

University of Central Oklahoma  
College of Liberal Arts  
Department of Humanities & Philosophy  
Spring 2020

**PHIL 3103: Ethical Theory**

CRN: 25063

M,W,F - 2:00-3:15 PM

Liberal Arts South, Rm. L05

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Office: Liberal Arts North, 204A

Office Hours: M,W 3:00-4:00 PM, T,Th 9:30-11:00 AM (and by appointment)

**Course Description:**

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“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:

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

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:

- 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.*

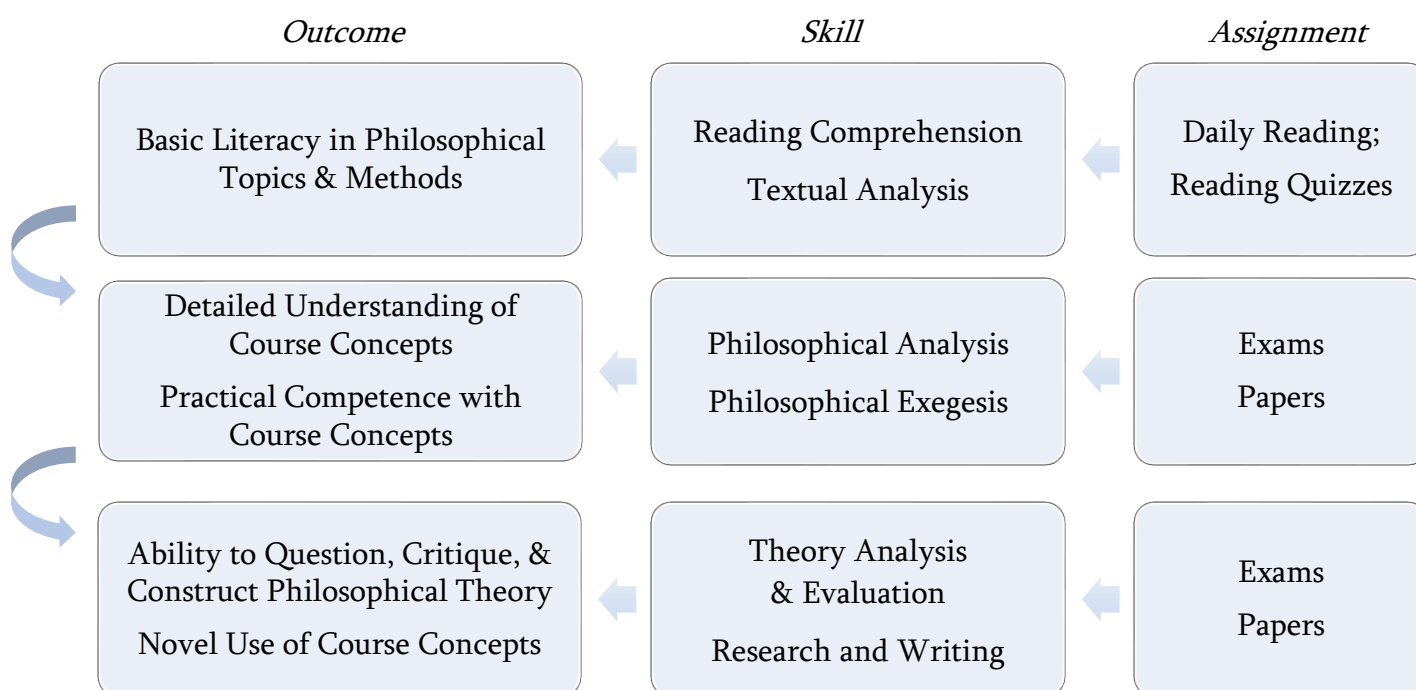
This course addresses three of the University’s transformative learning goals:

*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 Learning Outcomes



### Course Materials

There are two sources of required material for this course:

1. **Published texts.** There are three required books for this course, all available at the UCO Bookstore (you may use other editions of these works if you already own them):
  - a. Mill, John Stuart. *Utilitarianism*. Hackett. (ISBN: 9780872206052)
  - b. Kant, Immanuel. *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*. Cambridge Texts in the History of Philosophy (ISBN: 9781107401068)
  - c. Aristotle. *Nicomachean Ethics*. Oxford Classics. (ISBN: 9780199213610)
2. **Online, on D2L.** I have posted pdfs of each text, with the relevant date in the file name. You will be required to print these documents and bring them to class with you: they are too long, and too difficult, to read off a screen.

## Assignments

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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 20 pp. of reading per class, with a range of 6-40 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 in class almost every day. These quizzes will use a variety of short-answer questions (multiple choice, True/False, etc), and will test whether you're keeping up with the reading and paying attention in class. These should be easy points that you earn simply by doing the minimal required work. Conversely, if you're doing poorly on these quizzes, this shows that you need to change your study habits. If you find yourself in this position, come talk to me about study strategies.

In addition, each student will choose one of three assignment tracks, with different sets of assignments that utilize different skills and aim at different goals (I will give you more details about these assignments in handouts later in the semester).

### **Minor Track**

This track is for students new to the discipline, or to those who are studying Philosophy as a supplement to another field. The goal of this track is simply to understand and accurately explain the major concepts and details of each theory. You will be given six take-home essay exams focusing on these questions, one for each unit (you are only required to do five of these exams). These exams will contain a number of roughly one-page essays, focusing on accurately reporting and applying material from each unit.

### **Major Track**

This track is for current (or aspiring) Philosophy Majors. The goal of this track is to develop fluency in the different approaches to philosophical argumentation common in the discipline. You will be asked to write five short essays modelling these approaches (you may choose which category you use for each unit of class, but you may only use each category one time):

- Exegesis
- Application
- Formalization
- Defense from Objection
- Internal Debate
- Accommodation/Conflation

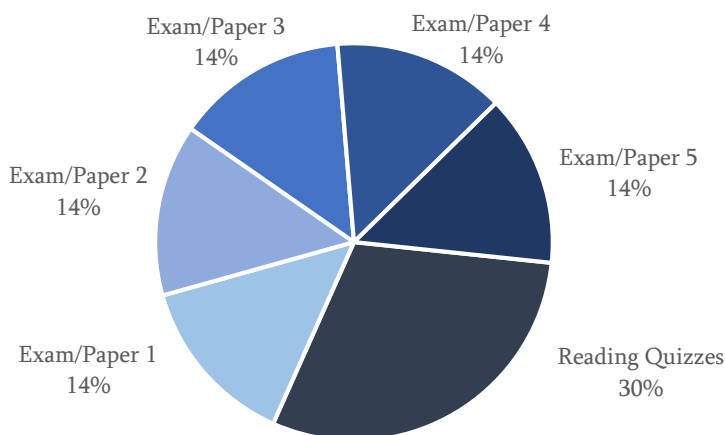
### **Grad School Track**

This track is for students who are considering a post-graduate degree (e.g. law school or a Philosophy PhD). This track involves an independent research project culminating in a writing-sample caliber final paper (c. 4000 words). All assignments for this track are directed toward this end:

1. Research pre-proposal
2. Bibliography
3. Annotated Bibliography
4. Research Proposal/Abstract
5. First Draft
6. Revised Draft

*Note that you are not restricted to any track based on your enrollment status (e.g. you may choose the Major track even if you are only a Philosophy Minor). You will have to choose a track by the second week of class; I advise you consult with me first if you aren't sure which to choose.*

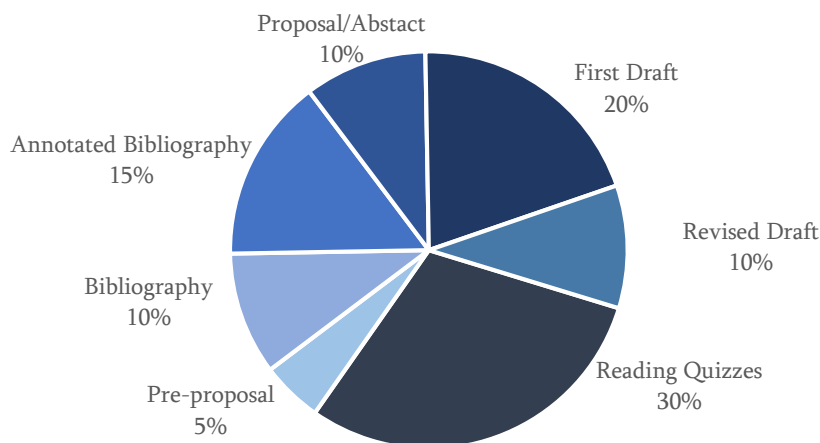
Minor Track / Major Track



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

Grad School Track



**Quizzes:** There will be 42 total class meetings, 36 of which will have reading assignments. We will have quizzes for each of these reading assignments. Each quiz will be worth 1 point total, which equals 1% of your total grade, for a total of 30 points. Because there are more quizzes than points available, you can miss 6 quizzes worth of questions with no penalty (either by missing the quiz, or by getting questions wrong on a quiz you attempted). Conversely, you can only get a maximum 30 possible points out of the 36 quizzes. In other words, you will get more than 30 chances to earn 30 points, which is a like a curve but better, because it rewards people who regularly attend class but don't always ace the quizzes.

**Exams/ Papers:** I will give Exam or Paper prompts for each of the six units of the class. However, you only need to do five of these assignments. This means you may skip one of the six assignments, at any point in the semester. Or, if you wish, you can do all six, and I will take the five highest grades.

**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 25% 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 90.0, 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

Daily Reading Quizzes will be administered in class, usually in the first few minutes (though I reserve the right to hold them at any point in class). If you arrive to class late and miss the quiz, you may not make it up. Likewise, if you skip class that day, you may not make up the quiz, because there is a built-in allowance of missed quizzes before your grade starts to be effected. (This does not apply if you have an official, excused absence; see policy below).

All other assignments will be submitted online, and instructions will be circulated well in advance, so there should be no need for make-ups. But if you find yourself in an emergency situation that prevents you from submitting your work on time, it is your responsibility to get in contact with me ASAP to work something out. Otherwise, a 1-point late penalty will be deducted once every 24 hours after the submission deadline. A 2-point late penalty will be deducted once every 24 hours after the submission deadline for the Intervention Plan.

### 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.*

### Tech Policy

Computers, tablets, e-readers, etc., will not be allowed during class time. I know it sounds paternalistic (it is) and lame (it isn't), but computers in class do [much more harm than good](#).

Four main reasons for this policy:

- 1) You might think you can multi-task well. [You are incorrect](#). Even if you were miraculously among the 2% of good multi-taskers, you would still distract those around you.
- 2) Electronic texts are much [less effective](#) than paper for the kind of reading we'll be doing.
- 3) [It is well-documented that taking](#) notes by hand is much more effective than typing. If you want a digital version of your notes, scan them or, better, type them out after class.
- 4) It is [distracting](#) to other students, and [lowers grades for everyone](#).

So, unless you have an accommodation from DSS (see below), no electronic devices in class. This won't be a big deal, because you'll be too busy thinking, writing, and discussing to need them anyway.

## **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: <http://sites.uco.edu/student-affairs/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.

## **Academic Honesty**

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 (<http://sites.uco.edu/academic-affairs/files/aa-forms/StudentInfoSheet.pdf>); 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 whether something constitutes academic dishonest, just ask. 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 the University.

Note that UCO subscribes to the Turnitin.com plagiarism prevention service. Students, by taking this course, agree that all required assignments may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to Turnitin.com for the detection of plagiarism. All submitted assignments will be included as source documents in the Turnitin.com restricted access reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of such assignments. Use of the Turnitin.com service is subject to Terms and Conditions of Use posted on the Turnitin.com website. Turnitin.com is just one of the various plagiarism prevention tools and methods that may be utilized by your instructor during the semester. The UCO Student Handbook describes the process for contesting allegations of plagiarism.

## **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](mailto: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: <http://www.uco.edu/central/title-ix/index.asp>.

## **Physical and Mental Health & Student Information Sheet**

College can be a very stressful time, emotionally, socially, and academically. You don't have to face these stresses alone. There are numerous resources on campus to help, including:

<http://sites.uco.edu/student-affairs/scc/>

<http://sites.uco.edu/wellness/shc/>

More important info here: <http://sites.uco.edu/academic-affairs/files/aa-forms/StudentInfoSheet.pdf>

## Reading Schedule

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- 1.13 - Syllabus & Schema
- 1.15 - Pojman, Louis (2004) *How Should We Live?*, Ch. 1
- 1.17 - Curtler, Hugh (2004), *Ethical Argument*, Ch. 4
- 1.20 - *MLK: No class*
- 1.22 - Mill, John Stuart (1861) *Utilitarianism* I-II
- 1.24 - Singer, Peter (1974) "Famine, Affluence, and Morality"
- 1.27 - Chang, Ruth (2015) "Value Pluralism"
- 1.29 - Sinhababu, Neil (2018) "Scalar Consequentialism the Right Way"
- 1.31 - Hooker, Brad (1990) "Rule-Consequentialism"
- 2.03 - Pettit, Philip (2012) "The Inescapability of Consequentialism"
- 2.05 - *Transition Day*
- 2.07 - Kant, Immanuel (1785) *Groundwork* I-II (4:393-4:420)
- 2.10 - Kant, Immanuel (1785) *Groundwork* II (4:421-463)
- 2.12 - Herman, Barbara (1993) *The Practice of Moral Judgment*, Ch. 1
- 2.14 - O'Neill, Onora (1989) *Constructions of Reason*, Ch. 5
- 2.17 - Korsgaard, Christine (1996) *Creating the Kingdom of Ends*, Ch. 4
- 2.19 - Baron, Marcia (1987) "Kantian Ethics and Supererogation"
- 2.21 - *Transition Day*
- 2.24 - Hobbes, Thomas (1651) *Leviathan* 13-15
- 2.26 - Rawls, John (2001) *Justice as Fairness* I.2, I.6-11
- 2.28 - Hampton, Jean (1991) "Two Faces of Contractarianism"
- 3.02 - Watson, Gary (1998) "Some Considerations in Favor of Contractualism"
- 3.04 - Scanlon, T.M. (1998) *What We Owe to Each Other*, Ch. 5.1-7
- 3.06 - Darwall, Stephen (2006) *The Second Person Standpoint*, Ch. 12
- 3.09 - *Transition Day*
- 3.11 - Aristotle (c. 350 BCE) *Nicomachean Ethics* I-II
- 3.13 - Aristotle (c. 350 BCE) *Nicomachean Ethics* III.6-IV, VII.1-5
- 3.16 -
- 3.18 - *Spring Break: No class*
- 3.20 -
- 3.23 - Foot, Philippa (1977) "Virtues and Vices"
- 3.25 - Hursthouse, Rosalind (1999) *On Virtue Ethics*, Chs. 1, 7
- 3.27 - Upton, Candance (2014) "What Virtues are there?"
- 3.30 - Annas, Julia (2011) *Intelligent Virtue*, Ch. 9
- 4.01 - *LA Symposium: No class*
- 4.03 - Confucius (c. 400 BCE) *Classic of Filial Piety; Analects* bk. I
- 4.06 - Rainey, Lee Dian (2010) *Confucius & Confucianism*, Ch. 2
- 4.08 - Rosemant Jr, Henry (2015) *Against Individualism*, Ch. 6
- 4.10 - Wen, Haiming (2012) "Confucian Co-creative Ethics: Self and Family"
- 4.13 - Nuyen, A.T. (2009) "Moral Obligation and Moral Motivation in Confucian Role-Based Ethics"
- 4.15 - Swanton, Christine (2016) "A Virtue Ethical Theory of Role Ethics"
- 4.17 - *Transition Day*
- 4.20 - Noddings, Nel (1984) *Caring*, Ch. 1
- 4.22 - Noddings, Nel (1984) *Caring*, Ch. 4
- 4.24 - Baier, Annette (1986) "The Need for More than Justice"
- 4.27 - Collins, Stephanie (2015) *The Core of Care Ethics*, Ch. 3
- 4.29 - Held, Virginia (2006) *The Ethics of Care*, Ch. 3
- 5.01 - Friedman, Marliyn (1987) "Beyond Caring - The De-Moralization of Gender"
- 5.06 - Scheduled Final Exam Time (Wednesday, 1:00-2:50 PM)