

Meeting times

T & Th 09:00 – 10:20
ACE 239

Instructor

Prof. Nicolas Delon

Email

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Office Location

ACE 303

Office Hours

<https://ndelon.youcanbook.me/>

Course Description: This is not your typical introduction to ethics.

This course will offer an introduction to the main ethical traditions and connect them to (1) the psychology of well-being, and (2) life in the Anthropocene. Instead of providing easy answers to the perennial questions such as: How to live? and What gives life meaning?, the course will ask what a flourishing life can look like in an age of global environmental degradation and uncertainty about whether individuals can make any difference. It offers an introduction to (a) the main ethical theories (utilitarianism, virtue ethics, deontology) and ancient eastern traditions (Buddhism, Confucianism, Daoism); (b) theories of wellbeing and their relations to the psychology of happiness and the philosophy of the good life; (3) an ethical approach to the global environmental crisis. The course draws on philosophy and psychology to make connections between timeless questions and the contemporary world: e.g., how to live a meaningful life in the age of climate change and mass species extinctions? Will making this world better and helping others make me happy? Can I even make a difference? Do I need money to be happy? Is success a matter of luck? Together we'll think of, and try out, ways of making our own and others' lives better. Activities include reading, writing, discussions, journaling, exercises in and outside the classroom, and training the basic skills of a good life—nurturing social connections, rewiring one's mind, and the cultivation of new habits.

Attributes and requirements fulfilled: CYC Breadth - Humanities, CYC Ethical Reasoning & Action, CYC Lifelong Learning, CYC Teamwork, Diverse Perspectives, Environmental Studies, First-Year Appropriate, Humanities LAC, Philosophy Value Theory

Goals and objectives: At the end of this course, students will have developed introductory knowledge of moral theory and the philosophical and psychological study of wellbeing; mastered relevant conceptual distinctions. They will be able to note the similarities and differences between ethical theories; have been exposed to various western and eastern philosophical traditions; have worked on integrating course materials into their own lives. Students will accomplish those goals by performing active and critical reading of academic texts; annotating readings and discussing them in class; writing short reflections and two essays; peer reviewing classmates' drafts; and completing an experiential learning group project.

Course Evaluation

All readings will be made available on Canvas. All the materials assigned in the course schedule must be read before class. You must be prepared to participate in class discussions and bring notes with you.

Assignments

- Attendance and participation (15%)
- Weekly Canvas discussions, Perusall annotations, and reflections (30%)
- Group Project (25%) (proposal, progress report, presentation, reflection)
- Two essays, including a proposal and a draft for each (15% for each essay)

Please refer to Canvas for deadlines and announcements. You are expected to complete all assignments unless they are marked as optional. Most of the assignments should be submitted to Canvas. Don't wait until the last minute to submit in case you face technical issues, and always save and back up your drafts. Don't write in Canvas first; draft, save, and back up on your own device and ideally cloud-based storage, then copy to Canvas. Check your email daily and Canvas frequently. I will communicate with you via your New College Gmail account and Canvas announcements, so make sure it is up and running and that you receive notifications for new Canvas announcements.

For reading and writing purposes, Jim Pryor (NYU) offers valuable guidance on his website. Please use them.

- Philosophical terms and methods (<http://www.jimpryor.net/teaching/vocab/index.html>)
- Reading philosophy (<http://www.jimpryor.net/teaching/guidelines/reading.html>)
- Writing a philosophy paper (<http://www.jimpryor.net/teaching/guidelines/writing.html>)

CYC skills

One of the goals of this class is to learn about and cultivate **ethical reasoning** concerning the intersections of animal agriculture, the food system, and environmental issues. Ethical reasoning concerns ethical concepts (good/bad, just/unjust, right/wrong, value, obligation) as they are deployed in theories, arguments, and choices. Ethical reasoning straddles theory and practice and helps students apply their intellectual skills to matters of moral significance and appreciate a plurality of values. In this class we take fundamental ethical ideas and apply them to how we live our lives in the real world. We compare the verdicts of different ethical theories, assess the merits of various arguments, and bring evidence to make on our decision-making. The purpose of ethical reasoning is to develop an intellectual toolkit to think and reason about ethical issues in context and across contexts, to illuminate unquestioned practices from an ethical perspective. Rather than teaching how to act ethically, we aim to think about ethical issues (critically, considering various perspectives and arguments) and integrate abstract theories, case studies, and perhaps look at ways of living ethically.

Another goal is to learn about and cultivate **lifelong learning**. Lifelong learning is “all purposeful learning activity, undertaken on an ongoing basis with the aim of improving knowledge, skills and competence”. College seeks to prepare students to be lifelong learner by developing specific dispositions and skills: curiosity, transfer, independence, initiative, and reflection. These skills will propel and support you across disciplines and professional environments in the long term. You will develop them through activities that encourage you to *reflect* on how you can incorporate such skills into your work. Reflections will help you make sense of your learning experiences and allow exploration of alternatives, the consideration of future plans, and provides evidence of your growth and development as a learner. For this class, the lifelong learning skills you will develop will straddle theory and practice and help you apply their tools and content to matters of moral significance

and appreciate a plurality of values. Rather than teaching you how to act ethically, we will reflect on how ethical issues pertain to your life, your values, and your projects, and look at ways of living ethically.

Finally, this class will have you **work in teams** to collectively explore the good life in practice: crafting a practical guide to living a better life at New College and beyond. The Teamwork consists in the coordination of individual team members to achieve a joint goal and is assessed in terms of three main components: the collective process, its outcome, and each individual's contribution (timely completion of assigned tasks, communication with the group, participation in integrated efforts, and written reflection). Teamwork involves meetings, coordination, distribution of tasks, constructive contributions, and independent work outside of team meetings. The purpose of teamwork is to train students to work together and to achieve collective outcomes that would be infeasible or harder individually. It seeks to foster valuable dispositions to coordinate action, distribute tasks, integrate content from multiple sources, contribute to joint projects, and respond to conflict and challenges. These subskills are essential to a lot of jobs as well as academic research and administration.

You will develop these CYC skills through a series of readings, discussions, and assignments. Activities will include balanced, constructive class discussions; debates after video/recent event; essay questions; field observation/ interviews for the group project.

Evaluation criteria: a balance of structure, rigor and clarity; a solid command of references and course-related materials; critical thinking; originality. Most specifically, and in relation to CYC skills:

- a. Clear writing and effective and competent oral communication
- b. Clearly laid out arguments and evidence
- c. A demonstrated effort to unpack and explicate assumptions
- d. The consideration of objections and of multiple theories and values
- e. The application of such theories and their implications to the case at hand
- f. Contributing respectfully and constructively to discussions and group meetings
- g. Timely completion of assigned tasks

Activities

Daily routine: In addition to the assignments, you are encouraged *for your own sake* to strive to complete the daily routine detailed in **Annex 1**. Use a **journal**. Many of your reflections should first be written in a journal as we go along. Keep track of your daily routine in a separate section of your journal. The routine aims at making concrete the implications of the topics discussed in class and will support effective work habits and well-being beyond the classroom. CYC skill fostered: Lifelong learning. *Fun facts: I'm bad at routines and consistency. I will also be journaling and sharing some of my entries with you!*

Weekly homework: All readings are mandatory. Prior to class, students will annotate readings on Perusall, preferably by (i) asking questions/raising objections *and* (ii) responding to other students' annotations. I will also post short reading comprehension quizzes before and/or after class. **SAT** => satisfactory completion of at least 75% of the annotations and at least 60% average on quizzes. CYC skill: Ethical Reasoning.

Essays: Two 1,000-word philosophical essays in response to specific prompts. A **preliminary draft** will be required and go through **peer review**. A complete paper must include a title, a question and a thesis statement, a structured argument, and at least three academic references drawn from course

materials. At least two distinct ethical theories must be discussed and objections to each must be considered. CYC skills: Ethical Reasoning and Lifelong learning.

Collaborative project: Groups of 3-4 students will work from Weeks 8-14 on the concrete details of living a good life on campus, integrating psychological research, ethical theories, and local resources into a guidebook. This will involve visiting on- and off-campus resources, interviewing current and former students, and circulating the project within the New College community. The entire project comprises a proposal, a progress report, an oral presentation, and an individual reflection. Creative, innovative, multimedia-based, field-based projects are welcome. CYC skills: Ethical Reasoning, Teamwork, and Lifelong learning. *Fun fact: I used to hate working in groups; I'm glad I had to though.*

Course Policies

Laptop use is strongly discouraged. **Cell phones** must be silenced and left in your bag. Electronic devices cause serious distractions for yourself and others and are normally not needed for class meetings, except, again, if they are necessary for note taking. Handouts will be provided regularly, and slides made available after class. You will need a computer or smartphone for some class activities. I will notify you in advance in such cases.

Lateness/Extensions: Out of fairness to other students, I can only grant extensions in exceptional circumstances. The earlier it is requested the likelier I am to grant it. As a rule, do not count on extensions as they will only be granted on a case-by-case basis.

Expectations: As a student, you are expected to read all assigned material before class, attend class, take notes, and review them in-between class meetings, participate in discussions, and complete assignments on-time. Check your email daily and Canvas frequently. I will communicate with you via your New College Gmail account and Canvas announcements, so make sure that you receive notifications for announcements.

You are responsible for knowing material covered in the assigned readings even if the material is not presented during class. Likewise, you are responsible for material covered during class (including discussions and activities) even if it is not covered in the assigned readings. Please seek help from me or your classmates and never hesitate to ask questions, consult resource centers (Writing Center, SWAs, peer tutors, library, Student Success, Counseling and Wellness). Needing help is expected and there are no silly questions. Silly is not asking questions when you need.

MEETING WITH ME

You are expected to meet one-on-one with me at least once during the semester. Please consult **Annex 1** for more details and a note on courtesy.

COURSE DEADLINES

Out of fairness to other students and out of concern for my schedule, plan ahead and advise early if you anticipate that you will be unable to complete an assignment in time. Extensions will only be granted in exceptional circumstances **and** if requested with a minimum of a week's notice. As a rule, do not count on extensions as they will only be granted on a case-by-case basis. "Technical issues" will not normally be accepted as excuses (again, plan ahead).

Fun fact: I've missed a number of deadlines. I've often wished I had not.

COURSE ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION

Attendance is mandatory. Missing more than three classes without permission will normally result in an UNSAT and any unjustified absence will affect your evaluation. I will keep track of absences. Please email me **before missing class whenever possible (or ASAP after class)**. You are solely responsible for catching up with missed materials and pertinent information. Ask your classmates for notes.

You are responsible for knowing material covered in the assigned readings even if the material is not presented during class. Likewise, you are responsible for material covered during class (including discussions and activities) even if it is not covered in the assigned readings. Please seek help from me or your classmates and never hesitate to ask questions, consult resource centers (writing resource center, library, quantitative reasoning). Really, needing help is expected and there are no silly questions. Silly is not asking questions when you need.

Participation: I will assess your demonstrated capacity to engage with arguments, verify assertions, research facts, unpack implicit assumptions, critically examine your positions, and work with the class with mutual respect, concern and dedication. Most importantly, we're all here to learn what can make our lives better, so be an active participant and help others achieve this goal.

Missing classes mechanically affects your participation, and therefore your evaluation. That said, there may always be good reasons to miss a class, in which case your performance will not be negatively affected. It's understandable that some of you are shyer than others, and less willing to speak their mind in class. You should not. There is no such thing as a silly question (unless it's answered in the syllabus), a view that is not worth sharing simply because it's not popular, or an authorized point of view that students should take. Please feel welcome to express yourself as long as you do so respectfully, in good faith, and following course policies.

NCF Policies

Disability services and accommodation: I am committed to providing an inclusive and effective learning environment for all students regardless of ability status. I will do my best to provide alternatives for materials and tests when applicable. Students in need of academic accommodations for a disability may consult with the office of Student Disability Services (SDS) to arrange appropriate accommodations (<https://www.ncf.edu/disability-services-ncf>, HCL3, (941) 487-4496, disabilityservices@ncf.edu). To ensure that I can work with Student Disability Services to provide the resources that you need, please alert me of your accommodation eligibility as early as possible and request testing accommodation in writing at least 10 days before scheduled date of the exam listed on the syllabus. If obtaining accommodations from the SDS is itself challenging for you, let me know so I can help you. To increase accessibility, especially in the event of students having to stay home for illness or COVID-19 symptoms, I will attempt to record class meetings (audio of lecture and discussion; video of whiteboard). I will maintain records for at least the entire academic year. I will not use the recordings for purposes not related to teaching. Students reserve the right to access the recordings.

Academic honesty: Students are expected to be familiar with the college's [academic dishonesty policy](#). Any violation of this policy, including plagiarism and cheating, may result in academic sanctions, up to and including, dismissal.

Religious observance: Please alert me as soon as possible if an assignment is due at a day or time when you are prohibited from participating by your religious beliefs. I will gladly accommodate any missed day for religious reasons.

Title IX: New College of Florida is committed to equal access to education pursuant to Title IX of the Educational Amendments of 1972. The law protects all individuals on our campus from gender-based discrimination or exclusion or instances of sexual misconduct. All full-time faculty, full-time staff, and resident advisors are Responsible Employees required to report any known instances of sexual misconduct or gender discrimination to the Title IX Coordinator. Please contact our Title IX coordinator (titleix@ncf.edu) or visit the [website](#) for more information.

Sexual assault awareness is important for our community to be vibrant and to have free exchange of ideas in a safe environment. The Victim Advocate number is (941) 504-8599; with 24-hour availability for assistance with crime, sexual assault, and partner violence. Sexual Assault does not discriminate between age, gender, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, ethnicity, or race. It is important to have a clear understanding of what sexual assault is and is not, as well as the resources available for sexual assault prevention and survivor support. More information is at www.ncf.edu/sexual-assault-awareness.

Equity, Diversity, and Equal Opportunity: New College’s commitment to academic excellence can only be realized in a learning environment that is inclusive, characterized by openness to diverse perspectives, and marked by mutual respect. Anything short of this aspiration is inconsistent with our commitment. Equal access, and the opportunity to participate fully in all of our programs and facilities, without regard to race, color, creed, religion, political ideology, national origin, age, marital status, disability, public assistance status, veteran status, gender identity, gender expression, or sexual orientation, is essential to that commitment and will be the standard to which we expect all members of our learning community to adhere.

HB 233 (“Viewpoint Diversity” bill): Students may record classroom lectures without a requirement for prior notice and without the faculty member’s consent, with specific limitations on where and how those recordings can be used. In particular, “a recorded lecture may not be published without the consent of the lecturer,” and it may be employed only “for a student’s own personal educational use”, “in connection with a complaint to the public institution of higher education where the recording was made”, and/or “as evidence in, or in preparation for, a criminal or civil proceeding”. Recorded lectures used for other purposes may allow the faculty member to seek “damages plus court costs and reasonable attorney fees, with the total recovery not to exceed \$200,000.” A class lecture does not include student presentations, academic exercises involving student participation, assessments (quizzes, tests, exams), or private conversations between students in the class or between a student and the instructor during a class session.

COVID-19 guidelines: The success of this class depends on mutual trust. Please refer to campus regarding vaccines, masks, and testing. I will fully accommodate students who miss class for medical reasons. If you feel symptoms before class, you may be excused. If you are sick, please stay home and email me. Most importantly, **please be respectful, considerate, and kind to each other.**

Course Schedule

See Modules on Canvas for detailed info

DATE	Activities	Topics	Readings	Important Dates
Week 1	<p>Introductions</p> <p>Survey</p> <p>Using Canvas</p>	What is this class about?	Watch Michele Moody-Adams, <i>The value of philosophy and the liberal arts</i>	
Week 2		The examined life, <i>eudaimonia</i> and justice	<p>Plato, <i>The Apology</i>; <i>The Crito</i></p> <p>Martin Luther King Jr., excerpts, <i>Letter from Birmingham City Jail</i></p>	
Week 3-4		Ancient Eastern traditions	Introduction and chapters on Buddhism, Confucianism, Daoism from <i>How to Live a Good Life</i>	
Week 4-5		Ancient Western traditions	<p>Aristotle, <i>Nicomachean Ethics</i>, Book I</p> <p>Selections from Epictetus, Cicero, and Seneca</p> <p>Selections from Epicurus and Lucretius</p>	
Week 6	Differences activity: Three groups list most important values, pleasures, and pains	Mill and utilitarianism	<p>Mill, <i>Utilitarianism</i> (I-II)</p> <p>Watch Todd May on <i>The Good Place</i> and utilitarianism</p>	Essay 1 topic
Week 7		Kant and deontology	<p><i>Groundwork</i>, selection</p> <p>Watch May on <i>The Good Place</i> and deontology</p>	Essay 1 draft (due before break)

DATE	Activities	Topics	Readings	Important Dates
Week 8	<u>Spring break</u>			
Week 9		<p>Helping</p> <p>Care ethics / ecofeminism</p>	<p>Tiberius on values and helping</p> <p>Singer, “Famine, affluence, and morality”</p> <p>Piper, Effective altruism</p> <p>Watch The Good Place (s3e8): Don’t let the good life pass you by</p> <p>Gruen, Entangled empathy</p> <p>Plumwood, Being prey</p>	Essay 1 due
Week 9-10		Theories of wellbeing	<p>Nozick, Experience machine excerpt</p> <p>Bishop, Can you be happy in the matrix?</p> <p>Parfit, “What makes a life go best” (and watch Roger Crisp)</p> <p>Haybron, <i>The Pursuit of Unhappiness</i>, chapter 2</p> <p>Browse Our World in Data, 80000 Hours, Happiness and Wellbeing Project</p>	
Week 10-11		The psychology of wellbeing	<p>Haybron’s SOARS model</p> <p>Tiberius, “Well-being: Psychological research for philosophers”</p>	

DATE	Activities	Topics	Readings	Important Dates
			<p>Listen <i>Happiness Lab</i>, Season 1</p> <p>Watch Daniel Gilbert</p> <p>Sean Illing and Paul Bloom on “The good life is painful” at Vox</p>	
Week 11		The value and meaning of work	<p>Robert Frank on success and luck</p> <p>David Graeber on bullshit jobs</p> <p>Marx, excerpts</p>	Essay 2 draft
Week 12		Values in nature	<p>Jamieson, <i>Ethics and the Environment</i>, excerpts</p> <p>Hourdequin and Wong, “A relational approach to environmental ethics”</p>	
Week 13		Anthropocene	<p>Jamieson, “Life in the Anthropocene”</p> <p>Jamieson and Nadzam, excerpts</p> <p>Scranton, “Learning how to die in the Anthropocene”</p>	Essay 2
Week 14		Animals	<p>Bruckner, “Human and animal wellbeing”</p> <p>Franks, “What do animals want?”</p> <p>Purves and Delon, “Meaning in the lives of humans and other animals”</p>	

DATE	Activities	Topics	Readings	Important Dates
Week 14	Final reflections Project presentations	Death and meaning	Nagel, "The absurd" Rini, "The last mortals" Wolf, "The meanings of life"	Group presentations