Phil 1200 Social Ethics

Course Description

In this course, we will think critically about contemporary moral issues. First, we'll consider various meta ethical questions: Is ethics subjective; do the right answers to moral questions depend on the sentiments of individuals? Is ethics culturally relative; do the answers to ethical questions vary from one culture to the next? Does ethics come from the commands of God?

Next, we'll discuss objective moral theories. Is utilitarianism true; should we make ethical decisions based on what achieves the greatest good for the greatest number? Is deontology true; does the moral status of an action depend on the intentions of the person performing it? Is virtue theory true; ought morality to be a matter of developing certain traits of character? Is care ethics true; do our moral obligations arise out of the care relationships that we take on?

Finally (and for the majority of the course) we'll discuss some of the most pressing social issues of our day. This course is, in many ways, "ripped from the headlines." We'll discuss issues that we all have to make moral decisions about in the here and now. Issues this semester will include: public health and the ethics of pandemics, civil disobedience and ethical issues pertaining to the criminal justice system, free speech and the internet, poverty and economic justice, environmental and animal ethics, and the ethics of technology.

Course Objectives

By the end of this course, you will be able to:

1. Work through moral issues in nuanced and thoughtful ways.
2. Identify, understand, and reasonably respond to the points of view of people with whom you disagree.
3. Articulate the major moral theories in a way that indicates familiarity with some of the history of moral thought.

Instructor

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Office: Old Main 002H

Office Hours: Fridays from 2:30-3:20 and by appointment on Zoom.
UTF Information

Maggie Mattinson
maggie.mattinson@usu.edu

Office Hours: By appointment on Zoom.

Course Resources

Textbook:

- Other readings are available here on Canvas.

Course Requirements

Each student will:

1. Contribute to weekly discussion boards. Each student must provide their own response to the question prompt and respond in a meaningful way to the contribution of another student. (200 points, 20% of the course grade).
2. Take two exams, a midterm (250 points, 25% of the course grade) and a final (250 points, 25% of the course grade).
3. Identify an ethical issue that is prominent in the news and write a case study on that issue. This assignment will be scaffolded; the student will do a series of assignments on Canvas throughout the semester that will assist them in completing their case study at the end of the semester. (300 points, 30% of the course grade)

Evaluation Methods and Criteria

Rubrics will be available for each assignment so students can get a sense of how they will be graded.

Grade Scheme

The following grading standards will be used in this class:
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<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
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Course Schedule/Outline

PART ONE: METAETHICS AND NORMATIVE ETHICS

Week One (August 31st-September 4th): Introduction to Ethics

Reading(s):

EE Chapter One: Morality and Moral Philosophy by William K. Frankena

Due (9/4): Discussion One.

Week Two (September 7th-September 11th): Metaethics: Subjectivism, Relativism, and Divine Command Theory.

Reading(s):

How Not to Answer Moral Questions by Tom Regan (On Canvas)

EE Chapter Six: The Challenge of Cultural Relativism by James Rachels pg 37

Due (9/11): Discussion Two.

Week Three (September 14th-September 18th): Introduction to Ethical Theory and Virtue Ethics

Reading(s):

EE Chapter Sixteen: The Nature of Virtue (from the Nichomachean Ethics) by Aristotle pg. 115
Week Four (September 21st-September 25th): Deontology
Reading(s):
EE Chapter Twelve: The Categorical Imperative by Immanuel Kant pg. 83
EE Chapter Thirteen: A Simplified Account of Kant's Ethics by Onora O'Neill pg. 94
Due (9/25): Discussion Four.

Week Five (September 28th-October 2nd): Utilitarianism
Reading(s):
EE Chapter Fourteen: Utilitarianism by John Stuart Mill pg. 98
EE Chapter Fifteen: The Strengths and Weaknesses of Utilitarianism by Louis P. Pojman pg. 106
Due (10/2): Discussion Five.

Week Six (October 5th-October 9th): Care Ethics and Midterm Exam
Reading(s):
EE Chapter Eighteen: The Ethics of Care by Virginia Held pg. 124
Midterm Exam available on Canvas October 7th-October 10th.

PART TWO: APPLIED ETHICS

Week Seven (October 12th-October 16th): Ethics and Pandemics
Reading(s): TBA
Due (10/16): Discussion Six.

Week Eight (October 19th-October 23rd): The Ethics of Protests and Civil Disobedience
Reading(s):
EE Chapter Two: Crito by Plato pg. 6
Letter From a Birmingham Jail by Martin Luther King Junior (On Canvas)
Additional Readings TBA

Due (10/23): Discussion Seven.

Week Nine (October 26th-October 30th): Conspiracy Theories and The Ethics of Belief
Reading(s):
The Ethics of Belief by W.K. Clifford (On Canvas)
The Will to Believe by William James (On Canvas).
Due (10/30): Discussion Eight.

Week Ten (November 2nd-November 6th): Poverty and Economic Justice
Reading(s):
EE Chapter Twenty-Two: Famine, Affluence, and Morality by Peter Singer pg. 151
Second Reading TBA
Due (11/6): Discussion Nine.

Week Eleven (November 9th-November 13th): Animal Ethics
Reading(s):
The Utilitarian Justification for Animal Liberation by Peter Singer (On Canvas).
The Case for Animal Rights by Tom Regan (On Canvas)
Why Animals Have No Rights by Carl Cohen (On Canvas)
Due (11/13): Discussion Ten.

Week Twelve (November 16th-November 20th): Environmental Ethics
Reading(s):
We Are What We Eat by Tom Regan (On Canvas)
Week Thirteen (November 23rd-November 27th): Thanksgiving, No Course Work.

Week Fourteen (November 30th-December 4th): Ethics and Technology

Reading(s):
EE Chapter Fifty: The Trolley Problem by Judith Jarvis Thompson pg. 421
EE Chapter Fifty-One: Turning the Trolley by Judith Jarvis Thompson pg. 424
Why Ethics Matters for Self Driving Cars by Patrick Lin (On Canvas).

Week Fourteen (December 7th-December 10th): Catch Up and Review

Due: Ethics Case Study

The Final will be available to take any time during finals week.

Library Services

All USU students attending classes in Logan, at our Regional Campuses, or online can access all databases, e-journals, and e-books regardless of location. Additionally, the library will mail printed books to students, at no charge to them. Students can also borrow books from any Utah academic library. Take advantage of all library services and learn more at libguides.usu.edu/rc. (Links to an external site.)

Classroom Civility

Utah State University supports the principle of freedom of expression for both faculty and students. The University respects the rights of faculty to teach and students to learn. Maintenance of these rights requires classroom conditions that do not impede the learning process. Disruptive classroom behavior will not be tolerated. An individual engaging in such behavior may be subject to disciplinary action. Read Student Code Article V Section V-3 (Links to an external site.) for more information.

University Policies & Procedures
COVID-19 Classroom Protocols

In order to continue to provide a high standard of instruction at USU, and to limit the spread of COVID-19 during the pandemic, students are asked to follow certain classroom protocols. These protocols are in place not only for your safety but also the safety of the rest of the campus community. You will be asked to clean your desk area at the start of each class, sit in designated seats, wear face coverings, and follow dismission instructions. There may be individual medical circumstances that prevent some students from using face coverings. These circumstances will be rare, but if they do exist, we ask that everyone be respectful. It is imperative that we each do our part so that on-campus instruction can continue.

Academic Freedom and Professional Responsibilities

Academic freedom is the right to teach, study, discuss, investigate, discover, create, and publish freely. Academic freedom protects the rights of faculty members in teaching and of students in learning. Freedom in research is fundamental to the advancement of truth. Faculty members are entitled to full freedom in teaching, research, and creative activities, subject to the limitations imposed by professional responsibility. Faculty Code Policy #403 further defines academic freedom and professional responsibilities.

Academic Integrity – "The Honor System"

Each student has the right and duty to pursue his or her academic experience free of dishonesty. To enhance the learning environment at Utah State University and to develop student academic integrity, each student agrees to the following Honor Pledge: "I pledge, on my honor, to conduct myself with the foremost level of academic integrity." A student who lives by the Honor Pledge is a student who does more than not cheat, falsify, or plagiarize. A student who lives by the Honor Pledge:

- Espouses academic integrity as an underlying and essential principle of the Utah State University community;
- Understands that each act of academic dishonesty devalues every degree that is awarded by this institution; and
- Is a welcomed and valued member of Utah State University.

Academic Dishonesty

The instructor of this course will take appropriate actions in response to Academic Dishonesty, as defined the University’s Student Code. Acts of academic dishonesty include but are not limited to:

- **Cheating:** using, attempting to use, or providing others with any unauthorized assistance in taking quizzes, tests, examinations, or in any other academic exercise or activity. Unauthorized assistance includes:
Working in a group when the instructor has designated that the quiz, test, examination, or any other academic exercise or activity be done “individually;”

- Depending on the aid of sources beyond those authorized by the instructor in writing papers, preparing reports, solving problems, or carrying out other assignments;
- Substituting for another student, or permitting another student to substitute for oneself, in taking an examination or preparing academic work;
- Acquiring tests or other academic material belonging to a faculty member, staff member, or another student without express permission;
- Continuing to write after time has been called on a quiz, test, examination, or any other academic exercise or activity;
- Submitting substantially the same work for credit in more than one class, except with prior approval of the instructor; or engaging in any form of research fraud.

- **Falsification**: altering or fabricating any information or citation in an academic exercise or activity.

- **Plagiarism**: representing, by paraphrase or direct quotation, the published or unpublished work of another person as one's own in any academic exercise or activity without full and clear acknowledgment. It also includes using materials prepared by another person or by an agency engaged in the sale of term papers or other academic materials.

For additional information go to: [ARTICLE VI. University Regulations Regarding Academic Integrity](http://example.com)

**Sexual Harassment/Title IX**

Utah State University is committed to creating and maintaining an environment free from acts of sexual misconduct and discrimination and to fostering respect and dignity for all members of the USU community. Title IX and [USU Policy 339](http://example.com) address sexual harassment in the workplace and academic setting. The university responds promptly upon learning of any form of possible discrimination or sexual misconduct. Any individual may contact USU's [Office of Equity](http://example.com) for available options and resources or clarification. The university has established a complaint procedure to handle all types of discrimination complaints, including sexual harassment ([USU Policy 305](http://example.com)), and has designated the Office of Equity Director/Title IX Coordinator as the official responsible for receiving and investigating complaints of sexual harassment.

**Withdrawal Policy and "I" Grade Policy**

Students are required to complete all courses for which they are registered by the end of the semester. In some cases, a student may be unable to complete all of the coursework because of extenuating circumstances, but not due to poor performance or to retain financial aid. The
term ‘extenuating’ circumstances includes: (1) incapacitating illness which prevents a student from attending classes for a minimum period of two weeks, (2) a death in the immediate family, (3) financial responsibilities requiring a student to alter a work schedule to secure employment, (4) change in work schedule as required by an employer, or (5) other emergencies deemed appropriate by the instructor.

**Students with Disabilities**

USU welcomes students with disabilities. If you have, or suspect you may have, a physical, mental health, or learning disability that may require accommodations in this course, please contact the Disability Resource Center (DRC) as early in the semester as possible (University Inn # 101, (435) 797-2444, drc@usu.edu). All disability related accommodations must be approved by the DRC. Once approved, the DRC will coordinate with faculty to provide accommodations.

Students who are at a higher risk for complications from COVID-19 or who contract COVID-19 may also be eligible for accommodations.

**Diversity Statement**

Regardless of intent, careless or ill-informed remarks can be offensive and hurtful to others and detract from the learning climate. If you feel uncomfortable in a classroom due to offensive language or actions by an instructor or student(s) regarding ethnicity, gender, or sexual orientation, contact:

- Division of Student Affairs: https://studentaffairs.usu.edu, (435) 797-1712, studentservices@usu.edu, TSC 220
- Student Legal Services: https://ususa.usu.edu/student-association/student-advocacy/legal-services, (435) 797-2912, TSC 326
- Access and Diversity: http://accesscenter.usu.edu, (435) 797-1728, access@usu.edu; TSC 315
- Multicultural Programs: http://accesscenter.usu.edu/multiculture, (435) 797-1728, TSC 315
- LGBTQA Programs: http://accesscenter.usu.edu/lgbtqa, (435) 797-1728, TSC 3145
- Provost’s Office Diversity Resources: https://www.usu.edu/provost/diversity, (435) 797-8176

You can learn about your student rights by visiting:
The Code of Policies and Procedures for Students at Utah State University: https://studentconduct.usu.edu/studentcode

**Grievance Process**

Students who feel they have been unfairly treated may file a grievance through the channels and procedures described in the Student Code: Article VII.

**Full details for USU Academic Policies and Procedures can be found at:**
Emergency Procedures

In the case of a drill or real emergency, classes will be notified to evacuate the building by the sound of the fire/emergency alarm system or by a building representative. In the event of a disaster that may interfere with either notification, evacuate as the situation dictates (i.e., in an earthquake when shaking ceases or immediately when a fire is discovered). Turn off computers and take any personal items with you. Elevators should not be used; instead, use the closest stairs.

Mental Health

Mental health is critically important for the success of USU students. As a student, you may experience a range of issues that can cause barriers to learning, such as strained relationships, increased anxiety, alcohol/drug problems, feeling down, difficulty concentrating and/or lack of motivation. These mental health concerns or stressful events may lead to diminished academic performance or reduce your ability to participate in daily activities. Utah State University provides free services for students to assist them with addressing these and other concerns. You can learn more about the broad range of confidential mental health services available on campus at Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) (Links to an external site.). Students are also encouraged to download the “SafeUT App” (Links to an external site.) to their smartphones. The SafeUT application is a 24/7 statewide crisis text and tip service that provides real-time crisis intervention to students through texting and a confidential tip program that can help anyone with emotional crises, bullying, relationship problems, mental health, or suicide related issues.