

**MORALITY AND JUSTICE | PHILOSOPHY 1304**  
**Fall 2017**  
**Tuesdays and Thursdays**  
**2:00-3:15pm | Section 86793 | Torgersen Hall 1080**

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Office Hours: TuTh 1-2pm and by appointment

This course is an introduction to ethics, and we will discuss some of the central questions in ethics:

- What is a good life? Before we discuss what is right and wrong it helps to have a sense of what is good or bad, or more specifically what is good or bad for people. We will discuss some of the main theories of well-being: hedonism, preference-satisfaction and objective-list theories.
- How do we know what is right and wrong? Once we know something about what is good or bad for people, we can discuss some of the main normative theories philosophers have thought could explain right and wrong action: consequentialism, deontology and virtue ethics.
- What is right or wrong in a specific situation? We will look at applied ethics, the subfield of ethics that takes theory and applies it to particular problems we face. We will look at three of these problems: the global poor, animals and the limits of the law.
- Do rightness and wrongness even exist? We will end the course with metaethics, the subfield of ethics that looks at the high-level questions of ethics: whether right and wrong exist and whether they are the same for everyone.

**What will I learn in this class?**

*By the end of this class you will be able to:*

- Recognize and explain central ideas and concepts of ethical theory.
- Compare rival ethical theories and evaluate ethical debates.
- See yourself as a moral agent that can value the nuances of moral judgments.

*By the end of this class you will improve your skills in:*

- Reading and analyzing complex philosophical texts.
- Constructing coherent philosophical arguments.
- Writing papers dealing with philosophical topics.
- Conversing and reflecting on questions in ethics.

## **What do I need to have?**

“The Ethical Life: Fundamental Readings in Ethics and Moral Problems, Third Edition” by Russ Shafer-Landau.

The book has a companion website with some self-quizzes, suggested readings summaries, and web links. I suggest using it:

<http://global.oup.com/us/companion.websites/9780199997275/stud/>

## **What do I need to do to get a grade?**

1. *Attendance (10 points)*: You can have up to 3 absences without any penalty. Each absence beyond that deducts a point from your attendance grade. Exceptions to this policy will only be made in the case of a *serious* extenuating circumstance (e.g. emergency medical or family problem) supported by appropriate evidence.
2. *Reading quizzes (8 points)*: There will be a reading quiz on Canvas for every class. Students must complete quizzes by 11:59 pm on the day before class (e.g. by 11:59 pm on September 6th for the assignment corresponding to the readings assigned for the September 7 class). The grading for these are on a complete/incomplete basis.

3. *Papers (24 points)*: There will be 3 papers in this class, each 1500-2000 words.

Paper #1 due: 10/1 11:59PM

Paper #2 due: 10/29 11:59PM

Paper #3 due: 11/19 11:59PM

Each of these will receive 0-8 points (8=great, 6= good, 4=acceptable, 2=poor, 0=unacceptable). In class, we will discuss the sort of thing I am looking for in your term paper. But in grading your essay I will be looking for three things, weighted roughly equally:

- Comprehension: understanding of the concepts and ideas discussed in the essay.
- Clarity: presentation of the ideas and concepts in a clear and concise manner.
- Engagement: serious, sincere and independent thinking about the items under discussion.

We will workshop each of these papers in class. A final draft in 3 printed copies is due in class in accordance to the schedule below.

4. *Final exam (18 points)*: Essay exam (~2 page per answer). Ahead of time I will give you a list of 9 questions from the class. 6 questions will be randomly selected for the exam of which you will need to discuss 3.
5. *Participation extra credit (5 points)*: You can receive up to 5 extra credit points to your grade if you actively participate in class, based on the quantity and quality of your contributions to class discussions (5=participates regularly, 3=often participates, 1=participates sporadically). Unfortunately, what counts as participating can only be assessed subjectively, but I will try my best to be fair.

## Grade calculation

60 points do not correspond to 100%. Grades are calculated as follows:

60	A+	46-50	B+	31-35	C+	6-20	D
56-59	A	41-45	B	26-30	C	0-5	F
51-55	A-	36-40	B-	21-25	C-		

\* Students sometimes worry when they receive a grade like 2/4. They translate this into percentages and are sure they will fail with only 50% of the points. This is not the case. 50% of the points add up to 30 points out of 60. The corresponding grade to that is C. It is not a terrific grade, but it is far from a failing grade. There are also really easy points available. Attendance will easily earn you 10 points. Completing the online quizzes regularly will earn you 8 points.

## What are the course policies?

- *Academic integrity:* I take academic integrity very seriously, and I expect you to take it equally seriously. The Undergraduate Honor Code pledge that each member of the university community agrees to abide by states: “As a Hokie, I will conduct myself with honor and integrity at all times. I will not lie, cheat, or steal, nor will I accept the actions of those who do.” Students enrolled in this course are responsible for abiding by the Honor Code. A student who has doubts about how the Honor Code applies to any assignment is responsible for obtaining specific guidance from the course instructor before submitting the assignment for evaluation. Ignorance of the rules does not exclude any member of the University community from the requirements and expectations of the Honor Code. For additional information about the Honor Code, please visit: <https://www.honorsystem.vt.edu/>
- If you have any concerns about academic integrity and how the honor code applies to you, whether questions about the importance of academic integrity or about what is or is not permitted on specific assignments, please talk with me.
- *Attendance and classroom behavior:* You are expected to attend every class **on time** and to have read the assigned material ahead of time. Attendance will be taken some time in the first five minutes of class. It will not be possible to sign in late. Disruptive classroom behavior will not be tolerated.
- *Laptops and electronics:* Use of computers, tablets, smartphones, and other electronic devices is not allowed in class, except with written permission from, for example, the Office for Students with Disabilities.
- *Late papers:* No papers will be accepted late. If you are late for any reason, simply avoid submitting that paper. Exceptions to this policy will only be made in the case of a serious extenuating circumstance (e.g. emergency medical or family problem) supported by appropriate evidence.
- *Students with disabilities:* I’m committed to making this class as accessible as possible. If you have any particular accommodation requests, please speak to me. You are also encouraged

to contact the Services for Students with Disabilities office to discuss and arrange reasonable accommodations. Please call 540-231-0858 or visit their website at [www.ssd.vt.edu/students.htm](http://www.ssd.vt.edu/students.htm) for more information.

## **Schedule**

	<b>Date</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Sub topic</b>	<b>Readings</b>	
1	8/29	Introduction		-	
2	8/31	Analytic reasoning		-	
3	9/5			-	
4	9/7	Well-being	What is well-being?	Raz	
5	9/12		Hedonism	2	
6	9/14		Preference-satisfaction	3,4	
7	9/19		Objective-list	5	
8	9/21		Compare and contrast	Alexandrova	
9	9/26		Well-being theories as guides	Wren-Lewis	
10	9/28		Workshop paper #1	-	
11	10/3		Normative ethics	Consequentialism	Mill
12	10/5			Consequentialism	8
13	10/10			Deontology	9
14	10/12	Deontology		Shafer-Landau	
15	10/17	Virtue ethics		12	
16	10/19	Feminist ethics		13	
17	10/24	Workshop paper #2		-	
18	10/26	Applied ethics		Poverty and hunger	20
19	10/31		Poverty and hunger	21	
20	11/2		Moral status of animals	26	
21	11/7		Moral status of animals	27	
22	11/9		STUDENT CHOICE	?	
23	11/14		STUDENT CHOICE	?	
24	11/16		Workshop paper #3	-	
	11/21	THANKSGIVING			
	11/23	THANKSGIVING			
25	11/28	Metaethics	The source of ethics	6	
26	11/30		Emotivism	15	
27	12/5		Error theory	16	
28	12/7		Objectivism	18	
29	12/12	REVIEW		-	
		FINAL		EXAM	