

PHI 1700: Global Ethics

last revised: 3/26/20
(modified for switch to distance learning)

Baruch College, Spring 2020

course website: bit.ly/philosophy1700

section/room/time:

- **DMWA:** Mon/Wed 12:50-2:05pm
- **EMWA:** Mon/Wed 2:30-3:45pm

instructor: Lauren R. Alpert

email: Lauren.Alpert@baruch.cuny.edu

office hours: by appointment over videoconference:
schedule a session using the link on the course website!

Ethics, or more generally, *moral philosophy*, is an investigation of human behavior along evaluative dimensions such as good/bad, right/wrong, acceptable/unacceptable, praiseworthy/blameworthy, etc.

This class will introduce some of the major themes and ongoing debates in three branches of ethics: meta-, normative, and applied. You'll learn new vocabulary and concepts that can help you

- 1) make sense of the moral conflicts you encounter in your everyday life,
- and 2) articulate your own ideas on these matters in constructive discourse with others.

PHI 1700 satisfies the Flexible Core *Individual & Society* requirement (and your thirst for knowledge).

course objectives

- learn concepts developed by philosophers to help us decide how to act ethically and understand the nature of morality
- practice adopting perspectives other than one's own and interpreting others' arguments charitably, to better understand sites of enduring interpersonal disagreement about morality
- cultivate reading comprehension, interpretation, critical thinking & reasoning skills
- improve the clarity & persuasiveness of written & spoken arguments, and develop confidence in expressing oneself through these media

course topics & theme questions

meta-ethics (moral epistemology, psychology, & metaphysics)

- *Do we have an innate "moral sense", or do we learn right & wrong only through experience? (nativism vs. empiricism)*
- *Are there moral facts? If so, where do they come from? (realism vs. anti-realism)*
- *Are moral values universal? (universalism vs. relativism)*
- *What parts of our minds are involved in moral decision-making? (rationalism vs. sentimentalism)*
- *Under what conditions are we morally responsible for our actions? (compatibilism vs. incompatibilism)*

moral/political philosophy

- *What is justice, and how does a government secure & maintain it?*
- *How do beliefs about morality & human nature shape political systems?*
- *How can governments & other systems of power shape our moral outlook & behavior?*

normative ethics

- *virtue ethics* – *consequentialism* – *contractarianism*
- *egoism* – *deontology* – *care ethics*

applied ethics (topics TBD, based on your interests)

requirements & grading

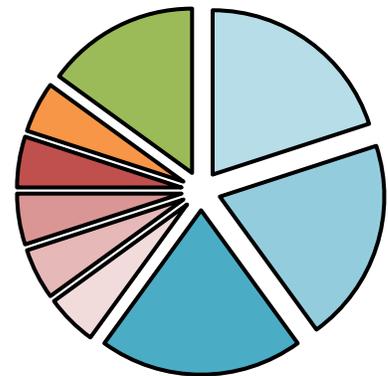
- ✓ **take a syllabus quiz** (on Google Forms)
 - This quiz will ensure that you understand how this course works & what Prof. Alpert's policies are.
- ✓ **attend each class session** (for 1/27-3/5)
 - Recommended readings for each session are posted to the course website as PDFs.
 - **From 3/19-5/14, you are not obligated to attend class during the live videoconference; however, doing so will make it easier to earn participation credit.**
- ✓ **participate in class activities**
 - **Participating in class discussions (in-person or online (via audio or over chat)) is highly recommended.**
 - However, as an alternative to sharing your ideas over chat, **you can earn participation credit by submitting questions & comments on class material to the discussion board on Blackboard, in writing via email, or by speaking to your professor one-on-one about class material during office hours (in person or online via conference).**
- ✓ **write 3 reading responses to assigned texts** (on Google Forms)
 - You'll read a brief article (meant to complement our lecture topics), and then respond to specific questions intended to help you comprehend the author's view and practice expressing your thoughts in writing.
- ✓ **complete 3 online exams & 1 final quiz** (on Google Forms)
 - You'll use the lecture slides to complete matching, fill-in-the-blank, multiple-choice, and short essay questions.
 - You may work with classmates to answer the exam questions; however, **you must compose your written answers independently from your classmates in order to get full credit for your work.** I grade based on how well you demonstrate *your own ideas* and *your own understanding*.
 - **You will *not* receive full credit for written answers that are identical to, paraphrases of, or otherwise derived from the answers submitted by another student.**

Grades will be calculated as follows

(using Baruch's grading scale: see bit.ly/baruchgrades)

- **online exams: 60%** (3 x 20% each)
- **syllabus quiz, reading responses: 20%** (4 (1 quiz, 3 RRs) x 5% each)
- **attendance: 5%**
- **participation & conduct: 15%**

Extra Credit opportunities may be offered.



accessibility

- I strive to ensure that every student can succeed in this course. Though I've made an effort to design the course so as to provide equal access to the immense benefits of studying philosophy, it's very possible that some students will need additional accommodations for the best possible experience in this course. I encourage any student encountering difficulties in getting the most out of the course to come talk to me: together, we can develop some strategies for success.
- The **Office of Services for Students with Disabilities** (OSSD: VC 2-272, Vertical Campus) can provide "reasonable accommodations" for students who register for services. The OSSD provides an "Accommodation Letter" that informs your instructors what services you need, while maintaining confidentiality about the basis for accommodation. For information on the OSSD, see baruch.cuny.edu/studentaffairs/ossd/disabilityServices.htm.

policies & etiquette

- **Check your email regularly for course updates.**
I will email the class in the event of any changes to the course schedule.
- **Feel free to email me** if you have questions or concerns about the course. I will try to make expectations for essays, quizzes, and exams abundantly clear, so please read assignments thoroughly before emailing.
 - **Please include "PHI 1700" in the subject line of your message.** I'll do my best to respond promptly.
- **Assignments/exams are due *by the start of class time* on their due dates.**
- **LATE POLICY: Submitting exams and reading responses late will result in deductions from your grade:**
 - 5% off if submitted *up to two calendar days* after the due date,
 - 10% if *three days or more*.
 - **I will accept late work any time on or before May 14th, 2020.**

conduct

- **You must respect the views of your classmates** during full-class and small-group discussions, no matter how drastically they may differ from your own. Disrespectful, disparaging, or hateful speech will not be tolerated. Please take care to ensure that your language conveys appreciation and support for your fellow students' efforts.
- **Harassment of any kind will not be tolerated.**
All communications with your classmates and professor should be courteous and professional. Pro-tip: If you sense that you ought to preface what you intend to say or do with an apology, that's probably a good indicator that what you were about to say is inappropriate for an academic context.
- There is **zero tolerance for cheating and/or plagiarism** in my course and at Baruch College. Confirmed instances of cheating/plagiarism will result in a zero for the assignment in question – and possibly for the entire course. Suspected instances will result in a hold on your grade for the course until the issue is resolved with the Dean's Office.

statement on representation in philosophy

The vast majority of texts traditionally taught in introductory philosophy courses are authored by white males. This reflects long-standing imbalances of power & privilege, which have deprived members of other groups of the opportunity to study philosophy, or to have their philosophical work recognized & celebrated. This syllabus aims for inclusivity, with respect to authors and topics that have been neglected for much of intellectual history.

course schedule (below): subject to change!

MONDAY		WEDNESDAY	
1	Jan. 27 th	2	Jan. 29 th
Intro to the Class/Intro to Moral Philosophy		Philosophical Methods "All About Arguments"	
3	Feb. 3 rd	4	Feb. 5 th
Moral Metaphysics & Epistemology Harman, Gilbert. "Ethics and Observation"		Moral Metaphysics & Epistemology Harman (cont.) Rachels, James. "The Challenge of Cultural Relativism"	
5	Feb. 10 th	NO CLASS Feb. 12 th	
Moral Metaphysics & Epistemology Rachels (cont.)			
NO CLASS Feb. 17 th		6	Feb. 19 th
		Rationalism vs. Sentimentalism Smith, Adam. A Theory of Moral Sentiments (excerpts) Bloom, Paul. "The Baby in the Well"	
7	Feb. 24 th	8	Feb. 26 th
Free Will & Moral Responsibility Churchland, Patricia. "The Big Questions: Do We Have Free Will?"		Free Will & Moral Responsibility Churchland (cont.) Access Exam #1	
9	Mar. 2 nd	10	March 4 th
Moral Responsibility, Situationism Milgram, Stanley. <i>Obedience to Authority</i> (excerpts)		Catch-Up Day	
11	Mar. 9 th	12	Mar. 11 th
Justice, Authoritarianism Plato. <i>The Republic</i> (excerpts)		Justice, Authoritarianism Plato (continued) Brennan, Jason. "Can Epistocracy, or Knowledge-Based Voting, Fix Democracy?"	
NO CLASSES March 12 th -18 th : Instructional Recess (switch to Distance Learning)			
13	March 23 rd	14	Mar. 25 th
Contractarianism Hobbes, Thomas. <i>The Leviathan</i> (excerpts)		Contractarianism, Liberalism Rousseau, Jean Jacques. "Discourse on the Origin of Inequality" (excerpt)	
15	March 30 th	16	April 1 st
Care Ethics Held, Virginia. "Non-Contractual Society: A Feminist View"		Justice as Fairness Rawls, John. <i>A Theory of Justice</i> (excerpts)	
17	April 6 th	18	Apr. 7 th (Weds. schedule)
Justice as Fairness Rawls (cont.) RR #2: Gutting, Gary & Anderson, Elizabeth. "What's Wrong with Inequality?" Access Exam #2		Catch up Day	

NO CLASSES April 8 th -19 th : Spring Break	
MONDAY	WEDNESDAY
19 April 20 th EXAM #2 DUE	20 April 22 nd
Virtue Ethics Aristotle. <i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> (excerpts)	Virtue Ethics Aristotle (cont.)
21 April 27 th	22 April 29 th RR #3 DUE
Consequentialism Mill, John Stuart. Utilitarianism (excerpts)	Consequentialism Nozick, Robert. "The Experience Machine" RR #3: Rini, Regina. "Enhanced Consequentialism...?"
23 May 4 th	24 May 6 th
Deontology O'Neill, Onora. "A Simplified Account of Kant's Ethics"	Deontology O'Neill (cont.)
25 May 11 th	26 May 13 th
Applied Ethics TBD Access Exam #3	Catch-Up Day
May 18th EXAM #3 DUE	May 20th
NO CLASS (Reading Week) All Late Work Due	NO CLASS Last Day to Meet for "Office Hours"