

# Advanced Ethics

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Fall 2022, Wednesday, 12:30-3:20 PM, ACE 112

Office hours Thursdays, 1-3pm or by appointment, ACE 303

## Course description and Objectives

The **goals of this seminar** are to provide students, through intense reading and discussion, with 1) the intellectual tools to make, grasp and evaluate ethical arguments across a variety of domains and practical contexts and to foster their critical reflection on pressing moral, social and political issues; 2) a solid and comprehensive theoretical and empirical background on these issues; and 3) an overview of both classical and recent essential readings. While there are no prerequisites, having completed an ethics or political theory class is strongly recommended. Debates around the issues covered in this course demand rigor, clarity, and critical self-reflection on both conceptual and empirical matters. The class will focus on selected readings every week and consist primarily of discussions. It is intended to be as interactive as can be reasonably done while providing comprehensive content. Academic articles and chapters will sometimes be paired with shorter pieces of public philosophy.

## Readings

*No required book.* All readings will be made available through Canvas or can be found through the online USF libraries system.

## Course requirements and Evaluation

The primary listing for this class is **Philosophy** but it is eligible for **Gender Studies** credit (pending early declaration of interest and satisfactory completion of a paper focused on a relevant GS aspect of the course materials – discuss details with me at the start of the semester).

Evaluation criteria: a balance of structure and coherence, understanding of references and course-related materials, critical skills and originality, and rigor and clarity. Tests are graded on a numerical basis. Papers and presentations are graded on a qualitative (SAT) scale.

- **Papers:** 3 papers, including two response papers (1,000-word) and a term paper (between 2,000 and 3,000 words) on a topic of your choice. The goal is to discuss views presented in one or several lectures of the course. You must run your topic by me first and a **preliminary outline** of the term paper will be required. **Recommended:** Jim Pryor's guides to philosophical terms and methods, reading philosophy, and writing a philosophy paper, available at [www.jimpryor.net/teaching/](http://www.jimpryor.net/teaching/)

## Policies

**Laptop use is strongly discouraged. Cell phones must be silenced and stowed away.** 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 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).

**Attendance** is mandatory. Missing more than three classes without permission may 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. 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 to.

**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](mailto: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](mailto: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](http://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.

### Schedule (subject to change)

\* = short essays

#### **Part (1): Foundations of metaethics**

##### **Week 1**

\*Peter Singer, “Does anything matter?”

G.E. Moore, *Principia Ethica*, §§ 5-13.

William Frankena, “[The Naturalistic Fallacy](#)”, *Mind* 48 (1930), 464-77

C.L. Stevenson, “[The Emotive Meaning of Ethical Terms](#)”, *Mind* 46 (1937), 14-31

J. L. Mackie, *Ethics: Inventing Right and Wrong*, Chapter 1, §§ 7-10

#### **Part (2): Consequentialism and its discontents**

##### **Week 2**

Shelly Kagan, *The Limits of Morality* (“Against ordinary morality”)

Peter Railton, “Alienation, Consequentialism, and the Demands of Morality”

##### **Week 3**

Thomas Nagel, *The View from Nowhere* (“Ethics”)

Bernard Williams, “A Critique of Utilitarianism”

Tim Scanlon, “Contractualism and utilitarianism”

##### **Week 4**

John Rawls, “Two Concepts of Rules”

Katarzyna de Lazari-Radek and Peter Singer, “Secrecy in Consequentialism: A Defense of Esoteric Morality”

### **Part (3): Kantian Ethics**

#### **Week 5**

Background: (re)read Kant, [Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals](#)

Christine Korsgaard, "Creating the Kingdom of Ends: Reciprocity and Responsibility in personal relations"

Karen Stohr, Kant, vice, and global poverty

#### **Week 6**

\*Karen Stohr, *Choosing Freedom* ([excerpt](#))

Karen Stohr, A Kantian love life (from *Choosing Freedom*)

\*Carol Hay, [A feminist Kant?](#)

### **Part (4): Virtue Ethics**

#### **Week 7**

G.E.M. Anscombe, "Modern Moral Philosophy"

Philippa Foot, "Virtues and Vices"

Dale Jamieson, "When utilitarians should be virtue theorists"

-- Week 8: Fall break --

#### **Week 9**

Gilbert Harman, "Skepticism about Character Traits"

Edward Slingerland, "The Situationist Critique and Early Confucian Virtue Ethics"

\*Bryan Van Norden, "[The second sage](#)"

### **Part (5): Recent issues in metaethics**

#### **Week 10**

Peter Railton, "Moral Realism"

Brian Leiter, "Moral Skepticism and Moral Disagreement in Nietzsche"

#### **Week 11**

Sharon Street, "A Darwinian Dilemma for Realist Theories of Value"

K. de Lazari-Radek and P. Singer, "The Objectivity of Ethics and the Unity of Practical Reason"

### **Part (6): Practical Ethics**

#### **Week 12**

Peter Singer, "Famine, affluence, and morality"

\*Larissa MacFarquhar, *Strangers Drowning* ([excerpt](#))

\*Amia Srinivasan, "Stop the robot apocalypse"

\*Will MacAskill, "The case for longtermism"

#### **Week 13**

Judith Jarvis Thomson, "A Defense of Abortion"

Maggie Little, "Abortion, intimacy, and the duty to gestate"

Regina Rini, "Abortion, ultrasound, and moral persuasion"

## **Part (7): Well-being and meaning**

### **Week 14**

Derek Parfit, *Reasons and Persons*, Appendix I

Eden Lin, "The concept of well-being" and "Theories of well-being"

### **Week 15**

Susan Wolf, "Happiness and Meaning: Two Aspects of the Good Life"

Susan Wolf, "Moral saints"

### **Suggested research topics**

*Come discuss your topic and readings during office hours!*

- Metaethics
  - Moral facts, objectivity
  - Moral epistemology
- Feminist ethics and gender
  - Consent
  - Objectification
  - Sexual orientation
- Ethics of Speech and Belief
  - Epistemic injustice, testimony
  - Speech acts, slurs, free speech, lying
  - Moral encroachment
- Disability
  - Well-being
  - Disability and justice
- Animals
  - Moral status
  - Welfare
- Effective altruism
  - Impartiality, utilitarianism
  - Existential risks
  - Longtermism