

**PHIL 181: Ethics**

**John Felice Rome Center**

Spring 2024

Tuesdays & Thursdays | 5:15-6:30pm

Dr. Moreno Rocchi

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Office Hours: Thu., 1:00-3:00pm (by appointment)

**Course Description**

The aim of this course is to lead students toward an autonomous judgment of fundamental issues related to the human society and ethical decision making, with special reference to happiness, justice, fairness, adherence to norms and civil disobedience, rules and duties, cultural and social influences. This will provide students with the basic critical skills for recognizing different ethical approaches and for judging their feasibility and correctness. By analyzing the philosophies that most consistently influenced the development of Western culture, students will be aided in their understanding of moral dilemmas, as well as their construction of philosophically informed decisions.

The course is divided into three parts.

We will first familiarize ourselves with the importance of ethics in everyday life by discussing a number of moral dilemmas. We will then clarify our field by analyzing moral relativism, the relation between ethics and religion, and the relation between ethics and legality.

In the second and largest part of the course we will compare two different theories on the universal criterion for moral judgment: Kant's theory and utilitarianism.

Both of these theories will be applied to contemporary issues.

Finally, the criticism of such a universalistic approach by feminist ethics will allow us to analyze the so-called "virtue ethics", a recent renewal of ancient ethics.

We will occasionally return to the original dilemmas as we move through these ethical frameworks.

**Learning Outcomes**

On completion of the course students should be able to demonstrate an understanding of the major philosophical questions in the area of ethics with attention to the historical and conceptual development of these questions, and be able to articulate some of the major problems and responses central to this area of philosophy.

This course should also enable students to:

- (a) appreciate the profound issues involved in social relations, such as dignity and diversity;
- (b) engage in dialogue with great philosophers, paying close attention to their meaning, their reasons, their concerns, their vision;
- (c) insert their own reflections into the dialogue;
- (d) examine the way different philosophically defended views challenge each other, and how they also challenge unexamined presuppositions in our own culture;
- (e) recognize the need for ethical judgment;
- (f) distinguish alternative courses of action;
- (g) articulate the relevant ethical values, principles, rights, and virtues from the point of view of each stakeholder;
- (h) formulate and support an ethical judgment;
- (i) recognize the premises for a given conclusion or viewpoint, identify unexamined presuppositions, appreciate astute insights, expose vulnerabilities in established positions;
- (j) compare and contrast ethical theories and evaluate them in terms of strengths and weaknesses;
- (k) differentiate among historical and contemporary perspectives about the world with a view to fashioning a humane and just world;

(l) understand the relationships among cultural, economic, political, and social forces, and their impact on human behavior;

(m) assess how moral principles are conditioned by one's involvement in (and responsibilities toward) the socially organized community in which one lives.

### **Required Texts/Materials**

James Rachels, *The Elements of Moral Philosophy*, McGraw-Hill, 10<sup>th</sup> edition (but 9<sup>th</sup> or 8<sup>th</sup> or 7<sup>th</sup> is fine too);

Immanuel Kant, *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals* (available online);

John Stuart Mill, *Utilitarianism* (available online);

Assigned readings posted on Sakai.

### **Attendance Policy**

In accordance with the JFRC mission to promote a higher level of academic rigor, all courses adhere to the following absence policy. Prompt attendance, preparation and active participation in course discussions are expected from every student.

- For all classes meeting once a week, students cannot incur more than one unexcused absence.
- For all classes meeting twice a week, students cannot incur more than two unexcused absences.
- For all classes meeting three times a week, students cannot incur more than two unexcused absences.

This course meets twice a week, thus a total of **two unexcused absences** will be permitted. **Unexcused absences beyond these will result in 1% lowering of the final course grade, for every absence after the "approved limit"**.

If, however, you are ill, do not attend class (your absence will be excused).

### **Assessment Components**

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|--------------------------------------|------|
| • Midterm Exam (in-class test)       | 35 % |
| • Final Exam (take-home paper)       | 40 % |
| • Presentation(s) and Participation* | 25 % |

\*Each student will be required to give one presentation. They will also occasionally be required to write short reflections on topics discussed in class.

### **Grading**

94-100: A

90-93: A-

87-89: B+

84-86: B

80-83: B-

77-79: C+

74-76: C

70-73: C-

67-69: D+

60-66: D

59 or lower: F

### **Academic Integrity:**

Academic integrity is the pursuit of scholarly activity in an open, honest, and responsible manner. Academic integrity is a guiding principle for all academic activity at Loyola University Chicago, and all members of the University community are expected to act in accordance with this principle.

Failing to meet the following academic integrity standards is a serious violation of personal honesty and the academic ideals that bind the University into a learning community. These standards apply to both individual and group assignments. Individuals working in a group may be held responsible if one of the group members has violated one or more of these standards.

1. Students may not plagiarize; the use of AI is considered plagiarism too and treated as such.
2. Students may not submit the same work for credit for more than one assignment (known as self-plagiarism).
3. Students may not fabricate data.
4. Students may not collude.
5. Students may not cheat.
6. Student may not facilitate academic misconduct.

Follow this link for more details about these standards, sanctions, and academic misconduct procedures: ([https://www.luc.edu/academics/catalog/undergrad/reg\\_academicintegrity.shtml](https://www.luc.edu/academics/catalog/undergrad/reg_academicintegrity.shtml))

### **Late or Missed Assignments**

Late or missed assignments will not be accepted for grading without the authorization of the instructor.

### **Accessibility Accommodations (with addendum on classroom recording policy)**

Students registered with the Student Accessibility Center requiring academic accommodations should contact the Office of the Dean at the John Felice Rome Center, the first week of classes.

Loyola University provides reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities. Any student requesting accommodations related to a disability or other condition is required to register with Student Accessibility Center (SAC), located in Sullivan Center, Suite 117. Professors receive the accommodation notification from SAC via Accommodate. Students are encouraged to meet with their professor individually in order to discuss their accommodations. All information will remain confidential.

Please note that in this class, software may be used to record class lectures exclusively in order to provide equal access to students with disabilities. Students approved for this accommodation use recordings for their personal study only and recordings may not be shared with other people or used in any way against the faculty member, other lecturers, or students whose classroom comments are recorded as part of the class activity. Recordings are deleted at the end of the semester.

For more information about registering with SAC or questions about accommodations, please contact SAC at 773-508-3700 or [SAC@luc.edu](mailto:SAC@luc.edu).

### **Course Schedule**

<u>Date</u>	<u>Topic</u>	<u>Assignment</u>
Tue. 01/16	Introduction to the course	
Thu. 01/18	Some moral dilemmas	Rachels, Ch. 1
Tue. 01/23	The challenge of moral relativism	Rachels, Ch. 2
Thu. 01/25	Ethics and religion	Rachels, Ch. 4
Tue. 01/30	Ethics and civil law	Rachels, Ch. 6 (except for 6.2); M.L. King, «Letter from Birmingham Jail»
Thu. 02/01	Introduction to Kant	



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<u>Date</u>	<u>Topic</u>	<u>Assignment</u>
Tue. 02/06	Movie day	
Thu. 02/08	Kant	<i>Groundwork</i> , Section 1 (part I)
Tue. 02/13	Kant	<i>Groundwork</i> , Section 1 (part II)
Thu. 02/15	Kant	<i>Groundwork</i> , Section 2 (part I)
Tue. 02/20	Kant	<i>Groundwork</i> , Section 2 (part II)
Thu. 02/22	Kantian applications 1	O'Neill, «Between Consenting Adults»
Tue. 02/27	Review	
<b>Thu. 02/29</b>	<b>Midterm Exam</b>	
<b>[SPRING BREAK]</b>		
Tue. 03/12	Kantian applications 2	Jonas, <i>The Imperative of Responsibility</i> (excerpts)
Thu. 03/14	Kantian applications 3	Kant, <i>Perpetual Peace</i> (excerpt); Benhabib, <i>The Rights of Others</i> (excerpt)
Tue. 03/19	On-site class on Migration	
Thu. 03/21	Introduction to Utilitarianism	Rachels, Ch. 7; Mill, <i>Utilitarianism</i> , Ch. 1
Tue. 03/26	Mill	<i>Utilitarianism</i> , Ch. 2
Thu. 03/28	Mill	<i>Utilitarianism</i> , Ch. 3-4
Tue. 04/02	The shortcomings of Utilitarianism I	Rachels, Ch. 8 + 9.1
Thu. 04/04 ( <i>might be rescheduled</i> )	The shortcomings of Utilitarianism II	Walzer, «Political Action: The Problem of Dirty Hands»
Tue. 04/09	The shortcomings of Utilitarianism III	Singer, «Famine, Affluence and Morality»
Thu. 04/11	Universalistic ethics vs. Ethics of Care	Rachels, Ch. 11; Elshstain, «Antigone's Daughters»
Tue. 04/16	Virtue ethics	Rachels, Ch. 12
Thu. 04/18	Study day	
<b>Thu. 04/25 (TBC)</b>	<b>Final exam</b>	