

# **Intro to Ethics**

Phil. 160H

Spring 2014

Tues./Thurs. 11:15-12:30

## **Instructor Information**

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Office Hours: Tues./Thurs. 12:45-1:45, and by appointment

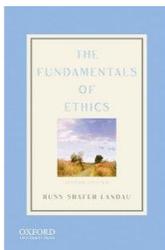
## **Course Description**

We will discuss a number of different topics in this course. We will begin by discussing the Good Life. We will look at several different accounts of what it is that makes a life good for the person living it. Next, we will discuss the conditions of rightness. We will look at several different accounts of what it is that makes actions morally right. In this connection, we will discuss utilitarianism, Kantianism, divine command theory, egoism, cultural relativism, and possibly some other theories. Finally, we will discuss some practical moral questions. We will discuss whether it is morally okay to eat meat, and whether abortion is ever permissible. Along the way, we'll talk a little about logic and argumentation.

## **Textbook**

Shafer-Landau, Russ. *The Fundamentals of Ethics*. 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011.

It looks like this:



You can buy it at the Textbook Annex.

There will be some other required readings for the course that don't appear in the textbook; they will be placed on Moodle.

## **Course Requirements**

*Two Tests (20% each)*

The tests will be in-class blue book exams. They will cover the material that we discuss in class. For each exam, I will give you a list of study questions ahead of time that will help you prepare. The first exam will be on March 4<sup>th</sup>. The second exam will be on April 22<sup>nd</sup>.

If you miss an exam, you will not be permitted to make it up, unless you have legitimate, documented excuse (such as an illness, a death in the family, or a conflicting religious obligation). If you need to miss an exam, let me know in *advance*, if at all possible.

#### *Term Paper (20%)*

The term paper is your chance to defend a position on one of the topics we discuss in the class. I will give you a list of possible paper topics, though you may come up with your own topic so long as you get it approved by me. The term paper should advance the conversation somewhat beyond what we talk about in class. I will say more about the term paper later in the course. The length of the paper will be about 6-8 pages, and it will be due during finals week.

Late term papers will be penalized, unless you have a legitimate, documented excuse.

#### *Two Short Papers (7.5% each)*

You will be required to write two short (3-4 page) papers during the course of the semester. The tentative due date for the first one is Feb. 11<sup>th</sup>. The tentative due date for the second is April 1<sup>st</sup>. The papers will be on a specific topic that I will assign, and they are meant to give you practice doing the type of writing that will be expected in the term paper.

Late short papers will be penalized, unless you have a legitimate, documented excuse.

#### *Homework Assignments (10% total)*

There will be frequent written homework assignments based on the assigned readings. These will be graded mostly on completion and are designed to get you to think about the readings prior to class.

No late homework assignments will be accepted, unless you have a legitimate, documented excuse.

#### *Logic Quiz (5%)*

The second meeting of the class will be devoted to discussion of some basic logical concepts that this class will presuppose. There will be a short logic quiz based on our discussion. The date of the quiz will likely be sometime during the second week of class.

If you miss the quiz, you will not be allowed to make it up, unless you have a legitimate, documented excuse. If you need to miss the quiz, let me know in advance.

#### *Attendance (5%)*

Simply put, you learn more if you come to class, and if you come to class, discussion will be better. For this reason, I will take attendance at the beginning of each class. You should plan to arrive on time—if you come after I've taken attendance, you may be counted as "absent."

Your attendance grade will be calculated according to the following chart:

<u>Number of Unexcused Absences</u>	<u>Attendance Grade</u>
2 or less	4/4
3-4	3/4
5	2/4
6	1/4
7 or more	0/4

*Participation (5%)*

I want there to be good discussion in this class, and there won't be good discussion unless a wide variety of people are participating. For this reason, I am requiring you to participate. You should aim to make a contribution to class discussion at least once every week or so.

How is participation graded? At the end of the semester, when it comes time to assign participation grades, I will ask myself the following question: "How often did student X participate in class?" Then I will attempt to answer the question, and I will assign grades according to the following chart:

<u>Answer</u>	<u>Score</u>
Never! I can't remember any time X said anything in class.	0/4
Hardly ever. Maybe X said something a couple times during the course of the semester, but I can't remember any more than that.	2/4
Every once in a while. Still, X didn't participate very often—I'd say probably 5 or so times during the whole semester.	3/4
Frequently. I could count on X to regularly contribute to the conversation. X probably spoke up at least once every two or three class periods.	4/4

**Other Stuff**

*Office Hours*

I encourage you to come to my office hours and talk to me about the class. Don't be afraid to ask me your questions! If you are not available to meet during my office hours, I'd be happy to arrange another time to meet with you.

*Moodle*

There is a Moodle page associated with this course. You should check it regularly. On it you will find the syllabus, readings that don't appear in the textbook, any handouts that I distribute, and other miscellaneous documents relevant to the course.

*Academic Dishonesty*

You should familiarize yourself with the UMass academic honesty policy. You can find this policy by doing a simple Google search, or you can go to: <http://www.umass.edu/ombuds/honesty.php/>. Acts of academic dishonesty will be subject to the maximum penalty allowed by this policy.

### *Laptops/Smartphones*

Using these things during class is distracting and negatively impacts class discussion. Please do not use them. If you absolutely must use a laptop to take notes, please speak with me.

### *Disability Services*

If you qualify for accommodations because of a disability, please submit a letter to me from Disability Services in a timely manner so that your needs can be addressed. Disability Services determines accommodations based on documented disabilities.

### *Assigned Readings/Paper and Pencil*

Please bring the assigned reading with you to class. I will often refer to them during class. Also, please bring paper and a writing utensil. Some classroom activities may require you to have paper and a pen/pencil.

### **Readings**

This course is divided into roughly three units. Here is a tentative list of the readings we will cover in each unit:

#### Unit 1: The Good Life

Shafer-Landau – “Introduction”

Chris Heathwood – “Welfare”

Shafer-Landau – Ch. 1 “Hedonism: Its Powerful Appeal”

Chris Heathwood – “Hedonism”

Shafer-Landau – Ch. 2 “Is Happiness All that Matters?”

Shafer-Landau – Ch. 3 “Getting What You Want”

Chris Heathwood – “Faring Well and Getting What You Want”

Shafer-Landau – Ch. 4 “Problems for the Desire Theory”

Jean Kazez – “Necessities”

#### Unit 2: Normative Ethics

Shafer-Landau – Ch. 5 “Morality and Religion”

Rachels – “The Challenge of Cultural Relativism”

Shafer-Landau – Ch. 8 “Ethical Egoism”

Shafer-Landau – Ch. 9 “Consequentialism: Its Nature and Attractions”

Shafer-Landau – Ch. 10 “Consequentialism: Its Difficulties”

Shafer-Landau – Ch. 11 “The Kantian Perspective: Fairness and Justice”

Ross – Selections from *The Right and the Good*

Rand – “The Ethics of Emergencies” (?)

#### Unit 3: Applied Ethics

Norcross – “Puppies, Pigs, and People: Eating Meat and Marginal Cases”

NYTimes – “Tell Us Why It’s Ethical to Eat Meat: A Contest”

Thomson – “A Defense of Abortion”

Marquis – “Why Abortion is Immoral”