

## Phi 2300: Moral Theory and Practice

**Instructor:** Dr. Duane Long

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**Office:** Catt Hall 432

**Office Hours:** Mondays 12:00PM-2:00PM; Fridays 8:30-9:30AM

Also available by appointment

**Meeting Time:** MWF 9:55 - 10:45 AM

**Classroom:** 1131 NSRIC

Section 23

3 credits

**Learning Outcomes:** Upon completing this course, students should be able to do the following:

- Explain arguments for and objections to views that deny there are any moral truths
- Explain major historical answers to the question “Why be moral?”
- Explain major philosophical analyses of where the motivation to be moral comes from and describe important empirical findings on moral motivation, particularly with respect to behavior in the workplace
- Describe prominent philosophical analyses of what a just economic system looks like
- Explain prominent arguments for and against affirmative action in hiring and philosophical analyses of the place of meritocratic thinking in good business hiring policy

**Required Texts:** There is no book for this class. All readings will be made available on Canvas. However, the readings on Canvas are required, not optional.

**Course Purpose:** One of the most fundamental questions in human life is, “How should I live?” Many people, however, give little if any thought to this question, for a variety of reasons. Some people believe there is no answer to the question; no way of living is any better or worse than any other. Others believe there is no way to know what the answer is; after all, we’ve been asking the question for thousands of years and haven’t reached a decisive answer. And still others believe asking and answering the question is a luxury they can’t afford: doing so doesn’t get you a job, pay your rent, or put money in your retirement account. This class seeks to convince you that you should take this question seriously: the grounds for doubting that there is an answer\* or that it can be known are overblown, and the rewards for asking and (hopefully) answering it are significant. We will spend part of the semester on the more theoretical questions about morality above; after that, we will look at more specific questions about morality and the motivation to be moral, particularly in the context of the workplace (where most of you will spend most of your waking hours for most of your lives).

### **Statement of Free Expression**

Iowa State University supports and upholds the First Amendment protection of freedom of speech and the principle of academic freedom in order to foster a learning environment where open inquiry and the vigorous debate of a diversity of ideas are encouraged. Students will not be penalized for the content or viewpoints of their speech as long as student expression in a class context is germane to the subject matter of the class and conveyed in an appropriate manner.

- No employee, student, applicant, or campus visitor is compelled to disclose their pronouns.
- Anyone may voluntarily disclose their own pronouns.

**General Course Expectations:** Most of you taking this class are doing so to fill an ethics or humanities requirement. As such, there is no expectation that you have taken any philosophy classes before or developed the skills of a philosophy major. The expectations for the class are calibrated on the assumption that this is your first or, perhaps, second philosophy course. That being said, the class is not a freebie ‘A’ - you do have to show some aptitude at doing philosophy to do really well in the class. Some of you may be naturals at the discipline; others may have to put in significant work to develop that aptitude. I am here to help any and all of you as you work to achieve the grade you desire. To get the most out of the class, the following are best practices:

- Attend lectures consistently
- Arrive on time and do not leave early
- Do the assigned readings before the class in which they will be discussed
- Stay off your phone and only use computers for note-taking and other class-related activities
- Participate in class discussion, whether by asking questions or answering them
- Pay close attention when your classmates are speaking. Philosophy works best when it is a conversation, and every contributor to that conversation brings something of value
- Take notes during lecture. I do not distribute my lecture notes. If you have to miss a class and want notes from that class, you will need to find a classmate who will share their notes
- Visit me in office hours if something is unclear or if you have follow-up questions that go beyond what we cover in lecture

### **Course Grading Scheme**

- Questions and responses on Perusall: 15%
- Short Papers (2): 12% each = 24%
- Take-Home Exams (2): 18% each = 36%
- Final Exam: 25%

Late papers or take-home exams will be penalized 1/3 of a letter grade for each day they are late. If you miss the final exam without a documented emergency, you will not have an opportunity to take it late. Regardless of points earned, you must do all the papers and exams to pass the course.

Grade distribution:

Grade	Quality Points	Percentage	Grade	Quality Points	Percentage
A	4	93.0% - 100.00%	C	2	73.0% - 76.9%
A-	3.67	90.0% - 92.9%	C-	1.67	70.0% - 72.9%
B+	3.33	87.0% - 89.9%	D+	1.33	67.0% - 69.9%
B	3	83.0% - 86.9%	D	1	63.0% - 66.9%
B-	2.67	80.0% - 82.9%	D-	0.67	60.0% - 62.9%
C+	2.33	77.0% - 79.9%	F	0	59.9% or below

The default assumption of the class is that all grade fractions will be rounded DOWN to the nearest whole percent (i.e. an 89.999% is a B+, not an A-). However, the professor, at his sole discretion, reserves the right to round a grade up instead of down if he feels the result better

reflects a student's efforts, participation, and mastery of the material (for instance, if a single grade is especially dragging a student's average down or if a student shows consistent improvement over the course of the semester).

### **Policy on Academic Dishonesty**

The class will follow Iowa State University's policy on academic misconduct (5.1 in the Student Code of Conduct). Students are responsible for adhering to university policy and the expectations in the course syllabus and on coursework and exams and for following directions given by faculty, instructors, and ISU Test Center regulations related to coursework, assessments, and exams. Anyone suspected of academic misconduct will be reported to the Office of Student Conduct in the Dean of Students Office. Information about academic integrity and the value of completing academic work honestly can be found in the Iowa State University Academic Integrity Tutorial.

- **Generative AI**: Use of generative AI is not allowed on any assignment in this course. If detected, such use will be reported as academic misconduct. Please be aware, many writing assistance programs such as Grammarly now use generative AI. As such, use of these programs is not allowed. It is your obligation to check and confirm that any software you use to bolster your writing does not use generative AI content.

### **Accessibility Statement**

Iowa State University is committed to advancing equity, access, and inclusion for students with disabilities. Promoting these values entails providing reasonable accommodations where barriers exist to students' full participation in higher education. Students in need of accommodations or who experience accessibility-related barriers to learning should work with Student Accessibility Services (SAS) to identify resources and support available to them. Staff at SAS collaborate with students and campus partners to coordinate accommodations and to further the academic excellence of students with disabilities. Information about SAS is available online at [www.sas.dso.iastate.edu](http://www.sas.dso.iastate.edu), by email at [accessibility@iastate.edu](mailto:accessibility@iastate.edu), or by phone at 515-294-7220.

### **Discrimination and Harassment**

Iowa State University does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, age, ethnicity, religion, national origin, pregnancy, sexual orientation, gender identity, genetic information, sex, marital status, disability, or status as a U.S. Veteran. Inquiries regarding non-discrimination policies may be directed to Office of Equal Opportunity, 3410 Beardshear Hall, 515 Morrill Road, Ames, Iowa 50011, Tel. 515-294-7612, Hotline 515-294-1222, email [eooffice@iastate.edu](mailto:eooffice@iastate.edu).

### **Mental Health and Well-Being Resources**

At Iowa State, we're committed to your success and well-being. As a Cyclone, you can access 24/7 resources, services, and people dedicated to helping you achieve your goals and be your best in and out of the classroom. Whether you need academic support or just someone to talk to, we're here for you at Cyclone Support ([cyclonesupport.iastate.edu](http://cyclonesupport.iastate.edu)). If you are struggling emotionally and need support, there's confidential help available 24/7/365. You can call or text 988 or use the chat at [988lifeline.org](http://988lifeline.org).

## **Reading Schedule**

### **Week 1**

8/26: Intro. Syllabus.

## **Unit 1: Does morality even exist? Is morality “all just your opinion”?**

8/28: Start James Rachels, "Egoism and Skepticism"

8/30: Continue Rachels, “Egoism and Skepticism”

### **Week 2**

9/2: **Labor Day; no class**

9/4: Mackie, “The Argument from Queerness”

9/6: James Rachels, “Subjectivism in Ethics”

### **Week 3**

9/9: Continue Rachels, “Subjectivism in Ethics”

Start James Rachels, “The Challenge of Cultural Relativism”

9/11: Finish discussing all Rachels readings

9/13: No reading. Topic: How to write a philosophy paper

**Assignment: Short paper #1 on Unit 1. Due 9/20 by 11:59PM**

## **Unit 2: Why Be Moral?**

### **Week 4**

9/16: Start Plato, *Republic IV*

9/18: Continue Plato, *Republic IV*

Start Plato, *Republic VIII*

9/20: Continue *Republic VIII*

Start Plato, *Republic IX*

**Short Paper #1 Due by 11:59PM. Submit on Canvas.**

### **Week 5**

9/23: Continue *Republic IX*

9/25: Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* Book 1 chapters 1, 4, and 5

9/27: Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* Book 1 chapter 7

### Week 6

9/30: Marcus Aurelius, *Meditations*, Book 2

10/2: Immanuel Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, 23-31

**Take-home Exam 1 on Unit 2 Distributed. Due 10/13 by 11:59PM**

### **Unit 3a: Moral Motivation**

10/4: Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* Book 1 chapter 13

### Week 7

10/7: David Hume, “On the Influencing Motives of the Will”

10/9: Continue Hume

David McNaughton, *Moral Vision* (excerpt)

10/11: Eric Schwitzgebel, “Aiming for Moral Mediocrity”

**Take-home Exam 1 Due Sunday, 10/13 by 11:59PM. Submit on Canvas.**

### Week 8

10/14: Continue Schwitzgebel

**Assignment: Short paper #2 on Unit 3a. Due 10/25 by 11:59PM**

### **Unit 3b: Moral Motivation in the Workplace**

10/16: Drumwright, Prentice, and Biasucci, “Behavioral Ethics and Teaching Ethical Decision Making”, just pp. 434-442

**Watch Milgram Experiment Video Before Class**

10/18: Tepper, “When Managers Pressure Employees to Behave Badly: Toward a Comprehensive Response” 591-598

### Week 9

10/21: Continue Tepper

10/23: Sekerka, Bagnozzi, and Charnigo, “Facing Ethical Challenges in the Workplace: Conceptualizing and Measuring Professional Moral Courage

10/25: Sekerka, Comer, and Godwin, "Professional Moral Courage: Fostering Principled Performance at Work" 557-567

**Short Paper #2 Due. Submit on Canvas.**

Week 10

10/28: Bok, "Whistleblowing and Professional Responsibility"

10/30: Davis, "Some Paradoxes of Whistleblowing"  
Duska, "Whistleblowing and Employee Loyalty"

11/1: McFall, "Integrity"

**Take-Home Exam 2 on Unit 3b Distributed. Due 11/10 by 11:59PM**

**Unit 4: Economic Justice**

Week 11

11/4: Robert Nozick, *Anarchy, Utopia, and State* (excerpt)

11/6: Continue Nozick  
Boghossian, "The Inescapable Casino"

11/8: John Rawls, *Justice as Fairness: A Restatement* §§2, 4, 6-8

**Take-home Exam 2 Due Sunday, 11/10 by 11:59PM. Submit on Canvas.**

Week 12

11/11: John Rawls, *Justice as Fairness: A Restatement* §§13-14, 18.1-18.3

11/13: Continue Rawls

11/15: Rawls, *Justice as Fairness: A Restatement* §§45-46

Week 13

11/18: David Schweikert, *After Capitalism*, chap. 3

11/20: Continue Schweikert, chap. 3

11/22: Continue Schweikert, chap. 3

**11/25 - 11/29 Thanksgiving Break**

## **Unit 5: Affirmative Action and Meritocracy**

### **Week 14**

12/2: Steven Cahn, “Two Concepts of Affirmative Action”

12/4: Louis Pojman, “The Case Against Affirmative Action”

12/6: Elizabeth Anderson, “Understanding Affirmative Action”

### **Week 15**

12/9: Sandel, “The Tyranny of Merit” (excerpts)

12/11: Continue Sandel

12/13: Continue Sandel

**Final Exam as scheduled during Finals Week. Covers Units 4 and 5.**