. The lowest reading journal score will be dropped from the grade book.
3. **Reading Quizzes:** Basic knowledge of the assigned readings will be assessed by regular quizzes. There are fourteen quizzes. Each quiz will be worth 10 points. Quizzes will be averaged into 15% of your final grade. Quizzes open on Mondays and are due on Wednesday evening. The lowest quiz score will be dropped from the grade book.
4. **Essays:** Students will be expected to follow the course materials and express their comprehension of the course content in 5 written assignments. These assignments are designed to help the students develop their writing skills, advance their understanding of philosophical thought, and guide the students in developing a nuanced and coherent method of expressing themselves philosophically. For specific information regarding written work and its assessment, see the information sheet on “Written Work” available on D2L. Essays account for 15% of the final grade. The lowest essay score will be dropped from the grade book.
5. **Term Paper:** In this assignment, students will come to a considered judgment about a moral problem, an issue in applied ethics. Students will read two or more papers found in approved sections Part IV of *The Ethical Life* (5th edition), determine what you think about the issue, and defend their view. Approved topics include Poverty and Hunger, Euthanasia, Immigration, and The Death Penalty. The paper should be 1,500 to 2,000 words in length (this roughly equals five to seven double-spaced typewritten pages). This is not a research paper, but a paper through which students show that they have used our readings and class discussion to arrive at their own position on a certain issue in applied ethics. Students will not use sources besides our textbooks and course resources. The terms paper account for 15% of your final grade.

GRADING SCALE

Your points will be translated into percentages, and your final grade will be calculated according to the following percentage scale:

- 90-100% = A
- 80-89% = B
- 70-79% = C
- 60-69% = D
- 59% or below = F

Note about Incompletes: A grade of “Incomplete” may be given to a student who has not been able to complete specific required coursework due to circumstances beyond his/her control before the end of a given reporting period. In order to remove the ‘I’ from his/her record, the student will meet with the instructor to discuss his/her completion of coursework or the taking of a final exam. In turn, the instructor will issue a new grade two weeks before the closing of the following reporting period. A student’s failure to comply with the instructor’s requirements prior to this deadline will result in an

automatic F grade. Students are encouraged to meet the requirements set by their instructors in order to remove 'I' grades from their reports.

Late Work

No late written assignments (reading journal and essays) will be accepted for credit. Incomplete assignments will be considered late.

Make Up Work/Tests

Work cannot be made up unless there is a documented excused absence.

Grade Appeal Process

Students who wish to appeal a grade should consult the Midwestern State University Undergraduate Catalog.

Academic Misconduct Policy & Procedures

Academic Dishonesty: Cheating, collusion, and plagiarism (the act of using source material of other persons, either published or unpublished, without following the accepted techniques of crediting, or the submission for credit of work not the individuals to whom credit is given). Additional guidelines on procedures in these matters may be found in the Office of Student Conduct.

Academic dishonesty (cheating, plagiarism, etc.) will not be tolerated and will result in dismissal from the course with a grade of "F". Cases will also be referred to the Dean of Students for possible dismissal from the university.

This course observes the MSU Code of Conduct. Academic dishonesty, however small, creates a breach in academic integrity. A student's participation in this course comes with the expectation that his or her work will be completed in full observance of the MSU Code of Student Conduct. A student should consult the Student Handbook or the Office of the Dean of Students for answers to any questions about the code. Student Honor Creed: "As an MSU Student, I pledge not to lie, cheat, steal, or help anyone else to do so."

Cheating includes, but is not limited to, (1) use of any unauthorized assistance in taking quizzes, tests, or examinations; (2) dependence upon the aid of sources beyond those authorized by the instructor in writing papers or completing other assignments; or (3) the acquisition of tests or other academic materials belonging to the university faculty or staff without permission.

Plagiarism includes, but is not limited to, using the published or unpublished works of another person without recognition, either by paraphrase or direct quotation. The use of materials generated by agencies engaged in "selling" term papers is also plagiarism.

Desire-to-Learn (D2L)

Extensive use of the MSU D2L program is a part of this course. Each student is expected to be familiar with this program as it provides a primary source of communication regarding assignments, examination materials, and general course information. You can log into D2L through the MSU Homepage. If you experience difficulties, please contact the technicians listed for the program or contact your instructor.

Instructor Class Policies

Insults, slurs, or attacks of any kind will not be tolerated in this class. Any student who engages in this type of behavior in the classroom will be permanently removed from the class, in addition to other possible punishment by Midwestern State University.

Email: You should always include the course number and section in the subject of your email and include your name as a signature at the end of your message. Please observe proper email etiquette.

Writing a professional email is like writing a business letter. Emails to your professor are not text messages and should not be informal or overly familiar.

Disability Support Services

Midwestern State University is committed to providing equal access for qualified students with disabilities to all university courses and programs, and by law all students with disabilities are guaranteed a learning environment that provides reasonable accommodation of their disability. This guarantee is provided through Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act. The ADA reads: “No qualified individual with a disability shall, by reason of such disability, be excluded from participation in or be denied the benefits of the services, programs, or activities of a public entity, or be subject to discrimination by any such entity.” The Director of Disability Support Services serves as the ADA Coordinator and may be contacted at (940) 397.4140, TDD (940) 397.4515, or 3410 Taft Blvd., Clark Student Center 168.

College Policies

Midterm Grade Reporting

In order to help students keep track of their progress toward course objectives, the instructor for this class will provide a Midterm Progress Report through each student’s WebWorld account. Midterm grades will be reported for all students.

Midterm grades will not be reported on the students’ transcript; nor will they be calculated in the cumulative GPA. They simply give students an idea of where they stand at the midpoint of the semester. Students earning below a C at the midway point should schedule a meeting with their instructor at their earliest possible convenience after midterm grades are posted.

Course Schedule and Outline: We will follow the order of readings provided below. See modules on D2L for details. **Notice: Topics and readings are subject to change. Changes in the course syllabus, procedure, assignments, and schedule may be made at the discretion of the instructor.**

Week	dates	Topic	Readings	Assignments
Part One: The Good Life				
Week 1	Starts January 10	Introduction	FE Introduction EL Introduction	Discussion Questions 1 & 2
Week 2	Starts January 17	Hedonism: Its Powerful Appeal	FE 1 EL 1	Quiz 1 Discussion Questions 3 & 4 Reading Journal 1
Week 3	Starts January 24	Is Happiness All that Matters?	FE 2 EL 2 & 4	Quiz 2 Discussion Questions 5 & 6 Reading Journal 2 Essay One
Part Two: Normative Ethics – Doing the Right Thing				
Week 4	Starts January 31	Morality and Religion	FE 5 EL 6	Quiz 3 Discussion Questions 7 & 8 Reading Journal 3
Week 5	Starts February 7	Natural Law	FE 6 EL 7	Quiz 4 Discussion Questions 9 & 10 Reading Journal 4 Essay Two

Week 6	Starts February 14	Consequentialism: Its Nature and Attractions	FE 9 EL 8	Quiz 5 Discussion Questions 11 & 12 Reading Journal 5
Week 7	Starts February 21	Consequentialism: Its Difficulties	FE 10 EL 8	Quiz 6 Discussion Questions 13 & 14 Reading Journal 6 Essay Three
Week 8	Starts February 28	The Kantian Perspective: Fairness and Justice	FE 11 EL 9	Quiz 7 Discussion Questions 15 & 16 Reading Journal 7
Week 9	Starts March 7	The Kantian Perspective: Autonomy and Respect	FE 12 EL 9	Quiz 8 Discussion Questions 17 & 18 Reading Journal 8 Essay Four
Week 10	Spring Break			
Week 11	Starts March 21	Ethical Pluralism and Absolute Moral Rules	FE 15 EL 11	Quiz 9 Discussion Questions 19 & 20 Reading Journal 9
Week 12	Starts March 28	Ethical Pluralism Prima Facie Duties and Ethical Particularism	FE 16 EL 11	Quiz 10 Discussion Questions 21 & 22 Reading Journal 10 Essay Five
Part Three: Metaethics – The Status of Morality				
Week 13	Starts April 4	Ethical Relativism	FE 19 EL 14	Quiz 11 Discussion Questions 23 & 24 Reading Journal 11
Week 14	Holiday Break			
Week 15	Starts April 18	Moral Nihilism	FE 20 EL 15	Quiz 12 Discussion Questions 25 & 26 Reading Journal 12 Essay Six
Week 16	Starts April 25	Eleven Arguments Against Objectivity; Is Moral Knowledge Possible?	FE 21 & 22 EL 18	Quiz 13 Discussion Questions 27 & 28 Reading Journal 13
Finals Week	Starts April 30			Quiz 14 Term Paper