

Philosophy 4: Introduction to Ethics The Exercise of Skill

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Professor Aaron James

Department of Philosophy
HIB 79 (ground floor)
aaron.james@uci.edu
Virtual office hours (by appointment)

Topics

According to Aristotle, ethical virtue is similar to athletic and musical virtue: these are all an exercise of skill. This course considers several ways that “know how” bears on philosophical questions of ethics, including: Why be moral? What is it to be happy? How is morality related to freedom and control in action? What is the value and future of work and leisure, especially in light of climate and technological change?

Format

This course is entirely virtual. Instead of conventional in-person lectures, videos will be posted on Canvas.

You will have the opportunity to discuss the course material with your TA in Zoom section meetings, or on the Canvas course discussion board.

All assignments must be *submitted electronically on Canvas*. You may *not* submit them directly either to me or to your TA.

Readings: Essays or book selections, all available on Canvas

Prerequisites: There are no prerequisites for this course

Requirements: Your grade is determined by your performance on two writing assignments:

(1) a six-page paper (40%) – due Tuesday Feb. 2

(2) a take-home final exam (60%) – due March 12 by 5pm. *Note: No late final exams will be accepted.*

Instructions for both assignments are previewed below. The full assignments and prompts are posted on Canvas, along with an instructional video.

Participation

Virtual participation is strongly encouraged but not an official course requirement. Your TA will hold a Zoom discussion section meeting each week.

Please contact me directly *only with personal matters*. Questions about the content of the course should be raised in your discussion section or on the Canvas discussion board, for the benefit of everyone.

Pro Tip:

Since the paper and final exam questions are already posted on Canvas, *work on both of them as the quarter progresses*, using the weekly lecture videos and your TAs discussion section. The final exam includes short-essay questions for *each of the readings for the course*. You can write each question as you do the readings, listen to the lecture videos, and attending your TAs section meetings. Don't wait until the last minute. (And note again that no late final exams will be accepted, for any reason.)

Schedule of weekly topics:

Part I: Foundations

Week 1: Why Be Moral?

Plato, *Gorgias* (selection)

Week 2: Knowledge

Ryle, G., "Knowing How and Knowing That"

Week 3: Virtue

Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book II

Week 4: Happiness

Parfit, D. "What Makes Someone's Life Go Best"

Nozick, R. "The Experience Machine"

James, A., "Flow," from *Surfing with Sartre*

Week 5: Morality and Freedom

Kant, I., *Groundwork* (selections)

Sartre, J. P., "Existentialism as a Humanism"

Merleau-Ponty, M., "Freedom" (selection)

Week 6: Attunement

Marion-Young, I., “Throwing Like a Girl”

Herrigel, E. “Zen in the Art of Archery” (optional)

Railton, P., “The Affective Dog and its Rational Tale: Intuition and Attunement.”

Part II: Work

Week 7: Liberty and the Workplace

Anderson, E., “Liberty, Equality, and Private Government”

Week 8: Meaning in Work and Leisure

Crawford, M., *Shop Class as Soul Craft* (selection)

James, A., “Work,” from *Surfing with Sartre*

Week 9: Leisure Capitalism?

McAfee, A., and Brynjolfsson, E., *The Second Machine Age* (selection)

James, A., “Nature,” from *Surfing with Sartre*

Week 10: Utopias

J. S. Mill, "Of the Stationary State"
<http://www.econlib.org/library/Mill/mlP61.html>

Suits, B., *Games, Life, Utopia* (selection)

Why this course?

Your tasks: you will be asked to read the assigned materials carefully; "attend" lecture (by watching videos); actively follow and engage in discussion; and write an essay and a final exam.

Their purpose: To develop skills in critical thought, analysis, and argumentation. To acquire greater sensitivity to key questions of ethics. To gain an appreciation of key classical and modern texts in philosophy. To sharpen your writing skills, especially in clarity and economy of expression.

The criteria: Your work will be judged on the quality and clarity of your writing, your command over the discussed material, and your ability to charitably interpret arguments and effectively criticize or defend them.

In other words, you'll fulfill GE IV learning outcomes

In taking Philosophy 4, you should acquire a basic command of general critical thinking skills and a heightened sensitivity to key questions of ethics. Beyond attending lectures and sections, you are required to read the work of both ancient and contemporary philosophers and to write essays on these readings. These are evaluated for how well you convey an understanding of the reading and lecture material; how clearly you articulate and analyze the central claims, ideas, and arguments offered; and how well or creatively you critically assess these claims, ideas, and arguments. Because you are graded based on a paper and a take-home final, the course is writing intensive. Your success will depend heavily on how much time, thought, and craft you give to the writing process. Once you've completed Philosophy 4, you should be able to distinguish between good and bad forms of reasoning and think critically and reasonably about ethical issues, with a new awareness of central ethical questions.

Philosophy Major/Minor: Philosophy 4 satisfies a requirement for the B.A. degree in philosophy and the minor in philosophy.

Late Policy: the late penalty is a **1/3** grade deduction for each day late (including each day of the weekend). The policy applies for the original due dates any new due dates set because of an extension. *No late final exams will be accepted.*

Adding and Dropping: The deadline to add/drop this course, as set by the School of Humanities, is usually the end of the second week of the quarter. (But watch for any temporary rules, like the temporary rules for the Pass/Not Pass grade option noted below.)

Academic Integrity: Please review UC Irvine's guidelines for academic honesty (<http://honesty.uci.edu>). You are expected to know what plagiarism is (though do ask if you have any questions). The consequences for plagiarism are very severe and may include a mark on your permanent record. It is very difficult, if not impossible, to do well in this course if you are found to have plagiarized.

Disability Services: If you require support or assistance because of disability, you may be eligible for accommodations through the Disability Service Center. Please contact them directly at 949-824-6272 or visit <http://www.disability.uci.edu>.

Guidelines on Writing a Philosophy Paper: along with in-class and other writing instruction, you are encouraged to closely follow this guide in writing your essays. <http://www.jimpryor.net/teaching/guidelines/writing.html>

Assignment Instructions (we'll review these by video)

The Six Page Paper. Write six, and no more than six, pages on one (and only one) of the following essay topics [posted on Canvas]. As a general rule, approximately two-thirds of the paper (approx. four pages) should be careful and sympathetic *exposition* of the relevant positions or arguments. Approximately one-third (at least two pages) should reflect your *critical or reflective engagement* with the relevant positions or arguments. Exposition and critical engagement can be intermingled, and the amount of each may vary depending on the question you answer. Use helpful examples and apt quotations. Carefully organize the flow of ideas. Above all, strive for clarity.

Final Exam. Clearly and concisely answer each of the following questions [posted on Canvas] in *absolutely no more* than a half, double-spaced typed page. (Use 12 point Times New Roman with one-inch margins, header, and footer). You will not receive credit for any part of your answer that exceeds this space restriction. You may simply answer the question (citing the question number) without rephrasing it or formulating a thesis statement. *No late final exams will be accepted.* You may turn the exam early. If you work with others on your answers, your answers must be put entirely in your own words. If you do your own work, you should have no problem. But if the language of your answer is at

any point even close to that of another student, in ways not justified by the lecture or reading material, you automatically fail the exam.

Pass/Not Pass regulations (temporary):

1. All undergraduate courses will have a P/NP grading option. However, faculty may not require students to enroll in a course P/NP if the course currently has a letter-grade option. The choice is up to the student.
2. The Academic Senate grants deans and units the authority to temporarily count P/NP courses toward the fulfillment of specific School and major requirements (where fulfillment of a requirement currently can only be done with a letter grade). Furthermore, the Academic Senate positively encourages the relaxation of such requirements.
3. Students will be able to change from the letter-grade option to P/NP through the end of the 10th week.
4. P/NP courses taken during spring quarter 2020 will not count toward the 12-unit overall cap on these courses.
5. Students on academic probation may enroll in a course as P/NP during spring quarter 2020.

Some further considerations:

Note that further potential impacts are beyond the control of UCI. In particular: medical schools, graduate programs, and professional schools may not accept a grading option of P/NP for some courses. Also consider the impact of P/NP courses on GPA, as well as potential impacts on “satisfactory academic progress” and financial aid. The Office of the Vice Provost for Teaching and Learning will soon have a webpage to you understand your options and any ramifications.