

PHILOSOPHY 2: ETHICS

CSU SACRAMENTO, FALL 2026

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Office Hours: MW 11:00-12:00pm, R² 10:45-11:45am, or by appointment (Mendocino 3026)
Zoom meetings are by appointment only: [csus.zoom.us/my/dorcaschung](https://csus.zoom.us/j/9162873763)

Class Meets: MW 9:00-9:50am in Douglass 110 (sec 3, #80397)
This is a hybrid course which will also include online lectures and assignments
Please see Canvas for more information: [csus.instructure.com](https://canvas.csus.edu)

Required text: Steven M. Cahn, *Exploring Ethics*, 6th Edition (New York: Oxford, 2023)
ISBN: 978-0-19-760906-4

GENERAL INFORMATION

Course Description:

The examination of the concepts of morality, obligation, human rights and the good life. Competing theories about the foundations of morality will be investigated.

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¹ Every effort is made to communicate with you quickly, effectively, and accurately. I take this as an important element of my responsibility to you. However, my response may be delayed outside of office hours and on weekends.

² In case you didn't know, the "R" means "Thursday" (So a class that says TR means it meets on Tuesdays and Thursdays)

Area 3-B Learning Objectives (formerly C-2), The Arts & Humanities (G.E., 3 Units)

The course objectives are as follows:

- Demonstrate knowledge of the conventions and methods of the study of the humanities.
- Investigate, describe, and analyze the roles and effects of human culture and understanding in the development of human societies.
- Compare and analyze various conceptions of humankind.
- Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the historical development of cultures and civilizations, including their animating ideas and values.

Student Learning Outcomes and Assessment for Philosophy 2

Outcome:

- Grasp the theoretical content of significant moral philosophers in various periods of Western Philosophy.
- Explain how traditional ethical theories and problems are possible foundations for moral issues in a pluralistic, diverse, and morally complex society.
- Understand the contributions to and limitations of applying concepts in moral philosophy to various social issues.
- Develop critical thinking, reading, and writing abilities by analyzing one theory against another and/or moral alternative against another.
- Recognize that an informed and critical exploration of contemporary issues can assist in making responsible decisions, which in turn equips the student for participation in a good society.

Assessments:

- Quizzes will test comprehension of the writings of significant moral philosophers and the comprehension of readings on various social issues.
- The group presentations, writing assignments, and exams will test the ability to define, understand, evaluate & criticize, utilize, and apply the relevant content.

Grading and Grade Breakdown

Breakdown of Points:

- Attendance/Participation – 200 (20%)
- Quizzes – 200 (20%)
- Midterm exam – 200 (20%)
- Writing Assessment – 100 (10%)
- Fishbowl – 100 (10%)
- Final Exam – 200 points (20%)

- *TOTAL – 1000 points*

Scale:

- 930-1000 points – A (excellent)
- 900-929 points – A-
- 880-899 points – B+
- 830-879 points – B (above average)
- 800-829 points – B-
- 780-799 points – C+
- 730-779 points – C (average)
- 700-729 points – C -
- 600-699 points – D (below average)
- 0-599 points – F (failure from course)

Technology Component

It is your responsibility to ensure that you have regular and reliable access to the computing facilities necessary for this course. If you come across any technical difficulties (for example, when it comes to accessing Canvas), you should notify me as soon as possible. If the problem is more complex than my skills allow, please contact [Information Resource Technology \(IRT\) Support and Consultation](#) by e-mail: servicedesk@csus.edu or phone (916) 278-7337.

Accommodations and Support

This course and material have been designed for universal access. If you have difficulty accessing any of the material, please let me know at your earliest experience of difficulty.

Disability Access Center

“Sacramento State is committed to ensuring an accessible learning environment where course or instructional content are usable by all students and faculty. If you believe that you require disability-related academic adjustments for this class, please immediately contact [Disability Access Center](#) to discuss eligibility. A current accommodation letter from DAC is required before any modifications, above and beyond what is otherwise available for all other students in this class will be provided.”

Title IX

As your instructor, one of my responsibilities is to help maintain a safe learning environment on our campus. In the event that you choose to write, speak or otherwise disclose information about having experienced sexual misconduct/sexual violence, including rape, sexual assault, sexual battery, dating violence, domestic violence, or stalking and specify that this violence occurred while you or the perpetrator were a Sac State student, federal and state laws require that I, in my capacity as a “responsible employee,” must notify Sac State’s Title IX Coordinator. The Title IX Coordinator will contact you to inform you of your rights and options and connect you with support resources, including possibilities for holding accountable the person who harmed you. Please be advised that you will not be forced to share information and your level of involvement will be your choice.

Sac State's Title IX Coordinator is *Skip Bishop* (Director of Equal Opportunity, Del Norte Hall 2005). You may contact him at william.bishop@csus.edu, 916-278-5770.

If you do not want the Title IX Coordinator notified, instead of disclosing the experience to me, you can speak confidentially by contacting the following confidential resources³:

- Campus Confidential Advocate, weave@csus.edu, 916-278-5850
- WEAVE 24/7 Hotline, 916-920-2952
- [Student Health & Counseling Services](#) at The WELL, 916-278-6461

³ Note: If it is determined that an alleged perpetrator poses an imminent threat to the broader campus community or if persons under 18 years of age are involved, our Campus Confidential Advocate is required to notify the Sacramento State Police Department.

Other University Support and Services

- [Academic Advising](#)
- [Drop and Withdrawal Policy](#)
- [Grading Policy](#)
- [Student Rights & Responsibilities](#)
- [Information Resources & Technology](#)
- [Peer and Academic Resource Center](#)
- [Crisis Assistance & Resource Education Support \(CARES\)](#)
- [Community Support Centers & Programs](#)
- [Student Health and Counseling Services](#)
- [Student Success Center](#)
- [University Reading & Writing Center](#)

PARTICIPATION & POLICIES

Participation points comprise 200 points total (or 20% of your overall course grade). Participation includes, but is not limited to: attendance (50 points); icebreaker activities, participation in class and online discussions, and group work activities (~50 points); and Socrative polls (~100 points).

Respect for One Another

In order to help maintain a successful and flourishing learning environment, I ask that you follow some of the following guidelines:

1. Please be on time to class, and pay attention as you would in any other in-person class.
2. Be respectful to the instructor and classmates, in both your speaking and your listening.
3. Avoid distractions and multitasking (for example, don't be preoccupied by your phone).
4. Actively participate by asking questions or responding to questions. Try not to interrupt, though (raise your hand instead).

Do recognize some of our discussion topics are very important and personal subject matters. While passion for the subject is great, please do not confuse that with emotional/irrational outbursts. Any comments/criticisms not made in the interest of academic pursuit are not tolerated. Please also be aware of the [University's Honor Code](#).

Electronics in the Classroom

Unless your device is an e-reader tablet designed specifically for distraction-free note-taking (such as reMarkable, Kindle Scribe, Supernote, etc), all electronic devices (phones, computers, music players, etc.) must be turned off or put on "silent" mode. Earbuds and headphones should also be taken off your ears. Occasionally we may have activities (such as Socrative) that will involve the use of the web. In those instances, I will allow you to take your devices out. In all other instances, please do not be tethered to them during class time.

You may be interested in reading this article, which discusses the benefits of note-taking by hand: <https://www.gse.harvard.edu/ideas/usable-knowledge/17/08/note-taking-low-tech-often-best>

In addition, note that recording is allowed only to help accommodate students with documented learning disabilities. California law otherwise prohibits recording or filming in a classroom without instructor consent ([Education Code § 78907](#)). Do not record anything in this classroom (for social media sharing, personal distribution, or other use) unless you have the expressed consent of all who are in the recording.

Please be aware that if you persistently fail to comply with my electronics policy, you may have participation points deducted for that class period (2 attendance points per class day).

Absence Policy

If you are unable to attend our class sessions, you're welcome to let me know. I may still mark you as "absent" in the course, however. I generally require some form of documentation giving evidence for absences. Most of the time, though, these are taken on a case-by-case basis.

Keep in mind that you are still responsible for the information that you missed, even if you are absent from class. For example, if there is a Socrative poll, group work activity, or presentation that takes place during your absence, you will still have points deducted if you are not present to complete the activity. You are welcome to contact me if you are interested in completing makeup work. Note that some assignments (such as Fishbowl activities) may be ineligible for makeup.

Late Work Policy

Late assignments will lose 0.5 points for each hour that it is submitted late. The following circumstances are considered legitimate excuses:

- 1) Death in the family
- 2) Medical leave for yourself or an immediate family member; such as your child or spouse
- 3) U.S. military service
- 4) Jury duty, subpoena, or other compulsory governmental activity
- 5) A university-sponsored activity
- 6) Religious or cultural holiday

Documentation or verification must be provided for these excuses. *Computer problems are not legitimate excuses.* Be sure to back up your work.

Please note also that *it is important to be timely* if you are requesting makeup work. By this, I mean that you must inform me of your excusable hardships prior to your missed work, or within at least one or two weeks after the given due dates for which you are requesting the makeup work. For instance, if you tell me right before Finals Week that you experienced hardships months prior, it will be too late to make up work from that month or those months, even if your reasons for hardship are documented and normally excusable.

Academic Honesty

You are responsible for knowing the policies and procedures regarding academic honesty, found in the [University Policy Manual](#). Please pay close attention to what counts as academic dishonesty (Section IV). In addition, you may be interested in utilizing the [Academic Honesty Tutorial](#).

Major graded work in this course must represent your own unaided reasoning and writing unless an assignment explicitly permits AI use. You may not submit AI-generated or AI-revised work as your own. You may not use AI tools during in-class assessments. Some low-stakes preparation activities may allow AI use when explicitly stated. Because AI-detection software is unreliable, course assessments are designed to require in-class, oral, handwritten, or otherwise observable demonstrations of learning.⁴

I do believe that there is great benefit to you in doing the hard work yourself and struggling through the daily grind. You may be interested in reading the following article from MIT, which reveal in preliminary studies that people who rely too much on LLMs like ChatGPT have weaker brain connectivity patterns: www.media.mit.edu/projects/your-brain-on-chatgpt/overview/.

READING ASSIGNMENTS

Reading assignments are found on the calendar schedule at the very end of this Syllabus. Readings may be found either in your assigned textbook or on Canvas. You should be reading the corresponding material for homework while it is being covered in class lecture and class discussion.

You may notice that these readings can be a little hard and deep. Don't be surprised if it takes more than one reading to really understand the material. I would advise you to join regular study groups – they can help!

QUIZZES

There will be a total of 10 quizzes worth 20 points each, comprising a total of 200 points, or up to 20% of your overall course grade. They will be based on both reading and lecture content, and will be administered in class.

A schedule of the readings and their corresponding quizzes are found in the Calendar Schedule, found at the end of this Syllabus.

FISHBOWL DEBATE/PRESENTATION

Fishbowls will comprise a total of 100 points, or 10% of the overall course grade. This is a presentation/debate that you will participate in with a group of classmates. The Fishbowl has three aspects: Presentation (50 points), Questions (20 points), and Peer Reviews (30 points). The presentation portion will be relevant for the individuals presenting during that particular day; but the questions and peer reviews will be relevant for all those listening to the presentation/debate. More information on the Fishbowls will be provided for you in Canvas.

⁴ Many thanks to Prof. Matt McCormick for writing this paragraph portion of the AI-use policy.

Signups for fishbowl presentation topics will be made available to you in the People section of Canvas. Please check the calendar for the topics and presentation dates (see Weeks 9-15).

WRITING ASSESSMENT

You will have one in-class writing assessment due this semester. The paper will coincide with your Midterm Exam, and will be a moral theory application paper. Further details will be made available to you in Canvas.

Citing Sources

It is very important that you properly cite sources. The most important thing I look for is that you are giving credit to the authors and providing page numbers for all your quotes and paraphrases. Failure to provide correct citations may be given point penalties and may be counted as “plagiarized.”

EXAMS

You will have two exams in this course – a Midterm, and a Final Exam. Each exam will comprise 20% of your total grade (200 points). Together, the exams will comprise 40% of your grade (400 points). The Midterm will assess material covered between Weeks 1-7 (Moral Theories), and the Final Exam will assess material covered between Weeks 9-15 (Moral Issues). Please bring a bigger (8.5 x 11) Blue Book or Green Book to class on the day of your exam.

Exams will generally follow the following pattern: 1) Identification (multiple choice, fill-in-the-blanks, short answer, etc.); and 2) Definitions (defining/explaining significant terms and concepts).

CALENDAR SCHEDULE

Please see the attached calendar below for a tentative schedule of our course. Note that the assigned (required) readings may be accessed either in Canvas or via your textbook. However, they are subject to change due to any unforeseen circumstances. In addition, please keep in mind that the list of due dates is not exhaustive of all of your assignments. You may have in-class group activities, Socrative polls, or other participation activities to complete.

If there are changes, I'll let you know, either in class or on Canvas!

AUGUST/SEPTEMBER 2026

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
31 (Wk01) Syllabus and Introductions	1	2 Defining Philosophy and Ethics	3	4 <i>ONLINE: Watch Relativism videos & read King & Timmons (both in Canvas)</i>
7 (Wk02) <u>NO SCHOOL</u> Labor Day Holiday	8	9 <u>NO IN-PERSON CLASS</u> <u>office hours cancelled</u> (Professor on family leave) <i>Watch Relativism videos & read King & Timmons</i>	10	11 <i>ONLINE: Watch Relativism videos & read King & Timmons (both in Canvas)</i>
14 (Wk03) <u>God & Morality</u> <i>Read: Singer & Hare (in Canvas)</i> Quiz 1 on Relativism	15	16 <u>God & Morality</u> <i>Read: Singer & Hare (in Canvas)</i>	17	18 <i>ONLINE: Watch God & Morality videos</i>
21 (Wk04) <u>Utilitarianism</u> <i>Read: Mill, p. 100-108; and Driver, p. 109-117</i> Quiz 2 on God & Morality	22	23 <u>Utilitarianism</u> <i>Read: Mill, p. 100-108; and Driver, p. 109-117</i>	24	25 <i>ONLINE: Watch Utilitarianism videos</i>
28 (Wk05) <u>Deontology</u> <i>Read: Kant, p. 86-95; and O'Neill, p. 96-99</i> Quiz 3 on Utilitarianism	29	30 <u>Deontology</u> <i>Read: Kant, p. 86-95; and O'Neill, p. 96-99</i>		

OCTOBER 2026

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
			1	2 <i>ONLINE: Watch Deontology videos</i>
5 (Wk06) <u>Virtue Ethics</u> <i>Read: Aristotle (p. 118-124); and Driver (p. 125-128)</i> Quiz 4 on Deontology	6	7 <u>Virtue Ethics</u> <i>Read: Aristotle (p. 118-124); and Driver (p. 125-128)</i>	8	9 <i>ONLINE: Watch Virtue Ethics videos</i>
12 (Wk07) <u>Care Ethics</u> <i>Read: Held (p. 129-134)</i> Quiz 5 on Virtue Ethics	13	14 <u>Care Ethics</u> <i>Read: Held (p. 129-134)</i>	15	16 <i>ONLINE: Watch Care Ethics videos</i> Also take Quiz 6 on Care Ethics in Canvas Quizzes
19 (Wk08) Writing Assessment Please bring an 8.5 x 11 green book to class	20	21 MIDTERM Please bring an 8.5 x 11 green book to class	22	23
26 <u>World Hunger</u> <i>Read: Singer (p. 157-167); and Timmerman (p. 168-172)</i>	27	28 <u>World Hunger</u> <i>Read: Singer (p. 157-167); and Timmerman (p. 168-172)</i>	29	30 <i>ONLINE: Watch World Hunger videos</i>

NOVEMBER 2026

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
2 (Wk09) <i>ETHICS SYMPOSIUM</i> <i>(go to University Union,</i> <i>Redwood Room)</i>	3	4 <u>Fishbowl Debate 1</u> on World Hunger Quiz 7 on World Hunger	5	6 <i>ONLINE: Begin watching</i> <i>Immigration videos</i>
9 (Wk10) <u>Immigration</u> Read: Miller (p. 184-195); and Mendoza (in Canvas)	10	11 <u>NO SCHOOL</u> Veteran's Day Holiday	12	13 <i>ONLINE: Continue</i> <i>watching Immigration</i> <i>videos</i>
16 (Wk11) <u>Immigration</u> Read: Miller (p. 184-195); and Mendoza (in Canvas)	17	18 <u>Fishbowl Debate 2</u> on Immigration Quiz 8 on Immigration	19	20 <i>ONLINE: Watch Abortion</i> <i>videos</i>
23 (Wk12) <u>Abortion</u> Read: Warren (p. 406-420); and Marquis (p. 422-428)	24	25 <u>Abortion</u> Read: Warren (p. 406-420); and Marquis (p. 422-428)	26 <u>NO SCHOOL</u> Thanksgiving Holiday	27 <u>NO SCHOOL</u> Thanksgiving Holiday
30 (Wk13) <u>Fishbowl Debate 3</u> on Abortion Quiz 9 on Abortion				

DECEMBER 2026

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
	1	2 <u>Euthanasia</u> Read: Rachels (p. 444-451); and Foot (in Canvas)	3	4 <i>ONLINE: Watch Euthanasia videos</i>
7 (Wk14) <u>Euthanasia</u> Read: Rachels (p. 444-451); and Foot (in Canvas)	8	9 <u>Fishbowl Debate 4</u> on Euthanasia Quiz 10 on Euthanasia	10	11
14 (Wk15)	15	16 FINAL EXAM Please bring a Green Book 8:00 – 10:00am	17	18
21	22	23	24	25
28	29	30	31	