



PHILOS 241
Introduction to Ethics

Spring 2022

Brogden Psychology Building 121
Tuesdays and Thursdays, 2:30-3:45

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This course will deal with ethics in the broadest sense of the word. We will examine the ways in which we should structure society as a whole and our own lives to fulfill our moral responsibilities and to create better lives for ourselves and others. In the process, we will examine our duties to other people, the nature of moral communities, the idea of a good life, and the virtues we should cultivate in ourselves (and, importantly, the vices we should avoid). We will study a number of different theoretical views on these topics, interspersed with works of literature that will give our discussions substance. The purpose of this variety, however, is not to present a mere smorgasbord; rather, it is to examine critically the various answers to these questions to see the extent to which they can be rationally justified. My not-so-secret agenda is to force every student to examine her own beliefs and to think critically about her own life.

Credits: 4

How credit hours are met: This class meets for 75 minutes twice a week and 50 minutes in a discussion every week.. The expectation is that students will do 2-3 hours of work outside class for every hour in class.

Course designation: Humanities or Social Science, Intermediate

Requisites: Sophomore standing

Instructional mode: In person

Learning objectives: At the end of the course, students should be more able to

1. Think critically about ethical arguments
2. Communicate precisely and concisely in both their writing and speech
3. Think carefully about their responsibilities to others.
4. Exchange reasons about controversial subjects respectfully with an aim to finding the truth.

Canvas website for course: <https://canvas.wisc.edu/courses/290838>

Required Texts:

Ayad Akhtar, *Disgraced* (Back Bay)
Kwame Anthony Appiah, *The Lies that Bind* (Liveright)
Aristotle, *Nicomachen Ethics*, trans. Terry Irwin, 3rd ed. (Hackett)
Lorraine Hansberry, *A Raisin in the Sun* (Vintage)
Henrik Ibsen, *Four Great Plays* (Bantam)
Immanuel Kant, *Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals*, trans. James Ellington (Hackett)
John Stuart Mill, *Utilitarianism*, 2nd ed. (Hackett)
Hannah Moscovitch, *This is War* (Playwrights Canada)
Sophocles, *The Three Theban Plays*, trans. Robert Fagle (Penguin)

Note about the texts: For ease of reference and consistency in translation, I prefer that you use the texts I have ordered. None are expensive, so I hope the costs are not prohibitive. However, I am not a stickler about this point: Many of the texts are available online, and few issues will turn on the exact translation, so feel free to use the versions you find online.

Assignments:

The grade in the class is determined out of a possible total of 460 points, divided between the assignments as indicated.

Class participation (100 points) is worth a significant portion of your grade. The class is based as much on student discussions as on lectures. You are expected to come to class, and you are expected to come to class prepared to discuss the readings – if only to ask relevant questions about them, and you are expected to participate actively in the weekly discussion sections led by the TA. Most of your class participation grade is based on regular, substantive participation in class discussions.

Papers (two, each worth 120 points) Written essays will constitute two of the three major assignments in the course. About 10-14 days before the paper is due, I will give you a several sets of questions, each of which will ask you to consider particular texts or a particular case or both. You will choose one set of questions and write a 4-5 page argumentative paper answering those questions. You will take a position on the issues, construct an argument supporting your position, and then consider and answer objections to it.

Final exam (120 points). The last assignment will be a final examination on May 13, 12:25-2:25. Before the exam, I will post a set of 5-7 questions. At the beginning of the exam, we will randomly select four of those questions, and you will be required to answer two. You will be allowed to bring a page of notes.

Grading scale: A:	426 points
AB:	403 points
B:	380 points
BC:	357 points
C:	322 points
D:	276 points

Schedule of readings and assignments

This schedule is tentative (especially for topics later in the course). However, any changes will be announced on Canvas, and an up-to-date copy of the syllabus can always be found there. All readings are in the required books for the class.

- Jan 25-27 Sophocles, *Antigone* (pp 55-128)
 Mill, *Utilitarianism*, chs. 1-2.10 (paragraph 10) (pp 1-12)
- Feb 1-3 Mill, chs, 2.11-ch. 4 (pp 12-41)
- Feb 8-10 Mill, ch. 5 (pp 42-64)
- Feb 15-17 Hansberry, *A Raisin in the Sun*
 Kant, *Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals*, preface, first section (pp 1-17)
- Feb 22-24 Kant, second section, ¶¶1-54 (pp 18-37)
- Mar 1 • *First papers due, 3:45 pm (No lecture Mar 1, no sections Mar 2-3)*
- Mar 3 Kant, second section, ¶¶55-89 (pp 37-48)
 Kant, “On the Supposed Right to Lie Because of Philanthropic Concerns”
 (pp 63-67)
- Mar 8-10 Ibsen, *The Wild Duck* (pp 253-358)
- Mar 15-17 *Spring break*
- Mar 22-24 Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Books I-IV (pp 1-79)
- Mar 29-31 Aristotle, Books IV-VII (pp 79-140)
- Apr 5 Aristotle, Book VIII-IX (pp 141-81)
- Apr 7 • *Second paper due, 3:45 pm (No lecture Apr 7, no sections Apr 6-7)*
- Apr 12-14 Aristotle, Books X (pp 181-203)
 Aktar, *Disgraced*
- Apr 19-21 Appiah, *The Lies that Bind*, chs. 1-3 (pp 1-104)
- Apr 26-28 Appiah, chs, 4-6 (pp 105-219)
- May 3-5 Moscovitch, *This is War*
- May 13 • *Final examination, 12:25-2:25*

University Policies and Resources

Teaching & Learning Data Transparency Statement

The privacy and security of faculty, staff and students' personal information is a top priority for UW-Madison. The university carefully evaluates and vets all campus-supported digital tools used to support teaching and learning, to help support success through [learning analytics](#), and to enable proctoring capabilities. View the university's full [teaching and learning data transparency statement](#).

Privacy of Student Records & the Use of Audio Recorded Lectures Statement

Lecture materials and recordings for this course are protected intellectual property at UW-Madison. Students in this course may use the materials and recordings for their personal use related to participation in this class. Students may also take notes solely for their personal use. If a lecture is not already recorded, you are not authorized to record my lectures without my permission unless you are considered by the university to be a qualified student with a disability requiring accommodation. [Regent Policy Document 4-1] Students may not copy or have lecture materials and recordings outside of class, including posting on internet sites or selling to commercial entities. Students are also prohibited from providing or selling their personal notes to anyone else or being paid for taking notes by any person or commercial firm without the instructor's express written permission. Unauthorized use of these copyrighted lecture materials and recordings constitutes copyright infringement and may be addressed under the university's policies, UWS Chapters 14 and 17, governing student academic and non-academic misconduct.

Course Evaluations

Students will be provided with an opportunity to evaluate this course and your learning experience. Student participation is an integral component of this course, and your confidential feedback is important to me. I strongly encourage you to participate in the course evaluation.

UW-Madison uses a digital course evaluation survey tool called [AEFIS](#). For this course, you will receive an official email two weeks prior to the end of the semester, notifying you that your course evaluation is available. In the email you will receive a link to log into the course evaluation with your NetID. Evaluations are anonymous. Your participation is an integral component of this course, and your feedback is important to me. I strongly encourage you to participate in the course evaluation.

Students' Rules, [Rights & Responsibilities](#)

Diversity & Inclusion Statement

[Diversity](#) is a source of strength, creativity, and innovation for UW-Madison. We value the contributions of each person and respect the profound ways their identity, culture, background, experience, status, abilities, and opinion enrich the university community. We commit ourselves to the pursuit of excellence in teaching, research, outreach, and diversity as inextricably linked goals. The University of Wisconsin-Madison fulfills its public mission by creating a welcoming and inclusive community for people from every background – people who as students, faculty, and staff serve Wisconsin and the world.

Academic Integrity Statement

By virtue of enrollment, each student agrees to uphold the high academic standards of the University of Wisconsin-Madison; academic misconduct is behavior that negatively impacts the integrity of the institution. Cheating, fabrication, plagiarism, unauthorized collaboration, and helping others commit these previously listed acts are examples of misconduct which may result in disciplinary action. Examples of disciplinary action include, but is not limited to, failure on the assignment/course, written reprimand, disciplinary probation, suspension, or expulsion.

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities Statement

The University of Wisconsin-Madison supports the right of all enrolled students to a full and equal educational opportunity. The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), Wisconsin State Statute (36.12), and UW-Madison policy (Faculty Document 1071) require that students with disabilities be reasonably accommodated in instruction and campus life. Reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities is a shared faculty and student responsibility. Students are expected to inform faculty [me] of their need for instructional accommodations by the end of the third week of the semester, or as soon as possible after a disability has been incurred or recognized. Faculty [I], will work either directly with the student [you] or in coordination with the McBurney Center to identify and provide reasonable instructional accommodations. Disability information, including instructional accommodations as part of a student's educational record, is confidential and protected under FERPA. (See: [McBurney Disability Resource Center](#))

Academic Calendar & Religious Observances

I will make every effort to accommodate religious observances that require you to miss class. However, please let me know ahead of time.

University Resources

The University provides many resources to help students achieve academic success. Please make use of them

- *[University Health Services](#)*
- *[Undergraduate Academic Advising and Career Services](#)*
- *[Office of the Registrar](#)*
- *[Office of Student Financial Aid](#)*
- *[Dean of Students Office](#)*