

**Gonzaga-in-Florence**  
**Philosophy 301: Ethics Fall 2011**

**Professor:** Dr. Erik Schmidt  
**Office Hours:** By appointment.  
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**Required Texts:** *Course Reader*

**Course Description:**

PHIL 301 introduces students to the field of ethics and value theory by exploring several general questions about ethics. What distinguishes ethical considerations from the other issues that figure into our deliberations? What reasons do we have for being ethical? Can we base cooperation on self-interest? Are ethical considerations based on anything other than culture or social agreement? Is it possible for humans to be motivated by duty or moral concern?

We will address these questions by reading a primary source text from four main traditions in Western thought: Contractarianism (Hobbes), Utilitarianism (Mill), Deontic Ethics (Kant), and Virtue Ethics (Aristotle). We will identify each text's central assumptions, critically examine its reasoning, and apply the approach it articulates to various contemporary ethical issues. Each text will also be paired with a reading by a contemporary thinker who attempts to develop a contemporary version of that ethical theory.

**Course Requirements:**

Grades for the class will be computed on the basis of the following five components:

1. Reflection Papers (3)	30 %
2. Midterm Exam	25 %
3. Final Exam	25 %
4. Attendance, Participation, Reading Quizzes	20 %

**(1) Reflection Papers (30%):** Students write **three** reflection papers during the semester. There will be 6 topics posted to Blackboard that address issues raised by the readings and provide students with an opportunity to reflect on those issues. ***Students will select three topics.***

**Due dates for reflection papers can be found on the course schedule.** Since reflection papers are intended to reflect a student's independent thought and students are able to select among 6 potential topics, ***reflection papers will not be accepted after the due date.***

(2) *Midterm Exam (25%)*: Students will take an **in-class midterm exam on xxxx**

(3) *Final Exam (25%)*: Students will take a final **exam on xxxx**

(5) *Discussion Questions, Attendance, and Participation (20 %)*:

*Attendance*: Attendance will be taken during each class. According to Gonzaga University policy, students who miss more than 6 hours of class may receive a V or be asked to withdraw from the class.

*Participation*: Students are expected to be present, attentive, and prepared to actively participate in class discussion. I will maintain a record of student participation and notify students who fail to meet this basic expectation. Participation in the course may include contributing to class discussion, online or e-mail interactions, helping other students through study groups, and verbal discussions about your papers or the course outside of class.

### **Reading Schedule: PHIL 301 Ethics**

#### **Week 1 What is Ethics?**

T Course Introduction  
H 9.20 Plato's *Crito*

#### **Week 2 Why should we care about justice?**

M King "Letter from a Birmingham Jail"  
T Plato's *Republic*  
H Continue Discussion (**Reflection Paper #1 Due**)

#### **Week 3 How did the Renaissance change ethics?**

M Pico della Mirandola *On the Dignity of Man* and Marsilio Ficino *Selected Letters*  
T Machiavelli *The Prince*  
H Hobbes *Leviathan* (part 1)

#### **Week 4 Can we base ethics on self-interest?**

M Hobbes *Leviathan* (part 2)  
T Continue Discussion (**Reflection Paper #2 Due**)  
H Gauthier *Morals by Agreement*

**Week 5 Can we base ethics on group interest?**

M Mill *Utilitarianism* (part 1)

T Mill *Utilitarianism* (part 2)

H Continue discussion (**Reflection Paper #3 Due**)

**Week 6 Midterm Exam**

M Continue discussion

T Course Review

H 1 Mid-term Exam

**Week 7 Can we base ethics on duty?**

M Kant *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals* (part 1)

T Kant *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals* (part 2)

**[November Break]**

**Week 8 Can we base ethics on duty?**

T Continue Discussion (**Reflection Paper #4 Due**)

H Kant *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals* (part 3)

**Week 9 Can we base ethics on human psychology?**

M David Hume *A Treatise of Human Nature* (Book III, section i)

T Michael Ruse “Evolution and Ethics”

H Frans De Waal *Primates and Philosophers* (part 1)

**Week 10 Can we base ethics on human psychology?**

M Frans De Waal *Primates and Philosophers* (part 2)

T Continue discussion

**Week 11 Can we base ethics on happiness?**

M Aristotle *Nicomachean Ethics* (Part 1)

T Aristotle *Nicomachean Ethics* (Part 2)

H Continue discussion (**Reflection Paper #5 Due**)

**Week 12 Why should we care about the environment?**

M Baxter “People or Penguins”

T Rolston “Humans Valuing the Natural Environment”

H Continue discussion (**Reflection Paper #6 Due**)

## **Week 13 Course Review**

M Course Review

T Course Review