

# Phil 1700 – Ethical Theories

Location: Vertical Campus 5-175

Time: Tuesdays & Thursdays, 2:30 – 3:45

Instructor: Phoebe Friesen

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Office Location: VC 5-272

Office Hours: Tuesdays, 1:30-2:30

## Course Description:

This course will focus on the foundations, theories, and applications of ethics. We will read and discuss a variety of philosophical papers that consider topics such as the origin of morality, when moral responsibility is appropriate to assign (if ever), and what kind of theory might best guide ethical decision-making. The content of the course has been collected from an extensive timespan; it includes writings on ethics from ancient Greece as well as contemporary accounts of morality based on experimental research.

Philosophy is a unique discipline in that the way one thinks is given as much if not more emphasis than what one thinks about. This means that the course will require you to focus not on retaining information by memorizing facts and theories, but rather on developing a skillset that will help you approach philosophy (and a great number of other subjects) on your own. These skills include reading with a mind to underlying arguments, critical thinking, and writing in a clear and convincing manner.

## Readings:

All readings will be available online through Dropbox. Please ensure you have access to the course folder (email me at [phoebe.friesen@baruch.cuny.edu](mailto:phoebe.friesen@baruch.cuny.edu) if you have any issues).

## Grading Breakdown:

Attendance and Participation: 10%

Reading Responses/ In-Class Assignments: 6 total: 30% (5% each)

Debates: 20% (5% for discussion questions, 15% for debate)

Short Paper: 15%

Final Paper OR Final Exam: 25% (5% outline, 20% paper OR 25% exam)

## Attendance and Participation:

A portion of your grade will be based on whether you attend class regularly and contribute to class discussion. Brilliant thoughts and jokes are especially welcome.

- As per Baruch policy, if a student misses more than 4 classes throughout the semester, she or he will be assigned a 'WU'. Please email me in advance if you know you will be missing a class.

### Reading Responses:

These are short (less than one page, double-spaced) assignments requiring you to reflect on an assigned reading before we discuss it in class. All reading responses should be submitted to turnitin.com before class on the due date. Late responses will not be accepted.

Try to focus on the following questions within your response:

Paragraph One: What is the thesis of the paper? What evidence is given in support of it? What argument(s) are given in support of it?

Paragraph Two: Do you think this argument is successful? If yes, why do you think it's successful? If no, why do you think it's unsuccessful?

### In-Class Assignments:

These are exercises in writing and critical thinking that will take place at the beginning, middle, or end of class and will not be announced beforehand. In most cases, you will be required to write a short paragraph or two reflecting on the reading or class discussion.

\* While there will be a total of 8 reading responses and in-class assignments, I will only include your best 6 scores in your final grade. This means you can miss up to 2 in-class assignments or reading responses without penalty. However, if you complete them all, your 2 lowest scores will not count towards your final grade.

### Debates:

Near the end of the course, we will spend a few weeks considering particular topics in applied ethics. The topics will be selected by class consensus and you will each be given opportunity to choose a topic to debate in class with a team of two or three others. You will be expected to come prepared to defend either side of the debate, and will find out the position you are defending on the day of. This is meant to be an exercise in thinking critically about conflicting viewpoints. Debaters are not allowed to consult notes/ screens during the debate, but are welcome to hand in preparation materials (notes, etc) after for a potential grade boost. On the days that you do not present, you are expected to bring a written discussion question to class, each of which will be worth 1%, the best of which will be rewarded with bonus points each class.

### Short Paper:

This paper is meant to give you some experience developing your skills for writing a critical response to philosophical ideas. It is fairly short (between 2-3 pages, double-

spaced). Suggested topics will be distributed roughly two weeks prior to the due date. All papers should be submitted to turnitin.com before class on the due date.

### Final Paper / Final Exam (choose one):

The final paper will allow you to explore a particular issue in applied ethics (your choice) in detail. It is longer than the short paper (5-7 pages, double-spaced) and should consider two sides of an ethical debate while presenting an argument for one. A brief outline of the argument you intend to make in your final paper is due on December 6<sup>th</sup> and will be worth 5% of your grade. The remainder of the paper is worth 20% and should be submitted to turnitin.com by December 15<sup>th</sup> at midnight.

The final exam will be a take-home exam and will include both short and long form questions related to topics covered over the course of the semester. The exam will be distributed at least two weeks before it is due (midnight on December 15<sup>th</sup>). All exams should be submitted to turnitin.com.

### Writing:

For some great advice on writing a philosophy paper, please consult:  
<http://www.jimpryor.net/teaching/guidelines/writing.html>

### Plagiarism:

Plagiarism, intended or not, will be subject to penalties in conformity with the College's policies on Academic Honesty. My policy is to give a 0 (with no chance to make it up) to any assignment that has been plagiarized. In addition, I am required by College policy to submit a report of suspected academic dishonesty to the Office of the Dean of Students. This report becomes part of your permanent file.

Some examples of plagiarism are:

- Adopting a phrase, sentence, or passage from another writer's work without using quotation marks
- Paraphrasing a passage from another writer's work without citation
- Presenting facts, ideas, or text from the Internet as your own
- Submitting another student's work with your name on it
- Submitting your own work from another class
- Purchasing a paper online

Students are responsible for understanding what constitutes plagiarism. Please consult the following website and familiarize yourself with Baruch's policies related to academic honesty if you have not already done so:

[http://www.baruch.cuny.edu/academic/academic\\_honesty.html](http://www.baruch.cuny.edu/academic/academic_honesty.html)

Reading Schedule:

<b>TOPIC</b>	<b>DATE</b>	<b>READINGS</b>	<b>DUE</b>
INTRODUCTION TO MORAL PHILOSOPHY	Thursday, August 25 <sup>th</sup>	No Readings	
	Tuesday, August 30 <sup>th</sup>	“What is Morality?” – James Rachels	
	Thursday, September 1 <sup>st</sup>	No Readings	
MORAL REALISM/ MORAL RELATIVISM	Tuesday, September 6 <sup>th</sup>	“Ethics and Observation” – Gilbert Harman	READING RESPONSE 1
	Thursday, September 8 <sup>th</sup>	“Euthyphro” – Plato	
	Tuesday, September 13 <sup>th</sup>	“From Neural ‘is’ to Moral ‘ought’: what are the moral implications of neuroscientific moral psychology?” – Joshua Greene	
	Thursday, September 15 <sup>th</sup>	“Morality is a Culturally Conditioned Response” – Jesse Prinz	
	Tuesday, September 20 <sup>th</sup>	“Cultural Relativism” – Harry Gensler	READING RESPONSE 2
	Thursday, September 22 <sup>nd</sup>	No Readings	
MORAL RESPONSIBILITY	Tuesday, September 27 <sup>th</sup>	“The Impossibility of Moral Responsibility” – Galen Strawson	
	Thursday, September 29 <sup>th</sup>	“Freedom and Resentment” – P.F. Strawson	
	Thursday, October 13 <sup>th</sup>	“Moral Luck” – Thomas Nagel	READING RESPONSE 3
	Friday, October 14 <sup>th</sup>	“Moral Saints” – Susan Wolf	
	Tuesday, October 18 <sup>th</sup>	No Readings	

MORAL THEORY	Thursday, October 20 <sup>th</sup>	Introduction to “Feminism is for Everybody” – bell hooks	
	Tuesday, October 25 <sup>th</sup>	“The Need for More than Justice” – Annette Baier	SHORT PAPER DUE
	Thursday, October 27 <sup>th</sup>	“The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas” – Ursula K. Le Guin	
	Tuesday, November 1 <sup>st</sup>	“Being Virtuous and Doing the Right Thing” – Julia Annas	READING RESPONSE 4
	Thursday, November 3 <sup>rd</sup>	Selection from “Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals” – Immanuel Kant	
CLASS DEBATES IN APPLIED ETHICS – TOPICS TO BE DETERMINED	Tuesday, November 8 <sup>th</sup>	No Readings	
	Thursday, November 10 <sup>th</sup>	Should marijuana be legalized for recreational use by people 18 and over?	DISCUSSION QUESTION
	Tuesday, November 15 <sup>th</sup>	Is the death penalty justified?	DISCUSSION QUESTION
	Thursday, November 17 <sup>th</sup>	Should the government help the homeless?	DISCUSSION QUESTION
	Tuesday, November 22 <sup>nd</sup>	Do European countries have a duty towards Middle Eastern refugees?	DISCUSSION QUESTION
	Tuesday, November 29 <sup>th</sup>	Is child euthanasia morally permissible?	DISCUSSION QUESTION
	Thursday, December 1 <sup>st</sup>	Should we have more regulations or less regulations on gun control?	DISCUSSION QUESTION
X-PHI	Tuesday, December 6 <sup>th</sup>	“Intentional Action and Side Effects in Ordinary Language” – Joshua Knobe	FINAL PAPER OUTLINE /OPTIONAL BONUS ASSIGNMENT DUE
	Thursday, December 8 <sup>th</sup>	Class Activity of Your Choice ☺	

	Thursday, December 15 <sup>th</sup>		FINAL PAPER/ EXAM DUE
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### Turnitin:

Instructions for a student that has a pre-existing account:

1. Log into your Turnitin account by going to Turnitin.com.
2. Click on the gray "Enroll in a Class" tab in the upper left of the screen.
3. Enter the class ID number (13280955) and case-sensitive enrollment password (morality).
4. Click "Submit."

Instructions for students who are new to Turnitin:

1. Go to Turnitin.com.
2. Click on the "Create Account" link to the upper right, and choose to create a new "Student" account.
3. Follow the profile creation wizard.
4. Within the wizard, you will be asked to enter the class ID number (13280955) and case-sensitive enrollment password (morality).
5. You will add your account information (first and last name, email, password, secret question).
6. When you finish and exit the wizard, you can later log into your account by entering the e-mail address and the password you created in the appropriate fields of the Turnitin login page.

### Grading Scheme:

Grade ^	Grade Point Equivalent	Percentage Equivalent
A	4.0	93.0-100.0
A-	3.7	90.0-92.9
B	3.0	83.0-87.0
B+	3.3	87.1-89.9
B-	2.7	80.0-82.9
C	2.0	73.0-77.0
C+	2.3	77.1-79.9
C-	1.7	70.0-72.9
D	1.0	60.0-67.0
D+	1.3	67.1-69.9
F	0.0	below 60.0