

# MORAL THINKING

Fall 2024

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<b>Classroom:</b>	Architecture 103	Mon./Wed. 12:30-1:45p
<b>Office Hours:</b>	Social Sciences 127	Wed. 2-3p, Thurs. 3-4p

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## Course Description

This course is an introduction to moral philosophy and moral theory. We will critically survey answers to the following two questions: What makes for a *good life*? And what makes an action *right* or *wrong*? We will also learn how to reason about specific moral issues: Is there anything wrong with participating in the practice of *killing animals* for food? Is it morally permissible to have or administer an *abortion*? What justifies the state in instituting a system of *criminal punishment*, and what limits does morality impose on such a system? What is the moral importance of *consent*, and what does it take to give one's consent?

## Objectives

The goals of this course are to improve:

- your understanding of morality and moral theory;
- your ability to reason morally and to apply different moral frameworks to real-life issues;
- your understanding of your own moral commitments;
- your ability to understand, construct, and evaluate arguments and theories;
- your ability to compose clear, concise, and persuasive argumentative prose; and
- your ability to engage in charitable, cooperative, and critical discussion.

It is expected that, by the end of the course, you will: (1) be able to describe and critically discuss the various theories of well-being presented in the course; (2) be able to describe and critically discuss the various theories of right action presented in the course; (3) be able to apply the tools of moral philosophy to reason carefully about particular moral issues; (4) have composed a clear, concise, and persuasive argumentative essay in the style of the philosophical discipline; and (5) have composed a clear, concise, and persuasive oral argument in the style of the philosophical discipline.

## Office Hours

Barring special circumstances, the door to my office (SS127) will be open Wednesdays 2-3p and Thursdays 2:30-3:30p — feel free to drop in during those times without warning. Otherwise, we can try to schedule a time to meet by appointment (shoot me an email).

## Required Materials

*Always* bring a laptop/tablet, paper, and pens/pencils to every class session, as well as a copy of any readings assigned for the session. You will typically need all of the above. The use of your laptop/tablet is permitted, provided it is used exclusively for class purposes. Cell phone use is not permitted without prior permission. (While laptops are permitted for note taking, I do encourage students to take notes by hand, as **studies** have shown that students who take notes by hand have better uptake and memory retention.)

## Readings

All readings will be made available on D2L. (The tentative reading schedule is posted further down in the syllabus, but this is subject to change. I will always announce in class if there are any changes to readings or reading assignments.)

## Grading Breakdown

- **Participation (15%)**. Students are expected to be attentive throughout class and to participate with thoughtful contributions. (Of course, given the size of the class, there is no expectation that each student make a contribution in each meeting.) Students are also expected to be respectful in their contributions. Though we will very often disagree with one another, we do so in the cooperative pursuit of truth; we don't disagree so as to win a fight or dunk on our classmates.
- **Quizzes (15%)**. Students will take a very short quiz at the start of most class meetings. These quizzes incentivize attentiveness and aid with memory leak over the course of the semester. (The two lowest quiz grades will be dropped.)
- **Homework Assignments (15%)**. Some readings will have a short, written assignment associated with them. (The lowest homework grade will be dropped.)
- **Short Paper (15%)**. An argumentative essay of 1,000 words will be submitted near the mid-point of the course.
- **Exams (20%)**. There will be a total of three exams, one after each of our main modules. The average of your three exam grades will count for a total of 20% of your grade.
- **Video Project (20%)**. Where the short paper is intended to develop your ability to craft a written argument, the video project is intended to develop your ability to craft an oral argument. Every student will create and post a 5-7 minute video in which they argue for a particular answer to one of the prompt questions I will make available. After all of the videos are posted, each student will then create and post a 5-7 minute critical evaluation of another student's video. Each video will count for 10% of your grade.

## Grading

Your individual assignments will be graded with a numerical value between 0 and 100. The numerical value will be used to calculate your final grade, which will be converted to a letter grade at the end of the semester as follows:

A (excellent)	$\geq 90$	D (poor)	$\geq 60$ & $< 70$
B (good)	$\geq 80$ & $< 90$	E (fail)	$< 60$
C (satisfactory)	$\geq 70$ & $< 80$		

Quizzes will not be returned, but your grades will be posted on D2L. Reading assignments will be returned, graded, with little to no comments, within about one week's time. Short papers, exams, and video projects will be evaluated within two-three weeks.

### Attendance/Tardiness Policy

I will not take attendance after the first day of class. You are adults, who I expect to take your academic work seriously without the need for external incentives. But while there is no requirement or grade for attendance strictly speaking, unexcused absences will inevitably result in a 0% on that day's quiz if we have one (since you won't be there to take it), and consistent absences will detract from your participation grade (since you won't be there to participate).

UA policy concerning class attendance, participation, and administrative drops.

UA policy regarding absences for any sincerely held religious belief, observance, or practice.

UA policy regarding absences preapproved by the Dean of Students.

### Assignment Submission Policy

All quizzes will be done in class, on paper, and turned in to me upon the conclusion of the quiz. (Don't forget to put your name atop the quiz!). Reading assignments and your short paper must be submitted via D2L in a **.doc** or **.docx** format. Late reading assignments will not be accepted. The short paper will be accepted late, but it will lose five points per each (unexcused) day late. Extensions for assignments will be considered on a case-by-case basis and will not be granted within 48 hours of the assignment deadline. (Note: *excused absences and late assignment submissions require formal documentation as consistent with University of Arizona policy.*)

Should your written work reveal numerous and basic problems with writing, such as poor understanding of punctuation or unfamiliarity with rudimentary grammatical rules, you will be required to take your work to the U of A writing center to request help. You then must revise and resubmit with your previous draft to prove you have addressed these problems. I don't expect mastery of English prose, but it is a prerequisite that your work display basic competence of spelling, punctuation, and grammar.

### Communications Policy

I will make all announcements in class, on D2L, or through email. You therefore have a responsibility to attend class and check D2L and your university email account regularly. It will not count as an excuse for missing an announcement that you missed class or did not check D2L or your email. I am able to answer brief questions by email, so long as they are not questions you could easily answer by reading the syllabus. For questions that would require an extensive reply, please come in to office hours to discuss them. I will reply to emails within, at most, 48 weekday hours.

I will also maintain an **anonymous comment box** for students to use at any time throughout the semester to offer the instructor feedback about the course or about the classroom environment — good or bad.

### Grading Complaints

I am happy to discuss your essay with you after it has been graded, but I am not open to debate with you about whether you should have a higher grade than the one your grader or I assign. If you believe we have made a mistake in assigning you a certain grade, please make your case to me over a single email, in no more than half a page. I will consider your reasons and then let you know whether I will change your grade — *after which time I will not discuss the matter further*. If you find my verdict unsatisfactory, you are more than welcome to pursue the matter through whatever channels the university affords you. Some fields of study have clear, exhaustive, and demonstrable means of assessment (e.g., math). Philosophy is not one of them. The bottom line is that your grader and I are the ones whose task it is to evaluate your work, and though we work very hard to consider your work carefully and fairly, there is an inescapable subjective element in judging the quality of an argumentative essay or presentation. (Importantly, though, I want to assure you that this in no way means that they will be marked down on the grounds that they take a position that disagrees with that of their grader's. It makes no difference whether your grader agrees with the thesis you argue for; your paper will be evaluated only on the basis of how well you argue for that thesis.)

### Academic Integrity

Plagiarism — presenting someone else's ideas as your own, either verbatim or recast in your own words — is a serious academic offense with serious consequences. Students are encouraged to share intellectual views and discuss freely the principles and applications of course materials, but graded work must never involve the presentation of someone else's ideas as one's own. Students are expected to know and adhere to the **UA Code of Academic Integrity**. Please familiarize yourself with the University's definition of plagiarism therein. *Ignorance of the rules is no excuse.*

### Classroom Behavior

There is a zero tolerance policy for disruptive, threatening, or discriminatory behavior. Please familiarize yourself with the following university policies:

**UA threatening behavior by students policy**

**Nondiscrimination and anti-harassment policy**

The University prohibits discrimination and harassment on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex (including pregnancy), religion, age, disability, veteran status, sexual orientation, gender identity, and genetic information. The University also prohibits all forms of sex discrimination, including sexual harassment and sexual violence, such as sexual assault, interpersonal violence, and stalking.

### Syllabus Changes

The instructor reserves the right to make reasonable modifications to the syllabus throughout the course. Any changes will be announced in advance, in class or over email.

## Accommodations

At the University of Arizona, we strive to make learning experiences as accessible as possible. If you anticipate or experience physical or academic barriers based on disability or pregnancy, please contact the [Disability Resource Center](#) (520-621-3268) to establish reasonable accommodations. If you have reasonable accommodations, please plan to meet with me by appointment or during office hours to discuss accommodations and how my course requirements and activities may impact your ability to fully participate.

Please be aware that the accessible table and chairs in this room should remain available for students who find that standard classroom seating is not usable.

## Course Topics & Schedule

### 1 Introduction

Class Date	Subject	Assignment/Reading
Aug. 26	Syllabus, etc.	
Aug. 28	What is Morality?	<i>Shafer-Landau</i>
Sept. 4	Philosophical Reasoning I	<i>WiPhi</i>
Sept. 9	Philosophical Reasoning II	<i>WiPhi</i>

### 2 Theory of the Good

Sept. 11	Intro to Well-Being	
Sept. 16	Pleasure	<i>Bentham, Nozick, &amp; WiPhi</i>
Sept. 18	Desire Fulfillment	<i>Heathwood &amp; Kraut*</i>
Sept. 23	Objectivism I	<i>Aristotle &amp; WiPhi</i>
Sept. 25	Objectivism II	<i>Parfit &amp; Adams</i>
Sept. 30	Well-Being and Death	<i>Kagan</i>
Oct. 2	Well-Being and Meaning	<i>Wolf</i>
<b>Oct. 7</b>	<b>Exam #1</b>	

### 3 Theory of the Right

Oct. 9	Egoism	<i>Rachels</i>
Oct. 14	Relativism	<i>Benedict &amp; Regan</i>
Oct. 16	Consequentialism	<i>LeGuin, Mill, &amp; WiPhi</i>
Oct. 21	Kant	<i>Kant</i>
Oct. 23	Ross	<i>Ross</i>
Oct. 28	Rights Theory I	<i>Quong</i>
<b>Oct. 30</b>	Rights Theory II	<b>Short Paper Due</b>
Nov. 4	God and the Right	<i>Plato &amp; Adams</i>
<b>Nov. 6</b>	<b>Exam #2</b>	

## 4 Contemporary Issues

Nov. 11	Meat Eating I	<i>Singer &amp; WiPhi</i>
Nov. 13	Meat Eating II	<i>McMahan</i>
Nov. 18	NO CLASS	
Nov. 20	Abortion I	<i>Thomson &amp; McMahan*</i>
Nov. 25	Abortion II	<i>Schouten</i>
Nov. 27	Criminal Punishment I	<i>Pojman &amp; WiPhi</i>
<b>Dec. 2</b>	Criminal Punishment II	<b>Video #1 Due</b>
Dec. 4	Consent I	<i>Jorgensen &amp; WiPhi</i>
Dec. 9	Consent II	<i>Dougherty</i>
<b>Dec. 11</b>	Review	<b>Video #2 Due</b>
<b>Dec. 18</b>	<b>Exam #3</b>	

### Important Links and Support Systems

#### Campus Emergency Medical Services.

Emergency Campus Health: (520) 570-7898. University of Arizona Police Department: (520) 621-8273.

#### Mental Health Resources. (520) 621-3334.

**CAPS** is the University's counseling and psych services. Students can access crisis support services by calling (520) 621-3334, 24/7, or dropping in to CAPS North or CAPS South during business hours.

#### National Suicide Prevention Lifeline. 1 (800) 273-8255. 24/7 on call.

Free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

#### Survivor Support Services.

Offering individualized support to survivors as they decide where to go after being subjected to interpersonal violence.

#### Student Code of Conduct.

All University of Arizona students have agreed to abide by the standards for behavior set forth by the Arizona Board of Regents. The Student Code of Conduct is in place to create a safe, healthy, and responsible environment that allows UA students, faculty, and staff to be successful in their daily endeavors and to achieve long term goals.

#### Disability Resource Center.

Provides the steps for students seeking accommodation and services, the University's documentation guidelines and general keys to success.

#### Formal Student Complaint Process.

Students who are unable to resolve issues with their peers or their instructors through informal means can pursue a formal complaint process.

### Grade Appeal.

Students are entitled to fundamental fairness in treatment from the instructor, as specified by the course syllabus policies. Grading standards of students in the same course section must be consistent. Students who believe these policies have been violated may choose to file a grade appeal.

### Academic Petitions.

Undergraduate students may petition the University Petitions Committee for relief if they believe they deserve redress or exception to university rules, regulations, or policies regarding academic affairs, such as extension of incomplete grade, choice of catalog, and degree requirements.

### Office of Institutional Equity (OIE).

All members of the University community are welcome to reach out to the Office of Institutional Equity if they have a concern, need assistance or support, or provide a report and/or referral of discriminatory conduct.