

## PHI 192 – Introduction to Moral Theory – Fall 2023 TENTATIVE Syllabus

Syracuse University; Instructor: Jags Singh ([jsdosanj@syr.edu](mailto:jsdosanj@syr.edu)), Phone: 315-944-0039

### Office Hours

Held for 1-hour Mondays and Wednesdays from 6:45pm until 7:45pm in Bowne Hall room 103 or by appointment. Email me for appointments. In emergency circumstances you can contact me via phone, I will answer if I am awake and available. If I do not pick up, leave a message and I'll get in touch with you.

### Overview

This course is an introduction to the major theories about moral rightness and wrongness, about virtue and vice, and about value and disvalue. We examine historically influential theories in the Western philosophical tradition that continue to be of contemporary interest, such as Utilitarian, Kantian, and Aristotelian theories. Along the way, we discuss the relationship between morality and self-interest, as well as some disputed moral issues, such as our duties to non-human animals, the obligations of the affluent towards the poor, the ethics of abortion, gun control, hate speech and free speech, and the ethics of violence in sports. We will use both historical and contemporary readings.

### Goals

The goal of the course is for you to develop skills in reading, writing, and most importantly discussing philosophy.

### Assessment

Your final grade will be composed of the following parts:

- 10 Reading Responses (10%)
- Participation (30%)
- Mid-Term Exam (30%)
- Final Exam (30%)

A	94-100%
A-	90-93%
B+	87-89%
B	84-86%
B-	80-83%
C+	77-79%
C	74-76%
C-	70-73%
D	60-69%
F	59% or less

Grade Rubric:

### General Class Breakdown

This class will be taught completely in person. There will be no online classes or recordings of classes or zooming in. This is not a hybrid class. If Covid forces us to end in person classes, only

then will lectures be held online through Blackboard Collaborate. **Laptops/phones may not be used during class.** Only those who have an accommodation letter from the Center for Disability Resources will be allowed to use their laptops. Otherwise, I will not allow any electronics in the class. I will try to give us a short break halfway through each class. I will post the slides on Blackboard after we cover the material in class. If we fall behind on material, the slides will be posted only after we cover the material in class. You should use the slides to study for the two exams that will make up the bulk of your grade. The exams will be made up of multiple-choice questions. Most of the class time will consist of conversation between us, so be prepared to participate. Put up your hand to ask questions at any time. Please don't talk over each other. All readings will be posted on Blackboard in PDF format. You must submit Reading Responses by midnight the night before we cover the material. So, it is advised that you plan to do the reading before each class.

## **Participation**

You are expected to attend every class unless you have some emergency. If you need to miss a class, please send me an email explaining why. Send me this email before class if possible.

**This is a high participation class with a heavy emphasis on discussion.** Participation is worth 30% of your total grade. During class I will have a sheet that I will use to mark off discussion contributions. You will earn one checkmark per class that you speak in. It does not matter what you say or how many times you speak in a single class. You just needed to contribute to the conversation one time per class to get a checkmark for that class and, no, you cannot get more than one check per class. Each checkmark will be worth 1.5%, so you will only need to speak in 20 different classes to get the full 30%.

I expect everyone in the class to contribute to the class discussion. You are expected to know the reading material and to make a meaningful contribution to the discussion based on that material. You should try to come to class with at least one question. I will call out students who have not participated in the class or students who are not paying attention. So, expect to be called on every class.

**Do not talk while another student is talking or while I am talking. Do not make snide or jeering comments after another student has given their thoughts. I consider this rude and disruptive to the learning of the whole class.** Put up your hand and you can speak. If you fail to do so, you will receive two warnings and I will speak to you after class. After that if you keep talking while others are speaking or making unpleasant comments under your breath, I will start docking your participation points per interruption. I will be moving students around to avoid having to impose these harsh penalties. I reserve the right to move any student to a different seat at any time for any reason.

In my class, there will be no censorship of your ideas or favoring of any moral view over any other. It is not my place to try to indoctrinate you in my personal moral beliefs. So, everyone is welcome to contribute their ideas as long as you provide reasons for your beliefs. Everyone's ideas are going to be challenged in this class, including mine, be prepared for that. That being said, try to keep contemporary politics out of the discussion. You can still have whatever opinion you want, just generalize your examples, there is no need to drop names or take direct digs at others.

We will be discussing all manner of awful things in this class. I understand that some people may have sensitivities to certain topics, but in this class discussion of every type of immoral action is

unavoidable. The topic of the class is morality. So, be prepared to discuss the absolute worst types of immoral actions in detail.

## Exams

There are two exams that will make up the bulk of your grade. The Midterm and the Final Exam are each worth 30%. Both exams will be available online under Exams on Blackboard.

Each exam will be open book, it will cover approximately 11 readings, and will consist of 30 multiple-choice questions. So, each question will be worth 1% of your overall grade. The exams will be available for 24 hours. You can start the exam anytime within that 24-hour period. Once you start the exam, you must finish it in one sitting. You will have 80 minutes to finish each exam.

The format of the exams is quite easy (open book, multiple choice, 80 minutes, etc.). However, the questions will be quite hard. So, before each exam there will be a class where we will try to catch-up on any remaining materials and do exam prep. Exam prep will consist of you bringing me questions or topics that you want to go over again, and as a class we will review that material before the exam.

**There will be no make-ups for missed exams unless there is a serious emergency.** If there is a serious emergency, it is your responsibility to inform me in a timely manner to avoid penalties. You can reach me by email [jsdosanj@syr.edu](mailto:jsdosanj@syr.edu) or phone 315-944-0039.

A side note, if you're having a tough time or some things are going on in your life that make it difficult for you to do the exam, CONTACT ME. I *might* be willing to grant you an extension. But **only if you contact me before the deadline.**

## Reading Responses

There are 22 readings. You owe me 10 Reading Responses on 10 **different** readings throughout the semester. You can choose which readings to post a response on. No, you may not do more than one response on the same reading. These are worth 10% of your total grade, so 1% each.

What is a reading response? It consists of three requirements:

1. Briefly explain ONE of the authors main arguments or claims from the reading.
2. Clearly state whether you agree or disagree. You lose points if you don't do this part.
3. Explain why you agree or disagree. You get a zero if you don't do this part.

If you procrastinate and do not submit anything until late in the semester, please understand **there will be no make-ups for missed Reading Responses.**

You can submit responses through Blackboard on the Discussion board. There will be a different forum and thread for each reading. This forum thread will disappear from Blackboard after the due date. So, it will not even be possible for you to submit them late.

You will earn 1% for each satisfactory response submitted, as long as it demonstrates that you have read and thought about the material, and you fulfil the three requirements listed above. Partial credit might be given.

Reading Responses are to be submitted no later than 11:59pm EST the day before the reading is scheduled (see the reading schedule below). If the reading is covered on two days, then it is due before the first class.

I will try to look over the Reading Responses before class and try to incorporate them into the lecture.

BONUS: If you want to submit more than 10 Reading Responses, you may. Each additional reading response past the 10th will give you a bonus 0.25% towards your overall grade. This is your only chance to earn bonus points in my class. There will not be any other bonus points or assignments.

## Class Schedule

**All readings will be available on Blackboard under Readings.**

Mon Aug 28 **No Reading:** Class Introduction, Syllabus, Expectations

Wed Aug 30 **No Reading:** Thought Experiments, Basic Arguments, & Logical Fallacies

Tue Sept 05 **Reading Resp Due: Shaffer-Landau - Introduction: The Fundamentals of Ethics**

Wed Sept 06 **Reading 1:** Russ Shaffer-Landau - Introduction: The Fundamentals of Ethics

Sun Sept 10 **Reading Resp Due: Shaffer-Landau - Ethical Relativism**

Mon Sept 11 **Reading 2:** Russ Shaffer-Landau - Ethical Relativism

Wed Sept 13 **Reading 2:** Russ Shaffer-Landau - Ethical Relativism (Same as last class)

Sun Sept 17 **Reading Resp Due: Mill - Utilitarianism**

Mon Sept 18 **Reading 3:** John Stuart Mill - Utilitarianism

Wed Sept 20 **Reading 3:** John Stuart Mill - Utilitarianism (Same as last class)

Sun Sept 24 **Reading Resp Due: Nozick - The Experience Machine, Shaffer-Landau - The Problem of Injustice, and Le Guin - The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas**

Mon Sept 25 **Readings 4, 5, & 6:** Robert Nozick - The Experience Machine, Russ Shaffer-Landau - The Problem of Injustice, & Ursula K. Le Guin - The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas (Yes three readings but all very short I promise).

Tue Sept 26 **Reading Resp Due: Shaffer-Landau - The Kantian Perspective**

Wed Sept 27 **Reading 7:** Russ Shaffer-Landau - The Kantian Perspective

Mon Oct 02 **Reading 7:** Russ Shaffer-Landau - The Kantian Perspective (Same as last class)

Tue Oct 03 **Reading Resp Due: O'Neill - A Simplified Account of Kant's Ethics**

Wed Oct 04 **Reading 8:** Onora O'Neill - A Simplified Account of Kant's Ethics

Tue Oct 10 **Reading Resp Due: Aristotle - Nicomachean Ethics**

Wed Oct 11 **Reading 9:** Aristotle - Nicomachean Ethics

Sun Oct 15 **Reading Resp Due: Hursthouse - Normative Virtue Ethics**

Mon Oct 16 **Reading 10:** Rosalind Hursthouse - Normative Virtue Ethics

Tue Oct 17 **Reading Resp Due: Shaffer-Landau - Ross's Ethic of Prima Facie Duties**

Wed Oct 18 **Reading 11:** Russ Shaffer-Landau - Ross's Ethic of Prima Facie Duties

Mon Oct 23 **No Reading:** Catch-up and Exam Prep

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**Wed Oct 25 Midterm Exam Online: Due by 8pm**

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Sun Oct 29 **Reading Resp Due: Norcross - Puppies, Pigs and People**

Mon Oct 30 **Reading 12:** Alastair Norcross - Puppies, Pigs and People

Tue Oct 31 **Reading Resp Due: Singer - Famine, Affluence, Morality**

Wed Nov 01 **Reading 13:** Peter Singer - Famine, Affluence, Morality

Sun Nov 05 **Reading Resp Due: Wolf - Moral Saints**

Mon Nov 06 **Reading 14:** Susan Wolf - Moral Saints

Tue Nov 07 **Reading Resp Due: Thomson - A Defense of Abortion**

Wed Nov 08 **Reading 15:** Judith Jarvis Thomson - A Defense of Abortion

Sun Nov 12 **Reading Resp Due: Marquis - Why Abortion is Immoral**

Mon Nov 13 **Reading 16:** Don Marquis - Why Abortion is Immoral

Tue Nov 14 **Reading Resp Due: LaFollette - Gun Control**

Wed Nov 15 **Reading 17:** Hugh LaFollette - Gun Control

Mon Nov 20 Thanksgiving Break

Wed Nov 22 Thanksgiving Break

Sun Nov 26 **Reading Resp Due: Hughes & Hunt - Liberal Basis of the Right to Bear Arms**

Mon Nov 27 **Reading 18:** Todd Hughes & Lester Hunt - Liberal Basis of the Right to Bear Arms

Tue Nov 28 **Reading Resp Due: Nicholas Dixon - A Moral Critique of Mixed Martial Arts**

Wed Nov 29 **Reading 19:** Nicholas Dixon - A Moral Critique of Mixed Martial Arts

Sun Dec 03 **Reading Resp Due: Steven Weimer - On the Alleged Intrinsic Immorality of MMA**

Mon Dec 04 **Reading 20:** Steven Weimer - On the Alleged Intrinsic Immorality of MMA

Tue Dec 05 **Reading Resp Due: Mill - On Liberty**

Wed Dec 06 **Reading 21:** John Stuart Mill - On Liberty

Sun Dec 10 **Reading Resp Due: Yong - Does Freedom of Speech Include Hate Speech?**

Mon Dec 11 **Reading 22:** Caleb Yong - Does Freedom of Speech Include Hate Speech?

**Fri Dec 15 (Tentative Date) Final Exam Online: Due by 8pm**

### **Academic Integrity**

Syracuse University's Academic Integrity Policy reflects the high value that we, as a university community, place on honesty in academic work. The policy defines our expectations for academic honesty and holds students accountable for the integrity of all work they submit. Students should understand that it is their responsibility to learn about course-specific expectations, as well as about university-wide academic integrity expectations. The policy governs appropriate citation and use of sources, the integrity of work submitted in exams and assignments, and the veracity of signatures on attendance sheets and other verification of participation in class activities. The policy also prohibits students from submitting the same work in more than one class without receiving written authorization in advance from both instructors. Under the policy, students found in violation are subject to grade sanctions determined by the course instructor and non-grade sanctions determined by the School or College where the course is offered as described in the Violation and Sanction Classification Rubric. Syracuse University students are required to read an online summary of the University's academic integrity expectations and provide an electronic signature agreeing to abide by them twice a year during pre-term check- in on MySlice. The Violation and Sanction Classification Rubric establishes recommended guidelines for the determination of grade penalties by faculty and instructors, while also giving them discretion to select the grade penalty they believe most suitable, including course failure, regardless of violation level. **Any established violation in this course may result in course failure regardless of violation level.** All academic integrity expectations that apply to in-person quizzes and exams also apply to online quizzes and exams. In this course, all work submitted for quizzes and exams must be yours alone. Discussing quiz or exam questions with anyone during the quiz or exam period violates academic integrity expectations for this course. Using websites that charge fees or require uploading of course material to obtain exam solutions or assignments completed by others and present the work as your own violates academic integrity expectations in this course.

### **Disabilities**

Syracuse University values diversity and inclusion; we are committed to a climate of mutual respect and full participation. There may be aspects of the instruction or design of this course that result in barriers to your inclusion and full participation in this course. I invite any student to contact me to discuss strategies and/or accommodations (academic adjustments) that may be essential to your success and to collaborate with the Center for Disability Resources (CDR) in this process. If you would like to discuss disability-accommodations or register with CDR, please visit Center for Disability Resources. Please call (315) 443-4498 or email [disabilityresources@syr.edu](mailto:disabilityresources@syr.edu) for more detailed information. The CDR is responsible for coordinating disability-related academic accommodations and will work with the student to develop an access plan. Since academic accommodations may require early planning and generally are not provided retroactively, please contact CDR as soon as possible to begin this process.

### **Religious Observances**

Syracuse University's Religious Observances Policy recognizes the diversity of faiths represented in the campus community and protects the rights of students, faculty, and staff to observe religious holy days according to their traditions. Under the policy, students should have an opportunity to make up any examination, study, or work requirements that may be missed due to a religious observance provided they notify their instructors no later than the end of the second week of classes

for regular session classes and by the submission deadline for flexibility formatted classes. Student deadlines are posted in MySlice under Student Services/Enrollment/My Religious Observances/Add a Notification.