



Course Syllabus: Ethics

College of Humanities and Social Sciences

PHIL-2033 (online)

Fall 2026 (A Term)

Contact Information

Instructor: Dr. Tyler M. Williams

Office: Bea Wood 236

Office hours: TR 10:00-11:00, 1:00-2:00; W 1:00-2:00; and by appointment

Office Phone: (940) 397-4125

E-mail: tyler.williams@msutexas.edu

Course Catalogue Description

A historical and theoretical introduction to the study of moral philosophy or *ethics*. Questions to be explored include, but are not limited to, “what are good and evil?”, “how ought one to live?”, and “how ought one to act?”

THECB Course Objectives and Assessments

- Critical Thinking Skills
 - To assess the student’s critical thinking skills, the Final Examination Rubric will be applied to the Take-Home Final Examination.
- Communication Skills
 - To assess the student’s written communication skills, the Final Examination Rubric will be applied to the Take-Home Final Examination.
- Personal Responsibility
 - To assess ethical use of sources as a measure of personal responsibility, the Final Examination Rubric will be applied to the Take-Home Final Examination.
- Social Responsibility
 - To assess the student’s ability to understand differing points of view, the Final Examination Rubric will be applied to the Take-Home Final Examination.

Textbook & Instructional Materials:

- Aristotle. *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. Bartlett & Collins. University of Chicago Press.
- John Stuart Mill. *Utilitarianism*. 2nd Edition. Indianapolis: Hackett.
- Immanuel Kant. *Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals*. Trans. James Ellington. Indianapolis: Hackett.

- Michael Sandel. *Justice: What's the Right Thing To Do?* New York: Farrar, Straus, & Giroux.

Course Objectives and Learning Outcomes

Course objectives for PHIL-2033 are:

1. To help students learn, understand, and evaluate the basic issues of moral philosophy from both a historical and theoretical perspective.
2. To help students gain familiarity with various pivotal texts in the history of moral philosophy.
3. To help students develop their skills in interpreting and critically analyzing texts.
4. To help students develop their skills in identifying and evaluating arguments as well as in formulating arguments of their own.
5. To help students improve their ability to read and write clearly and critically.
6. To help students appreciate the relevance of ethical discourse in public and private life and to gain a greater understanding of their personal ethical commitments.
7. To inculcate students with a love of wisdom and a desire to live a philosophical life.

Student Handbook

Refer to: [Student Handbook](#)

Academic Misconduct Policy & Procedures

Students are expected to uphold the standards of “Academic Integrity” set forth by the [MSU Student Honor Creed](#). The instructor will notify the appropriate authority of any infringement of academic honesty.

“Cheating” includes the unauthorized use of certain information, materials, or devices in exams, papers, or assignments. “Plagiarism” includes but is not limited to using the published or unpublished works of another person without recognition. This includes attempts to portray AI-generated material as evidence of a student’s personal knowledge of course content and/or academic skill. A student who makes use of plagiarized material, or anyone that profits from (or abets) cheating, will be dismissed from the course and referred to the Dean of Students.

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 individual to whom credit is given). Additional guidelines on procedures in these matters may be found in the [Office of Student Conduct](#).

PHIL-2033 Policy on the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI)

Students are strictly prohibited from using any and all forms of AI in their submitted work for this course, unless explicitly stated otherwise in an assignment description. Violations of this policy will be treated in accordance with the Academic Misconduct Policy & Procedures outlined above. This course requires that students demonstrate in writing their comprehension of philosophical ideas about the nature of ethical behavior and decision-making. Because philosophical concepts are shaped in and by language, any use of AI that generates language content for the user or edits/clarifies the user’s own language will be treated in this class as a form of cheating. Questions about this policy should be directed to the instructor at the start of the course.

Moffett Library

Moffett Library provides resources and services to support student's studies and assignments, including books, peer-reviewed journals, databases, and multimedia materials accessible both on campus and remotely. The library offers media equipment checkout, reservable study rooms, and research assistance from librarians to help students effectively find, evaluate, and use information. Get started on this [Moffett Library webpage](#) to explore these resources and learn how to best utilize the library.

Grading

Students will be able to view their "real time" grades in the D2L Gradebook according to the following allocation:

Table 1: Points allocated to each assignment

Assignments	Points
Week 1 Scenario Assessment 1	10
Week 1 Scenario Assessment 2	10
Test 1	50
Test 2	50
Test 3	50
Test 4	50
Take-Home Final Exam	80
Total	300

Table 2: Value of final letter grades

Letter grade	Percentage value	Point value range
A	90-100%	270-300
B	80-89%	240-269
C	70-79%	210-239
D	60-69%	180-209
F	0-59%	0-179

Homework

As an "asynchronous" online course, there is no official class time. Students can pace their own way through each week's course content, provided that they are completing the required weekly assignments on time. Homework assignments comprise readings, which should be completed before watching the corresponding lecture video. Lecture videos will be based on the readings and will work under the assumption that students have already prepared the reading. Students are encouraged to meet with the professor for help on reading strategies or on the reading's content. All other homework assignments are listed below.

Tests

Four tests will be administered throughout the course. Tests will be comprised of multiple-choice questions pulled randomly from a larger “pool” of possible questions. Tests are not cumulative, so each pertains only to the course material delivered that week. Each test will require a LockDown browser and webcam video monitoring. It is each student’s responsibility to ensure reliable access to the required technology. Because tests are intended to ensure that students are keeping pace with the course, missed quizzes cannot be retaken after the fact.

6-Page Take-Home Final Exam

Students will complete a 6-page take-home final exam. To submit the final exam, students will upload to the appropriate D2L submission dropbox. These longer questions will combine exegetical questions (where students are required to explain complicated ideas in detail) and applicative questions (where students are required to apply moral philosophies to real-world cases).

Extra Credit

There are no extra credit assignments in this course. Students are encouraged to meet with the professor to strategize study skills and to clarify course content before the need for extra credit would arise.

Late Work

Extensions will not be granted, except for highly exceptional circumstances. A wide enough range is provided for each assignment to be completed according to each student’s individual schedule. “Exceptional circumstances” include dire emergencies and official university activities. Deadline rescheduling needs to be discussed with the professor prior to the original deadline. Written work will be deduced the equivalent of one-third of a letter grade per calendar day late.

Make-up Work/Tests

Missed quizzes or exams cannot be made up after the deadline passes. If a student needs an alternate deadline for a scheduled exam, they are required to arrange that alternate time with the professor prior to the original exam deadline. Instances that warrant such rescheduling include documented illness, medical emergency, or official university activity.

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.

Attendance

As an “asynchronous” online course, there is no classtime to attend. However, ample opportunity exists for engagement to discuss course content either with the professor during office hours and/or online in the course’s Question Board. Office hours and question board posts are not requirements; they’re options. Students are required to complete all modules in the course within the timeframes outlined on the Course Schedule.

Online Computer Requirements

This course relies entirely on D2L for its content delivery. It is your responsibility to have (or have access to) a working computer in this class. ****Assignments and tests are due by the due date, and personal computer technical difficulties will not be considered a reason for the instructor to allow students extra time to submit assignments, tests, or discussion postings.*** Computers are available on campus in various areas of the buildings as well as the Academic Success Center. ****Your computer being down is not an excuse for missing a deadline!*** There are many places to access your class! Our online classes can be accessed from any computer in the world that is connected to the internet. Contact your instructor immediately upon having computer trouble. If you have technical difficulties in the course, there is also a student helpdesk available to you. The college cannot work directly on student computers due to both liability and resource limitations; however, they are able to help you get connected to our online services. For help, log into [D2L](#).

Instructor Class Policies

Help

Students should discuss any concerns with the instructor as soon as possible. Office hours are available throughout the week and appointments can also be made on a case-by-case basis. Students may also post questions to the D2L Question Board if they want to make their question public for the rest of the class to see.

Recordings

Lectures, lecture notes, assignments, etc. remain the intellectual property of the instructor. Students are not permitted to disseminate the content of our class without the prior permission of the instructor. This policy does not apply to a student's own hand-written notes.

Conduct

Actions that diminish the quality of other students' learning will not be tolerated. Insults, slurs, or attacks of any kind will be grounds for permanent removal from the course. Every student is expected to engage with the course material in a responsible and respectful manner. This course requires discussion of a diverse array of philosophical ideas. Students are likely to find some ideas popular and others unpopular. That's normal. Neither the course nor the instructor will defend any one philosophical viewpoint except insofar as it advances the teaching outcomes of the course. Therefore, disagreement is normal in classes of this nature; disagreement is conducive to positive learning outcomes, regardless of whether this disagreement pertains between texts themselves, between texts and readers, or between students. Disagreement that turns negative, derogatory, hostile, or otherwise demeaning *in any way* will not be tolerated in class.

Email

Check your MSU Texas and D2L email inboxes regularly. This is the only way students will be informed about cancellations or any changes to the course. Your instructor will email you via D2L. Therefore, either make sure you check your D2L email regularly or change the settings of your D2L inbox to reroute to your MSU address. Please allow 24 hours for a reply to all emails.

Change of Schedule

A student dropping a course (but not withdrawing from the University) within the first 12 class days of a regular semester or the first four class days of a summer semester is eligible for a 100% refund of applicable tuition and fees. Dates are published in the Schedule of Classes each semester.

Refund and Repayment Policy

A student who withdraws or is administratively withdrawn from Midwestern State University (MSU) may be eligible to receive a refund for all or a portion of the tuition, fees, and room/board charges that were paid to MSU for the semester. However, if the student received financial aid (federal/state/institutional grants, loans, and/or scholarships), all or a portion of the refund may be returned to the financial aid programs. As described below, two formulas (federal and state) exist in determining the amount of the refund. (Examples of each refund calculation will be made available upon request).

Services for Students with Disabilities

In accordance with Section 504 of the Federal Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, Midwestern State University endeavors to make reasonable accommodations to ensure equal opportunity for qualified persons with disabilities to participate in all educational, social, and recreational programs and activities. After notification of acceptance, students requiring accommodations should make an application for such assistance through Disability Support Services, located in the Student Wellness Center, (940) 397-4140. Current documentation of a disability will be required in order to provide appropriate services, and each request will be individually reviewed. For more details, please go to [Disability Support Services](#).

College Policies

Campus Carry Rules/Policies

Refer to: [Campus Carry Rules and Policies](#)

Smoking/Tobacco Policy

College policy strictly prohibits the use of tobacco products in any building owned or operated by WATC. Adult students may smoke only in the outside designated smoking areas at each location.

Alcohol and Drug Policy

To comply with the Drug-Free Schools and Communities Act of 1989 and subsequent amendments, students and employees of Midwestern State are informed that strictly enforced policies are in place which prohibit the unlawful possession, use, or distribution of any illicit drugs, including alcohol, on university property or as part of any university-sponsored activity. Students and employees are also subject to all applicable legal sanctions under local, state, and federal law for any offenses involving illicit drugs on University property or at University-sponsored activities.

Campus Carry

Effective August 1, 2016, the Campus Carry law (Senate Bill 11) allows those licensed individuals to carry a concealed handgun in buildings on public university campuses, except in locations the University establishes as prohibited. The new Constitutional Carry law does not change this process.

Concealed carry still requires a License-to-carry permit, and openly carrying handguns is not allowed on college campuses. For more information, visit [Campus Carry](#).

Active Shooter

The safety and security of our campus is the responsibility of everyone in our community. Each of us has an obligation to be prepared to appropriately respond to threats to our campus, such as an active aggressor. Please review the information provided by the MSU Police Department regarding the options and strategies we can all use to stay safe during difficult situations. For more information, visit [MSUReady – Active Shooter](#). Students are encouraged to watch the video entitled “Run. Hide. Fight.” which may be electronically accessed via the University police department’s webpage: [“Run. Hide. Fight.”](#)

Mandatory Reporting

Under Title IX, all MSU faculty are “mandatory reporters” of any disclosure from a student of sexual assault, abuse, harassment, dating violence, stalking, or other forms of sexual misconduct. It is the legal responsibility of a “mandatory reporter” to notify the Title IX coordinator if a student reports being the victim of any of the aforementioned abuses. For more information, please visit the [Sexual Misconduct Resource](#).

Grade Appeal Process

Update as needed. Students who wish to appeal a grade should consult the Midwestern State University [MSU Catalog](#)

***Notice:** Changes in the course syllabus, procedure, assignments, and schedule may be made at the discretion of the instructor.

Course Schedule

WEEK ONE: Monday, August 24 to Sunday, August 30

- Module 1: Course Information & Introduction.
- Module 2: Week One Assessments.
- Module 3: Divine Command Theory (no reading due to complete this module).
- Ensure you have reliable access to *all* technological requirements for this course (including the Lockdown browser software and the webcam hardware).
- Due: "Week 1 Scenario Assessment: Lying to the Murderer at the Door" to the D2L submissions dropbox no later than 11:59 p.m. on Sunday, August 30. See Module 2 for details.
- Due: "Week 1 Scenario Assessment: The Queen v. Dudley and Stevens" to the D2L submissions dropbox no later than 11:59 p.m. on Sunday, August 30. See Module 2 for details.

WEEK TWO: Monday, August 31 to Sunday, September 6

- Module 4: Consequentialism Introduction (no reading due to complete this module).
- Module 5: Effective Altruism (optional reading: Singer’s “The Life You Can Save” PDF).

WEEK THREE: Monday, September 7 to Sunday, September 13

- Univeristy offices will be closed on Monday, September 7 in observance of Labor Day.
- Read pages 6-12 of Mill's *Utilitarianism* and complete Module 6.
- Read pages 12-20 of Mill's *Utilitarianism* and complete Module 7.
- Read pages 20-26 of Mill's *Utilitarianism* and complete Module 8.
- Due: Test #1 is available to complete in the D2L tests folder anytime between 5:00 a.m. on Thursday, September 10 and 11:59 p.m. on Sunday, September 13

WEEK FOUR: Monday, September 14 to Sunday, September 20

- Read pages 27-34 of Mill's *Utilitarianism* and complete Module 9.
- Read pages 35-41 of Mill's *Utilitarianism* and complete Module 10.
- Module 11: Deontology Introduction.
- Read pages 63-67 of Kant's *Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals* ("On a Supposed Right to Lie") and complete Module 12.
- Read pages 1-5 of Kant's *Grounding* and complete Module 13.
- Read pages 7-17 of Kant's *Grounding* and complete Module 14.
- Due: Test #2 is available to complete in the D2L tests folder anytime between 5:00 a.m. on Thursday, September 17 and 11:59 p.m. on Sunday, September 20.

WEEK FIVE: Monday, September 21 to Sunday, September 27

- Read pages 19-23 of Kant's *Grounding* and complete Module 15.
- Read pages 23-30 of Kant's *Grounding* and complete Module 16.
- Read pages 30-42 of Kant's *Grounding* and complete Module 17.
- Due: Test #3 is available to complete in the D2L tests folder anytime between 5:00 a.m. on Thursday, September 24 and 11:59 p.m. on Sunday, September 27.

WEEK SIX: Monday, September 28 to Sunday, October 4

- Module 18: Ethical Egoism (no reading due to complete this module).
- Use the "Hobbes Reading Guide" to read chapters 13-14 of Thomas Hobbes's *Leviathan* and complete Module 19: Contractarianism.
- Module 20: Libertarianism (recommended reading: chapter 3 of Sandel's *Justice*).
- Module 21: Egalitarianism (recommended reading: chapter 6 of Sandel's *Justice*).
- Module 22: Ethical Consumerism (no reading due to complete this module).
- Due: Test #4 is available to complete in the D2L tests folder anytime between 5:00 a.m. on Thursday, October 1 and 11:59 p.m. on Sunday, October 4.

WEEK SEVEN: Monday, October 5 to Sunday, October 11

- Read Book I of Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* and complete Module 23.
- Read Book II of Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* and complete Module 24
- Read Book III of Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* and complete Module 25
- Read Book VIII of Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* and complete Module 26
- No test this week

FINAL EXAM

- Due: Take-Home Final Exam is due in the D2L dropbox as MS Word or PDF file no later than 11:59 p.m. on Thursday, October 15.