

Philosophy 180 A and B
Ethics
George Fox University
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Office Hours: MWF 9:30-1015 and TT TBA

Ethics, in a formal sense, is the study of what makes behavior and character good (or bad). In this course, we'll look at a variety of theoretical positions on the nature of the good and the right, as well as a number of ethical issues themselves. We will concentrate, overall, however, on how virtue and vice should be understood and how to live our lives in concrete ways that move us toward virtue.

Objectives:

The student will learn about various ethical theories, as well as the major positions and arguments taken on a variety of ethical issues.

The student will continue to learn to respond with respect toward those with whom they disagree, morally.

The student will begin or continue to develop his or her own views on various ethical matters.

Policies:

Plagiarism and cheating of other forms will be strongly treated resulting in, minimally, an F for the assignment, and a possible F for the course. Plagiarism is the use of other people's words or ideas without proper acknowledgement. If you have questions about whether something constitutes plagiarism, please ask.

I do not permit students to use computers in class except for taking notes. I do not permit emailing, text messaging, web-surfing or other forms of electronic communication during class. If I discover anyone engaged in computer use other than note-taking, that person will be asked to leave the class room. In short, I take such communication to be rude and unprofessional behavior. Please don't engage in it.

Each student must complete all the assignments, and they must be completed on time. Papers are due at the beginning of class on the due dates. Also, please do not make arrangements to leave the university before the term is over, so you are here to take the final exam during its scheduled time. I will provide extensions on papers only for legitimate excuses: serious illness, official university obligations or a funeral. I might be persuaded to give an extension if you are in your best friend's wedding and you need to fly home for it.

Paper extensions are to be granted ahead of time if possible. Please just send me an email explaining the situation. However, it is best if you work ahead of time so you aren't caught without the work done on time. Late work will be graded down a letter grade 24 hours of tardiness. After 3 days, you will be assigned an F for that assignment. Nevertheless, you must still finish the assignment. If you do not complete all the assignments for the class what would typically be a passing grade, your grade for the term will be an F.

Assignments:

Each student will write a 2 page paper (approximately 500 words) on one of the following two subjects: “What makes sin sin?” OR “Why be moral?” In either paper, you must provide reasons for the position you take. This is a philosophy paper, not merely an opinion paper. You must argue for the position you take. Each paper must have a clear thesis statement and at most two arguments for the thesis. Do not cram in five or six arguments. Instead, spend time developing the argument(s) you have.

For the “What makes sin sin?” paper, you will have to characterize sin. What is sin? Here I expect you to do a little research in theology texts to get a good grasp of different understandings of sin. Please settle on one clear account of the nature of sin and footnote your idea, but put it succinctly in your own terms. Examples and complete explanations can be important. But merely stating the definition is not enough. The real question is why sin as you choose to describe it is sin. In other words, there are many ways of stating what sin is but the challenge here is to think about, for example, why God thinks sin is sin. A parallel issue is to explain what, for example, ugliness is, and then to say what makes something ugly.

For the “Why be moral?” paper, the assumption is, of course, that one ought to be moral. The issue is, why? For this paper, one should characterize what morality is and proceed from there to defend the claim that one should be moral. One thing to remember is this. If you appeal to the existence of God to show that one should be moral, then you must also contend with the fact that some people don’t believe in God. If we should be moral because God wants us to be, for example, then why should an atheist be moral? To get yourself started, consider this: If you knew no one would ever catch you doing anything wrong, would you still act well? If so, why? If not, why not? This will begin to get at the issue of why you should be moral.

As an alternative to this first essay, students may pursue a practical learning experience. You may seek out a place where you can arrange at least 5 visits where you will meet and visit with the poor or otherwise challenged in our society. For example, you can visit with the hungry by arranging to eat with those needing food at a “soup kitchen.” Or you can work with some physically or mentally challenged children or adults. I prefer that this be in addition to what you would be doing anyway. So if you are interning somewhere working with some people who are disabled, then get your experience for this assignment by visiting with the poor. Students choosing this option will arrange for this time and have it approved by the instructor. Please have your site approved by the end of the second week of class. After that, I will assume you’ve chosen the first option. You can start by talking to the students involved in Urban Services. The point here is not just to do “behind the scenes” work but to actually meet and visit with people. So don’t just serve food, sit down and eat with those being served and get to know them and their stories. Preferably, the 5 visits will be spread over several weeks. Each student will keep a journal of her or his experiences, reflecting on them in terms of her or his own moral life and sensibilities. What did you learn about yourself, about people who are poor, or with physical or mental or emotional challenges? There should be one journal entry per visit of approximately one-page. The point here is to reflect on your emotional, moral, and spiritual response and development. These entries need to be reflective and not merely tossed together. What did you learn from the person you visited with? Talk about your expectations, your fears, your sense of power or privilege, etc. At the end, I expect a two-page response that ties together your five journal entries with at least one of the stories we have read for class this semester. How did your experiences change your response to the story or how did it make you understand the story more clearly than if you hadn’t had the personal experiences?

This first paper is worth 25%.

Each student will write a second paper. It is also a two-page paper (500 words approximately). Here I want you present an argument on one of the following topics. Remember that this is a philosophy paper and I expect a philosophical argument (a set of reasons) for your position. Here are the topics:

1. Give a one to two sentence description of patriarchy (as, for example, feminist authors might describe it). Explain why patriarchy is morally bad.
2. Give a one to two sentence description of “conspicuous consumerism.” Explain why such consumerism is morally bad.
3. Give a one to two sentence description of “altruism” and then explain whether or not you think altruism is actually possible for human persons. (Please do not appeal to Scripture as a “proof text.” Instead, present arguments from what you think Scripture might be saying or just from your own experience.)

This second paper is worth 25%

There will be quizzes given during the course of the term. These are “pop” quizzes. You are expected to take all the quizzes, although the instructor will drop the five lowest grades. If you miss some classes because of sports, illness, etc., you simply need to find out if you missed a quiz. If you did, turn in a brief summary of the reading for the day you missed. This can be handwritten (legibly) and please, less than ½ page. These make-up summaries are due within one week of the missed quiz. Quizzes will be over the day’s reading and will typically be multiple choice/true and false. I encourage you to take notes on the reading as you are doing it, mark up your books with the central points and arguments. This will help you to do better on the quizzes. Be forewarned, I use the full 5 points of the scale per quiz so. So a 5 is an A, 4 a B, 3 a C 2 a D 1 or below an F. I expect you to keep track of your grade so you know roughly where you are. I will give you the answers to the quiz immediately after you take it. They will not be returned to you.

Papers will be unacceptable should I find excessive grammatical, spelling or organizational problems. When in doubt, ask. I’m not requiring much writing. I am requiring that it be at the collegiate level.

The cumulative grade on these quizzes is 25%.

There will be a final exam worth 25% of the grade. This in all likelihood will be a take-home exam. However, I reserve the right to do an in-class, comprehensive final.

Due Dates: Paper 1: Friday Feb 10 (The alternative paper is due Friday March 16)
Paper 2: Friday. Apr 9
Quizzes: Expect Daily

Readings are listed below. The text book is Singer and Singer *The Moral of the Story: An Anthology of Ethics through Literature* Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2005

If you have specific physical, psychiatric, or learning disabilities and require accommodations, please contact the Disability Services Office as early as possible so that your learning needs may be appropriately met. You will need to provide current documentation of your disability to the Disability Services Office. For more information, go to ds.georgefox.edu or contact Rick Muthiah, Dean of Learning Support Services (503-554-2314 or rmuthiah@georgefox.edu).

The Academic Resource Center (ARC) on the Newberg campus provides all students with free writing consultation, academic coaching, and learning strategies (e.g., techniques to improve reading, note-taking, study, time management). The ARC, housed on the second floor of the Murdock Learning Resources Center (library), is open from 1:00-10:00 p.m., Monday through Thursday, and 12:00-4:00 p.m. on Friday. Call 503-554-2327 or email the_arc@georgefox.edu to schedule an appointment. Visit arc.georgefox.edu for information about ARC Consultants' areas of study, instructions for scheduling an appointment, and helpful learning tools.

I've listed the readings simply by their number(s) in the the text book.

January 9 – Introduction and Relativism	January 11 Utilitarianism	January 13 Kantianism
<i>January 16 – MLK Holiday</i>	January 18 - Virtue Theory	January 20 - 64, 65
January 23 - 66	January 25 - 67, 68	January 27 - 69
January 30 -70	February 1 - 71, 72, 73	February 3 - 76, 77
February 6 - 78, 79	February 8 - 1	February 10 - 2, 3, 4
February 13 - 6	February 15 - 8, 9	February 17 - 10
February 20 - 11, 12	February 22 - 13, 14	February 24 - 15
February 27 - 16, 17	February 29 - 18, 19	March 2 - 20, 21
March 5 - 22, 23, 24	March 7 - 25	March 9 - 26, 27
March 12 - 28, 29	March 14 - 30, 31, 32	March 16 - 33, 34
March 19 - 35, 36	March 21 - 37, 38	March 23 - 39, 40
<i>March 26 – Spring Break</i>	<i>March 28 – Spring Break</i>	<i>March 30 – Spring Break</i>
April 2 - 41, 42	April 4 - 43, 44	<i>April 6 – Good Friday</i>
April 9 - 45, 46	April 11 - 47, 48	April 13 - 53, 54
April 16 - 55, 56, 57, 58	April 18 - 59, 60, 61	April 20 - 62, 63
<i>April 23 – April 27 Finals Week</i>	Section A: Exam Tues. 8:00	Section B: Exam Wed. 8:00