

# Morality and Justice (PHIL 1304)

Professor: Karen Kovaka

Fall 2019

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Office Hours: Thurs 3:30-5:30pm

Office: Major Williams 220

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Class Hours: Mon/Wed 2:30-3:20pm

Classroom: Torgersen 2150

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## Course Description

This class will introduce you to a selection of personal and political ethical questions. For example: What makes an action right or wrong? Should we be allowed to sell parts of our bodies? Do corporations have an unjust amount of power? As you study these questions, you will learn how to analyze philosophical arguments, and even practice subjecting your own views to philosophical scrutiny. You will leave this class with a set of tools for engaging with the questions of morality and justice that we all encounter throughout our lives.

## Graduate Teaching Assistants

The teaching team for this class is made up of me, the professor, and 4 graduate teaching assistants, or GTAs. GTAs will lead your Friday discussion sections and grade your homework assignments and exams. They will also hold office hours, and they are available to answer questions and discuss course content with you.

*GTA contact information and office hours:*

- Rory Fearon: [roryfearon@vt.edu](mailto:roryfearon@vt.edu). Office hours: Fri 3:30-4:30 & 4:45-5:45p in Major Williams 210
- Ethan Gordon: [ethang@vt.edu](mailto:ethang@vt.edu). Office hours: Mon/Wed 1-2p in Major Williams 210
- Trey Rogers: [treyrg@vt.edu](mailto:treyrg@vt.edu). Office hours: Mon 4-5p & Wed 12-1p in Major Williams 208
- Justyn Smith: [solumstannum@vt.edu](mailto:solumstannum@vt.edu). Office hours: Mon 4-5p & Tues 3-4p in Major Williams 208

## Evaluation

1. Weekly online quizzes: 15%
2. Discussion section attendance & participation: 10%
3. Weekly homework assignments: 40%
4. Midterm exam: 15%
5. Final exam: 20%

## Online Quizzes

I will ask you to complete weekly multiple choice quizzes through Canvas. These quizzes are due each Monday by 2:15pm, and they will be available starting the Thursday before they are due. They will cover the assigned reading for that Monday (if there is additional assigned reading for Wednesday, the quiz will not cover it). This means you will be quizzed on reading material before we discuss it in class. Late quizzes will receive no credit. At the end of the semester, I will drop your lowest quiz score when calculating your final grade. There will be 13 quizzes total, and the first one is due on Mon. 9/9 (the third week of class).

## Discussion Sections

You are required to attend and participate in weekly discussion sections. Come to these sessions prepared to ask questions, listen to what others have to say, and engage in conversation with the group. Your GTA will assign your grade for this portion of the course.

*Rory Fearon's Discussion Sections:*

- CRN 88153: Friday 10:10-11a in Pamplin 2003
- CRN 88156: Friday 12:20-1:10p in Julia Cheatham 317A
- CRN 88149: Friday 2:30-3:20p in New Classroom Building 110B

*Ethan Gordon's Discussion Sections:*

- CRN 88161: Friday 9:05-9:55a in Surge Space Building 104B
- CRN 88150: Friday 11:15a-12:05p in Torgersen 1060
- CRN 88146: Friday 12:20-1:10p in Davidson 201

*Trey Roger's Discussion Sections:*

- CRN 88148: Friday 8-8:50a in Goodwin 244
- CRN 88157: Friday 9:05-9:55a in Julia Cheatham 317A
- CRN 88152: Friday 10:10-11a in McBryde 304

*Justyn Smith's Discussion Sections:*

- CRN 88154: Friday 10:10-11a in New Classroom Building 360
- CRN 88155: Friday 12:20-1:10p in Davidson 125
- CRN 88151: Friday 2:30-3:20p in Torgersen 1080

## **Weekly homework assignments**

The goal of your weekly homework assignments is to teach you how to reconstruct and respond to an argument. Argument reconstructions are a crucial philosophical skill. If you've never done one before, don't worry! You will learn this skill through a series of 12 assignments that increase in difficulty. Homework assignments will be due on Wednesdays, starting on 9/4 (the second week of class). There is no homework due the week of the midterm, or the last week of class.

## **Exams**

Both the mid-term and final will be take-home exams. I will make them available to you 1 week before they are due. The mid-term will be a short-answer style exam, and it is due on 10/21. The final exam will be a 1000-2000 word paper in which you apply the argument reconstruction skills you learn and practice throughout the semester. It is due on 12/17.

## **Fine Print**

- **iClickers:** An iClicker is required for this course. You must purchase one and register it on Canvas. Starting on Monday 9/9, I will use them to keep track of attendance and to poll the class about the readings. If you forget to bring your iClicker to a class session, you must see me in person immediately after class, or I will not give your credit for attending that session. To use your iClicker in this course, you need to register it by clicking on the "iClicker Registration" tab in Canvas and typing in the 8 character code on your clicker. Your clicker will then need to be set to the course's frequency code, which is **BB**.
- **Attendance:** Regular class attendance is essential to getting a good grade. I fully expect you to come to every single class session except when illness or other personal circumstances prevent you. In our large lectures, I will keep track of attendance each week and forgive up to 3 absences with no questions asked. After three absences, I will start deducting points from your final grade for each additional absence. If your circumstances require you to miss more than three classes, you and I need to speak in person about alternative ways for you to participate in the course. Your GTAs will also keep track of your discussion section attendance. If you miss more than 2 discussion sections without providing appropriate documentation, they will deduct points from your discussion section grade.

- **Accessibility:** We all learn differently, and I am committed to making this course accessible to everyone. Please come talk to me if some aspect of the course isn't working for you: we can collaborate on alternatives that suit your needs, interests, and learning style. If you have a disability (or think you might), it's also a good idea to contact [Services for Students with Disabilities](#).
- **Technology:** Phones, tablets, and laptops often distract us during class. I want to free you from these distractions as much as possible. For that reason, I will provide notes after every class. You will find them on the course Canvas site. This means you don't have to type or write notes yourselves, and it gives you the option of participating in class without any tech at all. If you do use a laptop or tablet, please do not check your email, message people, or use the Internet for anything that isn't course-related.
- **Academic integrity:** I take academic integrity very seriously. It's important that all the assignments you complete are your own work and that you know how to credit and cite sources appropriately. If you have any questions about my expectations for a particular assignment, be sure to talk to me!  
The Undergraduate Honor Code pledge that each member of the university community agrees to abide by states: "As a Hokie, I will conduct myself with honor and integrity at all times. I will not lie, cheat, or steal, nor will I accept the actions of those who do." Students enrolled in this course are responsible for abiding by the Honor Code. A student who has doubts about how the Honor Code applies to any assignment is responsible for obtaining specific guidance from the course instructor before submitting the assignment for evaluation. Ignorance of the rules does not exclude any member of the University community from the requirements and expectations of the Honor Code. For additional information about the Honor Code, please visit: <https://www.honorsystem.vt.edu/>.
- **Changes to the syllabus:** I may adjust the course readings and schedule as the semester goes along. It is your responsibility to pay attention to Canvas and your email so that you are aware of any changes.

## Texts

There are no required books. All of the reading assignments will be posted on Canvas.

# Reading, Quiz, & Homework Schedule

## 1 Intro to Moral Philosophy

Date	Content
Mon. 8/26	<b>What Moral Philosophy Is</b> Reading: Julia Driver (2007), <i>Ethics: The Fundamentals</i> , introduction
Wed. 8/28	<b>Philosophical Arguments I</b> Reading: Walter Sinnott-Armstrong and Robert Fogelin (2015), <i>Understanding Arguments</i> , ch 1
Mon. 9/2	NO CLASS
Wed. 9/4	<b>Philosophical Arguments II</b> Reading: Walter Sinnott-Armstrong and Robert Fogelin (2015), <i>Understanding Arguments</i> , ch 3 <u>Homework 1 due</u>

## 2 Major Ethical Theories

Date	Content
Mon. 9/9	<b>Utilitarianism</b> Reading: Julia Driver (2007), <i>Ethics: The Fundamentals</i> , ch 3 Reading: Ursula Le Guin (1973), "The ones walk away from Omelas" <u>Quiz 1 due</u>
Wed. 9/11	<b>Consequentialism</b> Reading: Julia Driver (2007), <i>Ethics: The Fundamentals</i> , ch 4 <u>Homework 2 due</u>
Mon. 9/16	<b>Deontology</b> Reading: Stephen Darwall (2003), <i>Deontology</i> , introduction and ch 8 <u>Quiz 2 due</u>
Wed. 9/18	<b>Philosophical Arguments III</b> Reading: Walter Sinnott-Armstrong and Robert Fogelin (2015), <i>Understanding Arguments</i> , ch 5 <u>Homework 3 due</u>
Mon. 9/23	<b>Virtue Ethics</b> Reading: Julia Driver (2007), <i>Ethics: The Fundamentals</i> , ch 8 <u>Quiz 3 due</u>
Wed. 9/25	<b>Ethical Theories &amp; Philosophical Arguments Review</b> <u>Homework 4 due</u>

### 3 Relativism

Date	Content
Mon. 9/30	<b>Cultural Relativism I</b> Reading: James Rachels (2003), "The challenge of cultural relativism" <u>Quiz 4 due</u>
Wed. 10/2	<b>Cultural Relativism II</b> <u>Homework 5 due</u>
Mon. 10/7	<b>Cross-cultural Disagreement I</b> Reading: Kwame Anthony Appiah (2010), "Relativism and cross-cultural understanding" <u>Quiz 5 due</u>
Wed. 10/9	<b>Cross-cultural Disagreement II</b> <u>Homework 6 due</u>

### 4 Inequality

Date	Content
Mon. 10/14	<b>Justice as Fairness I</b> Reading: John Rawls (1985), <i>A Theory of Justice</i> , pp. 10-19, 52-56, 118-121 <u>Quiz 6 due</u>
Wed. 10/16	<b>Justice as Fairness II</b> <u>Homework 7 due</u>
Mon 10/21	<b>Justice &amp; Disability</b> Reading: Christie Hartley (2011), "Justice and Disability" <u>Quiz 7 due</u>
Wed 10/23	<b>Justice &amp; Gender</b>
Mon 10/28	<b>Justice &amp; Race I</b> Reading: Charles Mills (2008), "Racial liberalism" <u>Quiz 8 due</u>
Wed 10/30	<b>Justice &amp; Race II</b> Reading: Derrick Bell (1992), <i>Faces at the Bottom of the Well</i> , ch 8
Mon 11/4	<b>Entitlement Theory I</b> Reading: Robert Nozick (1974), <i>Anarchy, State and Utopia</i> , ch 7 <u>Quiz 9 due</u>
Wed 11/6	<b>Entitlement Theory II</b> <u>Homework 8 due</u>

## 5 Markets

Date	Content
Mon. 11/11	<p><b>Buying &amp; Selling I</b>                      Reading: Jason Brennan and Peter Jaworski (2015) <i>Markets Without Limits</i>, selections  <u>Quiz 10 due</u></p>
Wed. 11/13	<p><b>Buying &amp; Selling II</b>                      Reading: Jason Brennan and Peter Jaworski (2015) <i>Markets Without Limits</i>, selections  <u>Homework 9 due</u></p>
Mon. 11/18	<p><b>Corporate Power</b>                      Reading: Elizabeth Anderson (2017), <i>Private Government</i>, ch 2  <u>Quiz 11 due</u></p>
Wed. 11/20	<p><b>Collective Action</b>                      Watch: <i>Harlan County, USA</i>  <u>Homework 10 due</u></p>
Mon. 11/25	NO CLASS
Wed. 11/27	NO CLASS

## 6 Students Choose

Date	Content
Mon. 12/2	Reading: TBD <u>Quiz 12 due</u>
Wed. 12/4	Reading: TBD <u>Homework 11 due</u>
Mon. 12/9	Reading: TBD <u>Quiz 13 due</u>
Wed. 12/11	Reading: TBD