

## PHILOSOPHY 103: CONTEMPORARY ISSUES IN ETHICS

Section 1 • Fall 2018 • 3 Credit Hours • Tuesday/Thursday 9:30-10:45 • DuSable 452

*Professor:* Jason Hanna  
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           W 1:45-2:45  
           & by appt

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*Hours:*

### Course Description

This course provides an overview of a variety of issues in applied or practical ethics. It addresses questions such as the following: What sorts of beings have a moral right to life, and what does this right involve? Under what conditions is the state justified in requiring or outlawing certain forms of behavior? How should the state distribute resources and opportunities, especially in light of historical injustices such as racism? Particular issues to be discussed include abortion, animal rights, poverty relief, anti-drug laws, prostitution and sexual ethics, gun laws, affirmative action, slavery reparations, and racial profiling.

### Introduction

Practical ethics is a branch of philosophy devoted to the moral evaluation of specific types of acts and policies. In other words, practical ethicists typically try to show that some type of act or policy is either right or wrong. Although practical ethicists often appeal to general principles and theories, they do so largely in the service of defending conclusions about some more specific ethical issue.

Despite their differences of opinion, practical ethicists share two general views: first, they believe that there are better and worse answers to moral questions and, second, they believe that the better answers are supported by good arguments.

### Course Objectives

Students will learn to communicate clearly in written English, demonstrating their ability to comprehend, analyze, and interrogate critically by completing written work in which they:

1. Clearly state a moral problem.
2. Formulate a clear position with respect to a moral problem.
3. Provide a cogent argument supporting a position on a moral problem.
4. Identify and articulate a plausible objection to a position on a moral problem.
5. Respond to an objection to a position on a moral problem.

### Course Materials

All readings for this course will be available electronically on Blackboard ([webcourses.niu.edu](http://webcourses.niu.edu)). If you are on an off-campus internet connection, you may need to log into NIU libraries to access some readings.

## Course Requirements

(1)	Blackboard Quizzes	10%
(2)	In-Class Writing Assignments	5%
(3)	First paper (assigned 9/11, due 9/18)	15%
(4)	Midterm Exam (10/11, over first half)	20%
(5)	Second paper (assigned 10/23; due 10/30)	15%
(6)	Affirmative Action Position Paper (assigned 11/13, due 11/20)	15%
(7)	Final Exam (12/13, 10:00, over second half)	20%

### *Quizzes and In-Class Writing Assignments:*

Brief quizzes will be given almost every week. Quizzes will be posted on Blackboard by noon each Tuesday and will be due by 9:00 a.m. on Thursday, except for the week of the midterm exam and the week of Thanksgiving. Each quiz will consist primarily of multiple choice questions and will cover only topics that have been discussed in class since the last quiz. At the end of the semester, your quiz grade will be equal to the total percentage of available quiz points that you earned.

Brief writing assignments will often be given in class. These assignments will sometimes be collected and graded on the following scale: 3 (makes a serious attempt to answer all questions in a level of detail appropriate for the time limit), 2 (makes a serious attempt to answer just some questions or provides insufficient explanations), 1 (makes no serious attempt to answer the questions), 0 (nothing submitted). *I will excuse 1 absence on the writing assignments, no questions asked. Otherwise, absences will be dealt with according to the policy on absences, below.*

### *Papers:*

Paper topics will be distributed approximately one week before the due date. Each assignment will require you to write 3-4 pages. Papers must be submitted through Blackboard's SafeAssign, which will check each paper for plagiarism.

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## Grading Scale

A 93-100	B+ 88-89	C+ 78-79	D 60-69
A- 90-92	B 83-87	C 70-77	F <60
	B- 80-82		

At the end of the semester, I round grades to the nearest whole percentage point. If, after rounding, you are within one point of the next grade category, I will bump you up to the higher grade *if and only if* your average on the two exams lies within or exceeds the higher grade category. [Ex.: If your overall average is 87, you will receive a B+ if and only if your exam average is 88% or higher.]

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## Policies

*Late Policy:* Late papers will receive a 3-point penalty (out of 100) for each 24-hour period they are late. (Late papers, like on-time papers, must be submitted on Blackboard.) The late paper penalty “maxes out” at 60% credit. Students who miss an exam will be allowed a make-up, subject to a 20-point penalty, at the TA's convenience.

*Extensions:* If you'd like an extension for a paper, you must request it by e-mail from me at least four days before the paper is due.

*Attendance Policy:* If you miss an in-class writing assignment because you are absent due to a religious holiday or your required participation in a university-sanctioned event (e.g., an athletic contest or a career fair that you must attend for a class), please let me know ASAP, and I will allow you to make up the writing assignment. Otherwise, there is no need to inform me or your TA of an absence, and missed in-class assignments will not be excused (with the exception of the one "free" absence).

*Emergencies:* In the event of an emergency that will interfere with your ability to complete course requirements, contact me as soon as you reasonably can.

*Academic Dishonesty:* "Good academic work must be based on honesty. The attempt of any student to present as his or her own work that which he or she has not produced is regarded by the faculty and administration as a serious offense. Students are considered to have cheated if they copy the work of another during an examination or turn in a paper or an assignment written, in whole or in part, by someone else. Students are responsible for plagiarism, intentional or not, if they copy material from books, magazines, or other sources without identifying and acknowledging those sources or if they paraphrase ideas from such sources without acknowledging them. Students responsible for, or assisting others in, either cheating or plagiarism on an assignment, quiz, or examination may receive a grade of F for the course involved and may be suspended or dismissed from the university." (For further details about this policy, see <http://www.niu.edu/stat/courses/pdfs/Policy-Academic-Integrity-Attendance-Accommodations-for-Students-with-Disabilities-Fall2012.pdf>.) *In this course, academic dishonesty will result in a grade of 0 for the assignment on which it occurs.*

*Accessibility Statement:* "If you need an accommodation for this class, please contact the Disability Resource Center [DRC] as soon as possible. The DRC coordinates accommodations for students with disabilities. It is located on the 4<sup>th</sup> floor of the Health Services building, and can be reached at 815-753-1303 or [drc@niu.edu](mailto:drc@niu.edu). Also, please contact me privately as soon as possible so we can discuss your accommodations. Please note that you will not be required to disclose your disability, only your accommodations. The sooner you let us know your needs, the sooner we can assist you in achieving your learning goals in this course" (<http://www.niu.edu/disability/forms/syllabus-statement.shtml>).

### **Tentative Schedule of Classes and Topics**

*(Readings should be completed by the date on which they are listed. I reserve the right to move or substitute readings, but I will not simply add readings.)*

DATE	TOPIC	READING
T, 8/28	Course Introduction	None
R, 8/30	Relativism and Moral Theory	Rachels, "The Challenge of Cultural Relativism"
T, 9/4	Abortion	Thomson, "A Defense of Abortion"
R, 9/6	Abortion	Brody, "Thomson on Abortion"
T, 9/11	Abortion	Marquis, "Why Abortion is Immoral" <b><i>First paper assigned</i></b>

R, 9/13	Abortion	McInerney, "Does a Fetus Already Have a Future-Like-Ours?"
T, 9/18	Animals	Presentation TBA <b><i>First paper due</i></b>
R, 9/20	Animals	Singer, "All Animals are Equal"
T, 9/25	Animals	Cohen, "The Case for the Use of Animals..."
R, 9/27	Poverty	Singer, "Famine, Affluence, and Morality"
T, 10/2	Poverty	Pogge, "Eradicating Systemic Poverty"
R, 10/4	Gun Control	DeGrazia, "The Case for Moderate Gun Control"
T, 10/9	Gun Control	Huemer, "Gun Rights and Noncompliance"
R, 10/11	<b>MIDTERM</b>	
T, 10/16	Drug Laws	Smith, "Drugs, Morality, and the Law"
R, 10/18	Drug Laws	De Marneffe, "Against the Legalization of Heroin"
T, 10/23	Tobacco Laws	Goodin, "No Smoking" <b><i>Second paper assigned</i></b>
R, 10/25	Tobacco Laws	Shapiro, "Smoking Tobacco"
T, 10/30	Prostitution	Ericsson, "Charges Against Prostitution" <b><i>Second paper due</i></b>
R, 11/1	Prostitution	Pateman, "Defending Prostitution: Charges Against Ericsson"
T, 11/6	Deception and Consent to Sex	Dougherty, "Sex, Lies, and Consent"
R, 11/8	Deception and Consent to Sex	Cont'd
T, 11/13	Affirmative Action	Himma, "Discrimination and Disidentification" <b><i>Third paper assigned</i></b>
R, 11/15	Affirmative Action	Newton, "A Fair Defense of a False Start"
T, 11/20	Campus Hate Speech Codes	No reading <b><i>Third paper due</i></b>
T, 11/27	Slavery Reparations	Fullinwider, "The Case for Reparations"
R, 11/29	Slavery Reparations	Horowitz, "Ten Reasons..."
T, 12/4	Racial Profiling	Risse and Zeckhauser, "Racial Profiling" (excerpts)
R, 12/6	Racial Profiling	Lever, "Why Racial Profiling is Hard to Justify," pp. 95-100
T, 12/13, 10:00 a.m.	<b>FINAL EXAM</b>	

