Phil 13: Introduction to Ethics
UC San Diego, Spring 2023, Duncan

Class time & Location
Center Hall 113 MWF 12-12:50

Instructor
Emma Duncan
erduncan@ucsd.edu
Office hours: MW 1:30-2:30
Arts & Humanities Building 0438
(Ridgewalk Academic Complex)

Graduate Teaching Assistants

Keyao Yang k2yang@ucsd.edu
Sections: **01** (CTR 201, Mon 2-2:50), **02** (HSS 2321 Wed 3-3:50)
Office hours: Mon (1-1:50) Wed (2-2:50) A&H 0441

Zachary Brants zbrants@ucsd.edu
Sections: **03** (CTR 205 Fri 10-10:50), **04** (CTR 205 Fri 11-11:50)
Office hours: Tues (12-2) Mandeville Coffee Cart

Course summary

This class is an introduction to 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 probably won't leave this class with definitive answers about the nature of morality and what it requires of us in certain cases, you will walk away with a better understanding of some tough moral questions and the tools with which evaluate the many possible answers to those questions.

Learning outcomes

In 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 theories and their application, and you will practice clarifying your assumptions along with the ideas and reasons that arise in the course of your reflection. You will also practice reading and writing philosophical texts, charitably reconstructing philosophers' arguments, and crafting careful, well-constructed arguments of your own. And, importantly, we will practice respectful and detailed discussion of important ethical theories, issues, and ideas.

Required materials: An iClicker is required (you can purchase one at the bookstore. You should be able to resell it at the end of the quarter if you want. Older model iClickers should work). All readings will be downloadable on Canvas.

Assessments

Lecture participation (via iClicker questions): 10%
Section attendance & participation: 10%
Asynchronous quizzes: 10%
Midterm: 30% (end of week 5)
Final paper: 40% (finals week)

*Note: some of the assessments use a threshold system for grading, requiring you to complete a certain number of the individual assignments to get credit for that category of assessment. These are marked by an * below.

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

*Lecture participation (via iClicker questions): 10%

Informed participation during lectures is great for learning and retention and helps me, as an instructor, gain insights into how well students understand the material (and what needs to be better explained). There will be appx. 2 Clicker Questions per in-person lecture, giving you at least 40 possible points to earn during the quarter. To get participation credit, you must earn 20 points. If you earn fewer than 20 points, you get a 0 for Lecture Participation.

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 attendance grade.

*Asynchronous quizzes: 10%

Recognizing that we all need a little flexibility in our schedules, I have opted to hold one lecture each week asynchronously so that you can watch it on your own time. Videos will be posted by the normal lecture time (12 pm) on Fridays, and you will have until 9 pm each Sunday to watch the video and take the associated quiz. There will be 10 videos and quizzes, you are required to complete 6 of them. If you complete fewer than 6, you will get a 0 for the Asynchronous Quizzes assessment.

Midterm: 30%

The midterm exam will be offered in two formats to accommodate different styles and skill sets. The first format will be a more 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 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: 40%

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

It's really easy, especially during spring quarter, to mentally check out of a class. You must resist this temptation as **NO LATE WORK** will be accepted. There are also **NO EXTENSIONS OR MAKEUPS** available on weekly assessments (this includes Lecture Participation, Discussion Attendance/Participation, and Asynchronous Quizzes). Understanding that things happen, flexibility has been engineered into the requirements for these assessments (in most cases you can miss up to half of the individual assignments/points and still earn full credit for the assessment category!). You should plan ahead for potential complications – don't wait until the last half of the quarter to try to earn the points you need to get credit for assessment categories!

Understanding that, despite our best intentions, we sometimes just get behind or encounter unforeseeable obstacles, a ***one-time 48-hour*** **discretionary extension is available on the Midterm only**. To use your extension, you must contact your TA by noon (12 pm, Pacific Time) on the day the assignment is due. No extensions or makeups 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. You must provide documentation of your medical emergency (e.g. for a Covid excuse, a pic of some random positive Covid test isn't sufficient – you need an officially acknowledged case of Covid from a health care provider). You must be in contact with your TA *immediately* with documentation of your medical emergency so that appropriate accommodations to be made. If you have a prolonged illness, you must contact your TA immediately 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 register correctly. 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 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 to write the content of your essay. The cost of getting caught outweighs the probability of getting away with it and the relatively low cost of taking a small hit to your grade by turning in less than stellar work that is your own. Students are expected to conduct themselves according to UCSD's guidelines for academic integrity: https://academicintegrity.ucsd.edu/

Schedule of Readings

You are expected to have read/listened to the assigned material before lecture/discussion section.

	Monday	**Wednesday**	**Friday** (asynch.)
Wk 1	**Welcome & Intro** • No reading	**Ethics and the Moral Life** • Lewis Vaughn (13-21)	**Moral Reasoning** • Lewis Vaughn (46-50, 56-62) *Recommended: Vaughn (51-55)*
Wk 2	**Moral Relativism: Intro** • Lewis Vaughn (29-39)	**Moral Relativism: Competing Perspectives** • Jesse Prinz: Morality is a Culturally Conditioned Response (1-6) • Paul Boghossian: The Maze of Moral Relativism (124-128) • Carol Rovane: Moral Dispute or Cultural Difference? (134-138)	**Moral Arguments** • Lewis Vaughn (62-66)
Wk 3	**Consequentialism: Utilitarianism** • Lewis Vaughn (103-109)	**Utilitarianism** • De Lazaria-Radek & Singer (42-52)	**Utilitarianism** De Lazaria-Radek & Singer (52-64)
Wk 4	**Utilitarianism** • James Rachels (102-110) • Bernard Williams: A Critique of Utilitarianism (124-131)	**Non-consequentialism: Immanuel Kant** • Lewis Vaughn (100-107)	**Non-consequentialism: Immanuel Kant** • Onora O'Neil: A Simplified Account of Kant's Ethics (43-48)
Wk 5	**Non-consequentialism: Immanuel Kant** • James Rachels (130-140)	**Non-consequentialism: Natural Law Theory** • Lewis Vaughn (107-113)	**Non-consequentialism: Natural Law Theory** • Phillipa Foot: The Problem of Abortion and the Doctrine of

			Double Effect (536-542)
Wk 6	**Virtue Ethics** • Lewis Vaughn (155-158) • Philosophy Bites Podcast: Julia Annas on Virtue Ethics (15 mins)	**Virtue Ethics** • Rosalind Hursthouse: Normative Virtue Ethics (645-652)	**Virtue Ethics** • Lorraine Besser-Jones: The Situationist Critique 375-383)
Wk 7	**Feminist Ethics** • Philosophize This! Podcast: Introduction to Care Ethics (43 mins)	**Feminist Ethics** • Nell Noddings: An Ethic of Caring (699-711)	**Feminist Ethics** • Julia Driver: Consequentialism and Feminist Ethics (183-197)
Wk 8	**Applied Ethics: Capital Punishment** • Lewis Vaughn (310-321)	**Applied Ethics: Capital Punishment** • van den Haag: The Ultimate Punishment: A Defense (321-324)	**Applied Ethics: Capital Punishment** • Jeffrey Reiman: Justice, Civilization, and the Death Penalty: Answering van den Haag (excerpt: 326-331)
Wk 9	**No Class** **Recommended Reading:** Patrick Lin: The Ethics of Autonomous Cars (Atlantic)	**Applied Ethics: Self-driving Cars** • Patrick Lin: The Ethical Dilemma of Self-Driving Cars (video 5 mins) • Sven Nyholm: The Ethics of Crashes with Self-Driving Cars: A Roadmap I (1-8)	**Applied Ethics: Self-driving Cars** • Sven Nyholm: The Ethics of Crashes with Self-Driving Cars: A Roadmap II (1-8)
Wk 10	**Applied Ethics: Class-selected Topic** • Animal Rights • Love Drugs • Reproductive Technology	**Applied Ethics: Class-selected Topic**	**Applied Ethics: Class-selected Topic**