

University of Central Oklahoma
College of Liberal Arts
Department of Humanities & Philosophy
Spring 2023

PHIL 3103: Ethical Theory

CRN: 22408

M,W,F 11:00-11:50AM

Liberal Arts North, Rm. 243

Instructor: Dr. Jerry Green

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Office: Liberal Arts North, 204C

Office Hours: M,W, F 12:00-1:00PM; T,TH 12:15PM-1:15PM

Course Description

“Examines the major systems of ethical thought. It will attempt to state and evaluate various principles for dealing with ethical problems.” (from UCO Course Catalog)

This course focuses on one of the central areas of Philosophy, Normative Ethics. Normative Ethics attempts to systematically explain (i) what kinds of things are of fundamental value, and (ii) what makes right actions right and wrong actions wrong.

We will focus on six of the most plausible and historically influential theories in Normative Ethics:

- Consequentialism
- Deontology
- Contractarianism
- Virtue Ethics
- Role Ethics
- Care Ethics

We will also consider some basic questions in Metaethics, such as the existence and source of moral facts.

Our aim will be to understand each theory as best we can, by constructing the most plausible and successful version of each theory and realistically weighing its pros and cons. By the end of the course, each students should be able to identify which theory most conforms to their own ethical judgment.

In addition to mastering course content, we will focus on developing the following philosophical skills:

- Reading and understanding conceptually difficult texts
- Uncovering and identifying assumptions and presuppositions (yours and others')
- Communicating complex ideas clearly and efficiently
- Drawing subtle conceptual and definitional distinctions
- Constructing and critically evaluating logical arguments

Student Learning Objectives:

- 1) Students will begin the process of developing ethical and critical thinking skills necessary for interpreting the self in relation to culture and society.
- 2) Students will read, analyze, and synthesize key philosophical texts and communicate about them in writing.
- 3) Students will develop their ability to express difficult ideas in writing clearly and in a professional style.
- 4) Students will analyze, appraise, and formally symbolize arguments.

Prerequisites: 3 hours of Philosophy

Transformational Learning Outcomes: The University of Central Oklahoma is a learning-centered organization committed to Transformative education through active engagement in the teaching-learning interchange, scholarly and creative pursuits, leadership, global competency, healthy lifestyles, and service to others.

Transformative learning goals (the “Central Six”) have been identified as: *Discipline Knowledge; Leadership; Research, Scholarly and Creative Activities; Service Learning and Civic Engagement; Global and Cultural Competencies; and Health and Wellness.*

This course addresses three of the University’s transformative learning goals:

Discipline Knowledge, by investigating some core questions and subfields of philosophy

Research, Scholarly and Creative Activities, by applying course content to personal interests

Leadership, by developing self-awareness, decision-making skills, and ethical fluency

Course Materials

We will not use a textbook for this course, because books are expensive. Instead, I have carefully (and laboriously!) selected a range of relevant free- and fair-use materials, from academic journal articles and book chapters to blog posts and interviews.

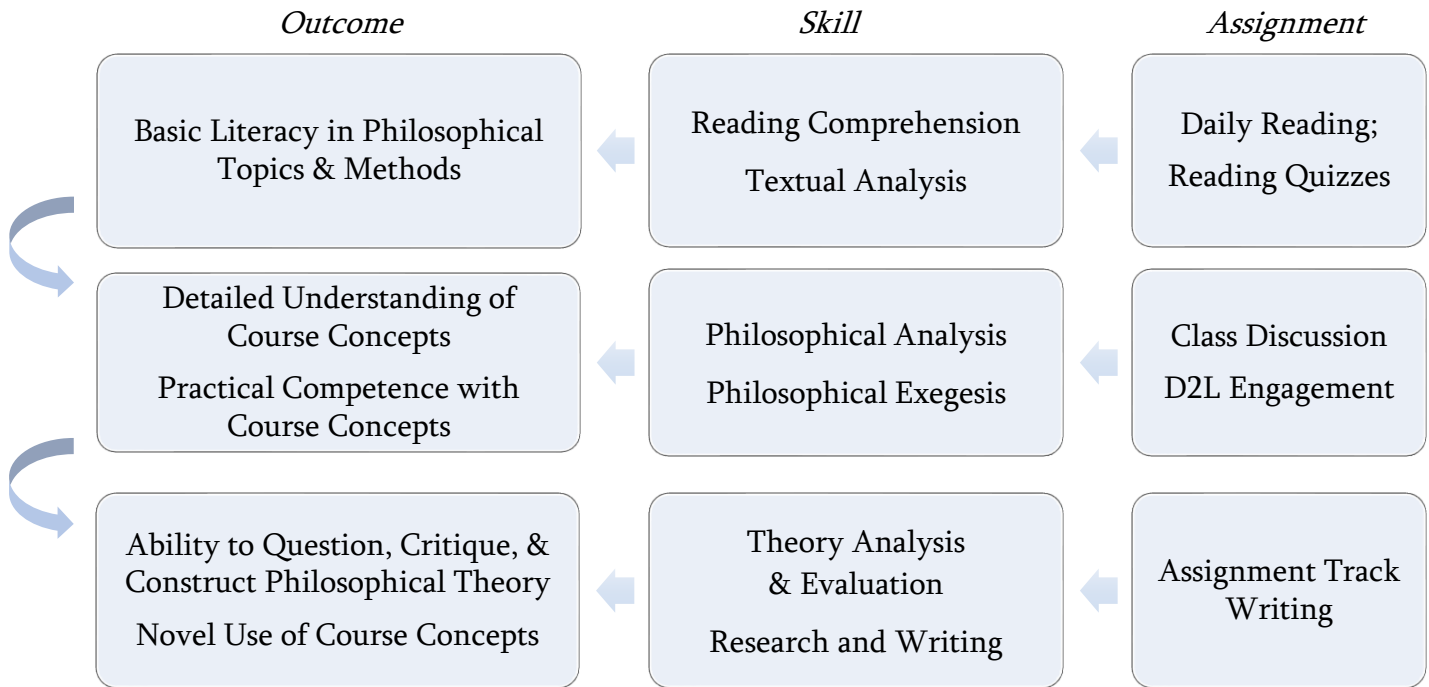
This is a **required text** for class: you must bring your hard copy of the reading to class *every* session (and I recommend you use it for studying as well). There will also be an online version of this material for students with accessibility needs (e.g. e-readers).

The coursepack should cost about \$30. It is available at [APMOK](#) on 500 E. 2nd St (right across from campus).

In addition to this primary course material, I will also post a number of handouts and other material to D2L. Most important are the *Daily Reading Guides*, one-page supplements to each day’s reading that give background context, highlight key points, and suggest study questions.

Daily Reading Guides are also **required texts**: material introduced there are fair game for quizzes and papers. My advice is to read the Daily Reading Guides *first*, then the day’s material, then the Handouts again.

Course Learning Outcomes



Assignments

All students in the course will have the following assignments:

Reading

This will be a reading-intensive course, in both quality and quantity. You will have an average of 22 pp. of reading per class session, with a range of 10-30 pp. This material will be very difficult, and you will undoubtedly have to read it more than once. We will cover both historically significant texts (some in translation) and recently published, cutting-edge research.

Daily Reading Quizzes

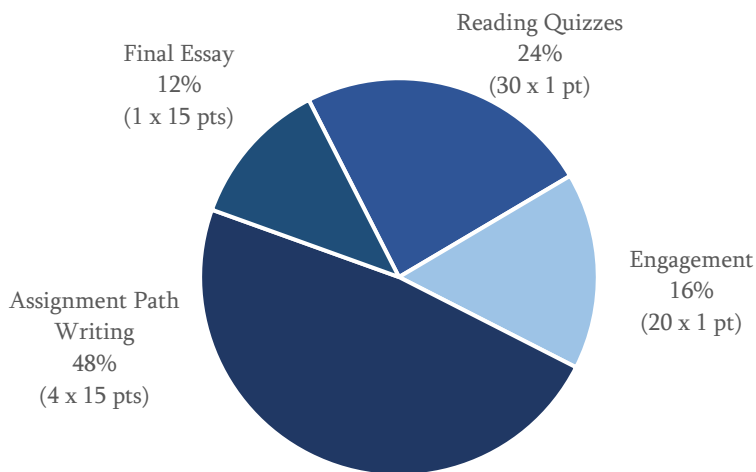
We will have low-stakes reading comprehension quizzes for each reading starting in the third week of the class (35 total). These short quizzes (c. 4 questions each) will use a variety of short-answer questions (multiple choice, True/False, etc.), to diagnose how well you are getting the important points from each reading. These should be easy points that you earn simply by doing the minimal required work. Conversely, if you are doing poorly on these quizzes, you may need to change your study habits: come talk to me to discuss study strategies.

Engagement

A second way of helping you work through course material is through social engagement, both with the professor and with your classmates. You will have a variety of ways to do this, depending on your schedule, learning preferences, etc., including things like discussion boards, chats, office hours, presentations, etc. You'll get a separate handout with more details on this.

Writing Assignments

Finally, you will have a set of short papers throughout the class (5 total). Each paper will give you space to show that you understand the course material, and can say insightful things about it. Each paper is roughly the same in size and structure, but there will be variety of paper topics throughout the semester. I will give you a separate handout later with more specific instructions and advice on these papers.



Grade Scale:

100.0-90.0 = A
89.9-80.0 = B
79.9-70.0 = C
69.9-60.0 = D
59.9 - 0.0 = F

Quizzes: There will be roughly 35 reading quizzes during the semester, essentially one every day starting in the third week of class. Each quiz will be worth 1 point total. However, there is a 30 point cap in this category: once you hit 35 points, you cannot earn any more. The extra quizzes give you more attempts to continue raising your grade until you hit the 30 point cap. This means that you can miss a few questions (either by getting answers wrong or by skipping it entirely), and still get 100% in this category. This is like a curve but better, because it rewards you for making an effort every day, and makes it possible to get a 100% in this category without acing every quiz.

Assignments Paths: There will be 6 Assignment Path assignments spread throughout the semester, but you will only need to complete 4 of them (plus a required Final Essay for everyone). Each one will be worth 15 points, for a total of 60 points (half of the final grade). There will be a new Assignment Path option for each unit of the class, with options for how exactly to write about it (more detail on that in a separate handout).

Attendance: Attendance is not, strictly speaking, part of your grade, and I will not take attendance in class. But since we have quizzes every day, your quiz grade functions as a *de facto* attendance grade, because you will get 20% on each quiz just for showing up.

Extra Credit: I do not typically offer extra credit assignments, though I will occasionally give extra quiz points for things like taking evaluation surveys. Don't bug me about this: focus instead on doing well on the work you already have.

Rounding: The letter grade cut-off for each grade is 90%. 80.0% etc. I may choose to round up in exceptional cases, if (i) I feel you've done better than your score suggests, and (ii) you do not have excessive incomplete or missing assignments. This is a courtesy, not an entitlement.

Appeals: I am more than happy to talk to you about low grades, and regrade your assignment if merited (but note the risk that the second grade could be lower). However, I consider asking for a grade increase for non-performance reasons (e.g. to keep a scholarship or prevent your parents from being mad) to be academic misconduct, because you are asking for me to give you a grade you did not earn. So don't ask.

Late Work & Make-Ups

With the exception of in-class Reading Quizzes, all assignments for this class will be posted and submitted online, through D2L. Reading Quizzes are in-class only: no make-ups for missing, unless you have an excused absence (see list above). If you find yourself in a position where you expect to miss a significant number of classes (e.g. for athletic travel), let me know as soon as possible: I can't help unless I know you need it!

Instructions for Writing Assignments will be circulated well in advance, so there should be no need for make-ups, barring exceptional circumstances (e.g. a prolonged illness). If you find yourself in such circumstances, it is your responsibility to get in contact with me ASAP to work something out.

Engagement activities are due throughout the semester. This means you can do them at your convenience, on your own time. But don't put them off until the end of the class: the only way to guarantee you'll get full points in this category is to participate regularly from the beginning of term.

A 1-point late penalty will be deducted once every 24 hours after the submission deadline for Writing Assignments. Any work not turned in by midnight on Sunday, May 14th gets an automatic zero.

Attendance

You are expected to physically attend class each session, barring illness or other unforeseen circumstances. Conflicting work schedules, personal commitments, etc. do not count as excused absences. It is your responsibility to make sure your out-of-class schedule does not interfere with regular attendance in this class.

There is no regular virtual attendance option (e.g. on Zoom) for this class. If you expect to miss a significant amount of class due to illness or injury, contact me as soon as possible to work out an alternative arrangement.

Excused Absences

The exception to the Late/Make-Up policy listed above is excused absences. The University considers absences for the following reasons excused:

- travel considered part of the instructional program of the university
- invited participation in activities directly and officially sponsored by the university
- jury duty or military obligations
- serious illness, medical condition, pregnant and parenting students' rights (as outlined in Title IX), accident, or injury
- death or serious illness in immediate family
- religious observances. *Note: a list of religious observances must be submitted to the instructor sometime in the first two weeks of the semester.*

Reasonable Accommodations Policy

Any student who needs extra time or resources to do their best work due to a physical, cognitive or emotional condition may qualify for academic accommodations. You should consult Disability Support Services for further information: <https://www.uco.edu/student-resources/dss/>

The University of Central Oklahoma complies with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. Students with disabilities who need special accommodations must make their requests by contacting Disability Support Services, at (405) 974-2516 (V/TTY). The DSS Office is located in the Nigh University Center, Room 305. Students should also notify the instructor of special accommodation needs as soon as possible.

Recording Policy

Recording Policy: Due to limitations on the disclosure of personally identifiable information under certain federal privacy laws, students are not permitted to record class sessions nor to allow non-students to view online class sessions. Students registered with the UCO office of Disability Support Services may request accommodation

Title IX

The University of Central Oklahoma complies with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. Students with disabilities who need special accommodations must make their requests by contacting Disability Support Services, at (405) 974-2516. The DSS Office is located in the Nigh University Center, Room 305. Students should also notify the instructor of special accommodation needs as soon as possible. Per Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 ("Title IX"), pregnant and parenting students may request adjustments by contacting the Title IX Coordinator, at (405) 974-3377 or TitleIX@uco.edu. The Title IX Office is located in the Lillard Administration Building, Room 114D. For more information about your options, including reporting and confidential resources, please visit: <https://www.uco.edu/student-resources/title-ix-office/>

Academic Honesty

Plagiarism Syllabus Statement: Academic dishonesty includes plagiarizing, cheating, turning in counterfeit papers, stealing academic materials, knowingly falsifying academic documents, accessing confidential academic records without authorization, disclosing confidential academic information without authorization, and turning in the same work to more than one class without the express permission of the instructors involved. Any student deemed to have engaged in academic dishonesty will be subject to disciplinary action up to and/or including expulsion from the University. To help ensure academic integrity, faculty may employ a variety of tools including, but not limited to, university-sanctioned Turnitin.com. More information concerning this policy can be found in Section IV of the UCO Student Code of Conduct located at: <https://www.uco.edu/offices/student-conduct/files/codeofconduct-webfile.pdf>.

Given that much of this course is devoted to intellectual and moral virtues, it should be no surprise that is also has high standards for academic conduct. You are expected to consult and understand the University's Academic Dishonesty Policy (detailed in the Student Info Sheet linked below); participation in this class constitutes an agreement to follow this policy.

My own policy is this: it is always better to ask for help than to cheat. Always. Cheating takes more work, with worse results, than simply attempting the assignment, even if you phone it in. If you are confused at any point about what constitutes academic dishonesty, just ask: I'm here to help. However, if you are caught engaging in academic misconduct, I will pursue whatever maximum penalties the University may apply, from a 0 to an assignment to an F for the course to expulsion from UCO.

Student Information Sheet

Additional important university policies and information can be found here: <https://www.uco.edu/academic-affairs/files/student-info-sheet.pdf>

Reading Schedule

- 1.18 Syllabus & Course Intro
- 1.20 Shafer-Landau, Russ (2012) *The Fundamentals of Ethics*, Ch. 21
- 1.23 Curtler (2004), *Ethical Argument*, Ch. 4
- 1.25 Pojman (2004) *How Should We Live?*, Ch. 1
- 1.27 Plato, *Meno* 70-80, *Republic* II, 357-368
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- 1.30 Mill, *Utilitarianism* I-II
- 2.01 Singer (1974) "Famine, Affluence, and Morality"
- 2.03 Sinhababu (2018) "Scalar Consequentialism the Right Way"
- 2.06 Hooker (1990) "Rule-Consequentialism"
- 2.08 Chang (2015) "Value Incomparability and Incommensurability"
- 2.10 Driver (2012) *Consequentialism*, Ch. 3
-
- 2.13 Kant, *Groundwork* I-II (4:393-4:420)
- 2.15 Kant, *Groundwork* II (4:421-463)
- 2.17 Herman, Barbara (1993) *The Practice of Moral Judgment*, Ch. 1
- 2.20 O'Neill, Onora (1989) *Constructions of Reason*, Ch. 5
- 2.22 Korsgaard, Christine (1996) *Creating the Kingdom of Ends*, Ch. 4
- 2.24 Baron (1987) "Kantian Ethics and Supererogation"
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- 2.27 Hobbes, *Leviathan* 13-15
- 3.01 Rawls, *Justice as Fairness* I.2, I.6-11
- 3.03 Hampton (1991) "Two Faces of Contractarianism"
- 3.06 Darwall, Stephen (2006) *The Second-Person Standpoint*, Ch. 12
- 3.08 Ridge, Michael (2003) "Contractualism and the New and Improved Redundancy Objection"
- Norcross (2002) "Contractualism and Aggregation"
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- 3.13-17 Spring Break
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- 3.20 Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* I-II
- 3.22 Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* III.6-IV, VII.1-5
- 3.24 Annas (2011) *Intelligent Virtue*, Ch. 9
- 3.27 Hursthouse (1999) *On Virtue Ethics*, Ch. 1, 7
- 3.29 No Class: LA Symposium
- 3.31 Harman, Gilbert (2003) "No Character or Personality"
- Solomon, Robert (2005) "What's Character Got to Do with It?"
-
- 4.03 Confucius, *Classic of Filial Piety; Analects* bk. I
- 4.05 Rainey (2010) *Confucius & Confucianism*, Ch. 2
- 4.07 Rosemant (2015) *Against Individualism*, Ch. 6
- 4.10 Wen (2012) "Confucian Co-creative Ethics - Self and Family"
- 4.12 Nuyen, A.T. (2009) "Moral Obligation and Moral Motivation in Confucian Role-Based Ethics"
- 4.14 Zheng (2018) "What is My Role in Changing the System?"
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- 4.17 Noddings (1984) *Caring*, Ch. 1
- 4.19 Noddings (1984) *Caring*, Ch. 4
- 4.21 Baier (1986) "The Need for More than Justice"
- 4.24 Collins (2015) *The Core of Care Ethics*, Ch. 3
- 4.26 Held (2006) *The Ethics of Care*, Ch. 3
- 4.28 Friedman, Marliyn (1987) "Beyond Caring - The De-Moralization of Gender"
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- 5.01 Dancy (1983) "Ethical Particularism and Morally Relevant Properties"
- 5.03 Horgan & Timmons (2006) "Morality Without Moral Facts"
- 5.05 Mackie, JL (1971) *Ethics: Inventing Right and Wrong*, Ch. 1
- 5.08 Scheduled Final Exam Time (11:00AM-12:50PM)