

# PHILOSOPHY 130

## Introduction to Ethics

([www.cohums.ohio-state.edu/philo/people/faculty/hubin.1/phil130.htm](http://www.cohums.ohio-state.edu/philo/people/faculty/hubin.1/phil130.htm))

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Office Hours: M 10:00 – 11:00, Tu 1:30 – 2:30

and by appointment

**Teaching Associate:**

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### Course Description:

It is often claimed that ethics depends on religion. We will begin the course by examining this hypothesis. We will then turn to the question of whether our moral judgments are relative in a way that other judgments we make are not. Some have thought that this conclusion is the only alternative to a religiously based moral theory. Next, we will consider and evaluate two fundamentally opposed approaches to understanding morality: consequentialism and deontology. We will employ these moral theories in examining a number of socially important moral issues, such as the moral status of nonhuman animals, the permissibility of abortion and euthanasia, the moral basis of individual liberty and the limitations of such liberty, and the issues of race and gender equality and affirmative action. The examination of the abstract moral theories should provide a foundation for addressing the issues in "applied ethics" which will elevate the latter discussions from the level of just "trading intuitions". The examination of the practical issues should make the moral theories discussed more concrete and provide a basis for evaluating them.

### Texts:

*Morality and Moral Controversies (Fifth Edition)*, John Arthur (ed.)

### PARTIAL Topic Outline and Reading Assignments:

#### I. Introduction

#### II. Theoretical Background

##### A. Divine Command Theory

Readings: Arthur, pp. 77-85

##### B. Moral Relativism

Readings: Arthur, p. 66-68, 85-91

##### C. Utilitarianism

Readings: Arthur, p. 34-41

##### D. Kantianism

Readings: Arthur, p. 24-33, 47-51

#### II. Morality in Practice

##### A. Morality and Nonhuman Animals

Readings: Arthur, p. 131-152

##### B. The Ethics of Abortion

Readings: Arthur, pp. 166-210

##### C. The Ethics of Euthanasia

Readings: Arthur, pp. 211-235

**PLEASE NOTE:** These topics, and the associated reading assignments, constitute only part of our work for the quarter. The remaining issues to be taken up will depend, in part, on class interest. Near the middle of the quarter, you will have an opportunity to "set the agenda" for the last portion of the class. I will hand out the rest of the syllabus when we have set the topics.

TO BE CONTINUED . . .

## Course Requirements:

There will be a midterm examination, a final examination and two very short (2 – 3 page) papers. The date of the midterm examination will be announced in class at least a week in advance. It will constitute 30% of your course grade. The final examination will be given at the time and date scheduled by the University: Monday, December 4, from 7:30 – 9:18 a.m.. The final exam will be comprehensive but will focus on the material since the midterm. It will also constitute 30% of your grade. Both the midterm and final exams will be partly objective and partly essay. The two short papers will constitute 30% of your grade (15% each). Papers must be typed, double-spaced. Suggested topics will be distributed in class and due dates will be announced well in advance. The balance of your grade (10%) will be determined by active, intelligent, informed participation in discussion section.

## Academic Misconduct

The University understands academic misconduct to include "any activity which tends to compromise the academic integrity of the institution, subvert the educational process" ("Procedures of the Committee on Academic Misconduct", Sept. 1989). Examples include, but are not limited to, such actions as cheating on exams and submitting a term paper written by another. No one should be unclear about whether *these* are wrong, but students are sometimes not clear about what constitutes plagiarism. 'Plagiarism' is defined by the University to be "the representation of another's works or ideas as one's own; it includes the unacknowledged word for word use and/or paraphrase of another person's work, and/or the inappropriate unacknowledged use of another person's ideas". There should be no misunderstanding about word for word transcriptions or simple paraphrases—these *must* be acknowledged through proper citations. It is sometimes not clear, though, when simply using the ideas of another requires citation. This is especially true in the context of a course, in which one is, presumably acquiring fundamental ideas of a subject matter from the text or the instructor. Certain ideas are "in the public domain", so to speak; they are ideas used by everyone working in the field, and do not require citation. Other ideas are such that their origin needs to be acknowledged. It is sometimes difficult for beginning students to distinguish these. It is helpful to remember that what is at issue is whether the failure to acknowledge a source would tend to misrepresent the idea as your own. The failure to acknowledge your source for a distinction between consequentialism and deontology, for example, would not tend to misrepresent the distinction as your own since it is a distinction that most people working in the field will draw in some way or other. To offer a *specific* account of this distinction that is offered by another without citing the source could easily tend to misrepresent the account as your own. It is clearly better to err on the side of over-acknowledgment in cases in which one is in doubt.

I view academic misconduct of any sort as a *very* serious violation of University requirements. University rules provide for extremely serious sanctions for academic misconduct, and I will, as I am required to do, forward any cases of suspected misconduct to the Committee on Academic Misconduct.