

Phil 13: Introduction to Ethics

UC San Diego, Fall 2023, Dr. Duncan

Class time & Location

CSB 002 MWF 12-12:50

Instructor

Emma Duncan

erduncan@ucsd.edu

(Virtual) Office hours: Tuesday

12-2:00pm, or by appointment.

See Canvas for link.

Graduate Teaching Assistants

Tyler Farmer tfarmer@ucsd.edu

Sections: A01, A02

Office hours: TBD Arts & Humanities 0433

Gabriel Nyberg gnyberg@ucsd.edu

Sections: A03, A04

Office hours: Wednesday 1-2p

Arts & Humanities 0432

Course summary

This class is an introduction to ethics, or moral philosophy. We'll start with some questions from metaethics, such as "are there moral facts out there in the world which we discover, or are moral notions of "right" and "wrong" merely relative to things like our cultural attitudes and practices?" We'll then explore some prominent normative ethical theories which aim to outline our ethical duties and obligations, and practice evaluating those theories. We'll ask things of these theories which include "what does the theory say makes an action morally right or wrong?," "what sorts of things does the theory say we ought to consider when trying to decide what's morally right/wrong to do?," and "what does the theory say we ought to do in a particular situation?". We'll end with applied ethics, which seeks to apply the principles of our moral theories to real world issues. We'll discuss the ethics of capital punishment, self-driving cars, and a final topic which will be determined by a student vote. While you likely won't leave this class with definitive answers about the nature of morality and what it requires of us, you will walk away with a better understanding of some tough moral questions and some robust tools with which evaluate the many possible answers to those questions.

Learning objectives and outcomes

During this course, you will learn new philosophical concepts and perspectives that will enable you to reflect on human life in new ways. You will practice interrogating your assumptions about ethical issues, evaluating ethical arguments and reasons, as well as reading and writing philosophical texts. Importantly, we will practice respectful and detailed discussion of important ethical theories, issues, and ideas. By the end of this course, you will be able to distinguish between moral and other kinds of arguments, describe and offer reasoned evaluations of key ethical theories, and construct and defend your own arguments about moral issues.

Required materials: All materials will be accessible via Canvas. **Check Canvas regularly as items on the syllabus, including readings, are subject to change.

Assessments

- Section attendance & participation: 10%
- Asynchronous quizzes: 15%
- Midterm: 30% (end of week 5)
- Final paper: 45% (finals week)

Section attendance & participation: 10%

Sections are the perfect place to ask questions, discuss ideas and their application, and develop paper ideas with your TA and classmates. Attendance (5%) and participation (5%) will be assessed by your TA. *You can miss up to 2 section meetings without penalty to your grade.*

Grading Scale

A	93-100	C	73-76
A-	90-92	C-	70-72
B+	87-89	D+	67-69
B	83-86	D	63-66
B-	80-82	D-	60-62
C+	77-79	F	Below

Asynchronous quizzes: 15%

Recognizing that we all need a little flexibility in our schedules, I have opted to hold one lecture each week *asynchronously*. These lecture videos will be posted by the normal lecture time (12 pm) on Fridays, and you will have until 5 pm each Sunday to watch the video and take the associated quiz. *There will be 8 quizzes, and I will drop your 3 lowest scores. No late quizzes are permitted, and there are no make-up opportunities.*

Midterm: 30%

The midterm exam will be offered in two formats to accommodate different testing styles and skill sets. The first format will be a traditional exam style (taken on Canvas) with a combination of multiple choice/true-false questions and short essay questions. The second format is a podcast-style presentation on one of the prompts provided (the project will be turned in as an audio or video file on Canvas). It'll be a bit like writing and presenting a midterm paper, but you'll also need another participant on the podcast to ask you some questions. Details and prompts will be provided closer to the midterm date, which is tentatively planned for the end of week 5.

Final paper: 45%

This essay will be due on Canvas at the beginning of our designated final exam period (listed on UCSD Webreg). You will need to write 5-7 pages making and defending an argument in response to one of the prompts provided. Prompts and detailed instructions will be provided at least 10 days before the due date.

Late work, make-ups, and extensions

No late work or make-ups are permitted. To give you some flexibility, your three lowest quiz scores will be dropped and you are entitled to a one-time 48-hour extension on the midterm. To use your extension, you must contact your TA by noon (12 pm, Pacific Time) on the day the assignment is due. Unfortunately, no extensions or make-ups can be granted for the final essay.

The only exception to the late work and extension policies is for cases of a properly documented medical emergency. This excludes things like having to stay late at work, having an urgent personal matter to attend to, etc. so please try to complete assignments early in case something unplanned arises. You *must* provide *adequate documentation* of your medical emergency. You must be in contact with your TA *immediately* with documentation of your medical emergency so

appropriate accommodation can be made. If you have a prolonged illness, you must contact your TA ASAP with documentation. **This is important:** do not wait until *after* you've missed a bunch of assignments to contact your TA with an explanation and ask for medical accommodation! At that point there's not much flexibility to be given.

*Submitting the correct file for an assignment on time is *your responsibility!* Make sure the file you submit is (i) the correct assignment and version, and (ii) a format readable by Canvas (.doc, .docx, .pdf are all safe). It is *not* the responsibility of your TA to track you down and make sure the file you submitted is the file you intended.

**When submitting anything to Canvas, including completing quizzes, you should (i) take a screenshot of the submission confirmation message (this is like a receipt) and (ii) click on the file you submitted to visually confirm it is the correct one. Sometimes there are glitches with Canvas and submissions don't register properly – it is *your responsibility* to make sure quizzes and other assessments are recorded by Canvas when you complete them. Without proof of your submission there's not much we can do.

Information for OSD students

If you are a student approved by OSD for special accommodations, you need to coordinate with me prior to the time when the accommodation is needed. Your TA's and I are happy to make any necessary accommodations, but since we often need time to do so it is important that you communicate your needs at least a week in advance via the appropriate channels and with the necessary documentation.

Academic Integrity

Just. Don't. Plagiarize! This includes collaborating on assessments meant to be completed individually (like the midterm exam), passing off another author's ideas or words as your own (i.e. not citing work belonging to another), submitting a paper you wrote from another course, or using AI tools, such as ChatGPT, to write your essay. Students are expected to conduct themselves according to UCSD's guidelines for academic integrity:
<https://academicintegrity.ucsd.edu/>.

Schedule of Readings

	Monday	Wednesday	Friday (asynch.)
Wk 1	Welcome & Intro No reading	Ethics and the Moral Life <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lewis Vaughn (13-21) 	Moral Reasoning <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lewis Vaughn (46-50, 56-62)
Wk 2	Moral Relativism: Intro <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lewis Vaughn (29-39) 	Moral Relativism: Competing Perspectives <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Jesse Prinz: Morality is a Culturally Conditioned Response (1-6) 	Moral Arguments <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lewis Vaughn (62-66)
Wk 3	Consequentialism: Utilitarianism <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lewis Vaughn (103-109) 	Utilitarianism <ul style="list-style-type: none"> De Lazaria-Radek & Singer (42-52) 	Utilitarianism <ul style="list-style-type: none"> De Lazaria-Radek & Singer (52-64)
Wk 4	Utilitarianism <ul style="list-style-type: none"> James Rachels (102-110) REC: Bernard Williams: A Critique of Utilitarianism (124-131) 	Non-consequentialism: Immanuel Kant <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lewis Vaughn (100-107) 	Non-consequentialism: Immanuel Kant <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Onora O’Neil: A Simplified Account of Kant’s Ethics (43-48)
Wk 5	Non-consequentialism: Immanuel Kant <ul style="list-style-type: none"> James Rachels (130-140) 	Non-consequentialism: Natural Law Theory <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lewis Vaughn (107-113) REC: Phillipa Foot: The Problem of Abortion and the Doctrine of Double Effect (536-542) 	Midterm (no reading)
Wk 6	Virtue Ethics <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lewis Vaughn (155-158) Podcast: Julia Annas on Virtue Ethics (15 mins) 	Virtue Ethics <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rosalind Hursthouse: Normative Virtue Ethics (645-652) REC: Besser-Jones: The Situationist Critique 375-383) 	No Class: Veterans Day

Wk 7	Care Ethics <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Philosophize This! Podcast: Introduction to Care Ethics (43 mins) 	Care Ethics <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nell Noddings: An Ethic of Caring (699-711) 	Care Ethics <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Michael Slote: The Justice of Caring (selections)
Wk 8	Applied Ethics: Capital Punishment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lewis Vaughn (310-321) 	Applied Ethics: Capital Punishment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> van den Haag: The Ultimate Punishment: A Defense (321-324) Reiman: Answering van den Haag (326-331) 	No Class: Thanksgiving
Wk 9	Applied Ethics: Self-driving Cars <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Patrick Lin: The Ethical Dilemma of Self-Driving Cars (video 5 mins) 	Applied Ethics: Self-driving Cars <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sven Nyholm: The Ethics of Crashes with Self-Driving Cars: A Roadmap I (1-8) 	Applied Ethics: Self-driving Cars <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sven Nyholm: The Ethics of Crashes with Self-Driving Cars: A Roadmap II (1-8)
Wk 10	Applied Ethics: Class-selected Topic <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Animal Rights (anti-)Love Drugs Moral Bio-enhancement 	Applied Ethics: Class-selected Topic	Applied Ethics: Class-selected Topic