

CONTEMPORARY MORAL ISSUES – PHI 2630

<u>Professor:</u>	Jon Rick Philosophy Department jrick@ufl.edu <u>Office:</u> Griffin-Floyd Hall (FLO), Room 310
<u>Professor's Office Hours:</u>	Wednesday: 10:00am-11:30am or By Appointment (All <i>via</i> Zoom)
<u>Course Meetings:</u>	Tuesday: Period 7 (1:55-2:45) <i>via</i> Zoom & MAT 0014 Thursday: Periods 7-8 (1:55-3:50) <i>via</i> Zoom & MAT 0014
<u>Course Website:</u>	https://elearning.ufl.edu (Canvas)

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

Do non-human animals have moral standing, comparable to that of human beings? Is abortion ever morally permissible? Are affirmative action policies morally justified or morally bankrupt? Given the persistence of vast global poverty in our world, what moral duties do those of us in wealthy nations have to persons in impoverished states? Should private gun ownership be morally permissible or impermissible? Is climate change a significant issue for individual morality? Are individuals morally responsible for their greenhouse gas emissions, despite the fact that individual actions seem to make little difference to climate change?

These are examples of moral questions about which many of us have strong and often opposing opinions. And, just as we disagree on many of these issues, so do many philosophers, political theorists, and economists. In this course, we examine opposing philosophical arguments and points of view on these urgent moral questions. The governing aim of our course will be to come to grips with and critically reflect on the underlying justifications for the various sides of these different debates. This course counts towards the Humanities (H) general education requirement and the Writing (W) requirement (4000 words).

REQUIRED TEXT AND READINGS:

No purchase of books is necessary for this course. All assigned readings will be available through the class Canvas page. Students are required to bring a copy of the day's assigned reading to each class and discussion section meeting; failure to do so will result in loss of participation points. A full list of the required readings for this course can be found in the Course Schedule, below.

COURSE LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

- Identify, describe and explain the major arguments and options in core areas of contemporary practical ethics.
 - Discern the structure of arguments, to represent them fairly and clearly and to evaluate them for cogency.
 - Formulate original arguments, anticipating objections and responding in a conscientious fashion.
 - Read and discuss complex philosophical texts from contemporary works.
 - Speak and write clearly and persuasively about abstract and conceptually elusive matters.
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WRITING REQUIREMENT CREDIT:

This course is marked 'WR', and is designated to satisfy 4,000 words of Writing Requirement credit. 4,000 words amounts to approximately 17 pages of writing (12 point font, double-spaced, one-inch margins). Needless to say, there will be more writing in this course than you may be accustomed to from other courses. But, you can do it! The Writing Requirement (WR) ensures students both maintain their fluency in writing and use writing as a tool to facilitate learning. Here are some links to the official UF statements about the WR:

<http://gened.aa.ufl.edu/writing-requirement.aspx>
<http://gened.aa.ufl.edu/wr-course-guidelines.aspx>
<http://gened.aa.ufl.edu/writing-requirement-syllabus-policy.aspx>
<http://gened.aa.ufl.edu/sample-writing-assessment-rubric.aspx>

The writing course grade assigned by the instructor has two components: the writing component and a course grade. Therefore, to receive writing credit a student must satisfactorily complete the writing component (by averaging 72% on the essay assignments) and receive a minimum grade of C (2.0) for the course. In other words, getting a C for the course is *necessary* but *not sufficient* for getting the WR credit.

It is possible to not meet the writing requirement and still earn a minimum grade of C in a class, so students should review their degree audit after receiving their grade to verify receipt of credit for the writing component. A few key things to note about the WR (quoting the "course guidelines" page, linked above) are the following:

- Written assignments that count toward the University of Florida Writing Requirement should contain extended analysis and develop original, sophisticated ideas, not merely present hastily written or cursory thoughts. UF Writing Requirement assignments should include such elements as well-crafted paragraphs, a thesis or hypothesis, a persuasive organizational structure (e.g., introduction, body, conclusion; introduction, methods, results, discussion), well-supported claims, and appropriate and effective stylistic elements.
- Writing will be evaluated based on the content, organization and coherence, effectiveness, style, grammar, and punctuation. I will provide a detailed rubric that shows how I will evaluate assignments using these criteria. See the course website for detailed assignment instructions and for the WR rubric.

- In-class writing assignments (including those done in tutorial sections), class notes, and essay examinations may not be counted toward the 4,000 words.
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COURSE REQUIREMENTS & ASSIGNMENTS:

1. **Discussion Board Posts:** Students will be divided into three different groups – A, B, & C. Starting in Week 2, students in Group A will be required to make a discussion post about the readings assigned for that week (T 1/19, R 1/21) by 5pm on Wednesday, January 20th. In Week 3, members of group B will be required to make a discussion post about the readings assigned for that week (T 1/26, R 1/28) by 5pm on Wednesday, January 27th. In Week 4, members of group C will be required to make a discussion post about the readings assigned for that week (T 2/2, R 2/4) by 5pm on Wednesday, February 3rd. This cycle will then repeat two more times over the course of the term (*see the Course Schedule below*). Each group (and thus each student) will be required to make 3 discussion posts over the course of the term. A detailed set of instructions and rubric explaining the requirements and expectations for these discussion posts will be made available before the second week of class. **Discussion Board Posts are worth 10% of the final grade.**
2. **Discussion Board Replies:** For every Thursday in which there is a set of discussion posts made, every student, irrespective of their group, will be required to make a short reply to one of their fellow student's discussion post for that week. To be clear, every student will be required to respond to a discussion post – both those who have made a post and those who have not posted that week. These will be due by 9am on the Thursday of the discussion section. Thus, each student will be required to make 9 reply posts over the course of the term. A detailed set of instructions and rubric explaining the requirements and expectations for these discussion post replies will be made available before the second week of class. **Discussion Board Reply Posts are worth 5% of the final grade.**
3. **Verbal Participation:** You will be expected to have read and to be prepared to discuss the texts assigned for each of the Tuesday/Thursday lecture meetings. During the weeks in which you are required to make a discussion post, you should be prepared to participate by discussing your post during that Thursday's Class Discussion meeting. This will be the primary way in which participation is assessed. However, your participation grade can be augmented by asking questions during lecture, during discussion sessions, and during office hours. **Verbal Participation is worth 5% of the final grade.**
4. **Essay Assignments:** You will be required to write three essays for this course. Detailed essay instructions and prompts will be distributed two weeks prior to the due date of the essay assignment. In order to receive the WR credit for this course, your average grade must be 72% on these three essays, combined.
 - (i) **Essay #1:** This essay will be a minimum of 1000 words and a maximum of 1200 words. Due Date: 5:00pm on Sunday, February 7th. This essay will be submitted electronically, via an Assignment link on Canvas. **Worth 20% of the final grade.**

- (ii) **Essay #2:** This essay will be a minimum of 1250 words and a maximum of 1500 words. Due Date: 5:00pm on Saturday, February 29th. This essay will be submitted electronically, via an Assignment link on Canvas. **Worth 25% of the final grade.**
 - (iii) **Essay #3:** This essay will be a minimum of 1750 words and a maximum of 2000 words. Due Date: 5:00pm on Friday, April 24th. This essay will be submitted electronically, via an Assignment link on Canvas. **Worth 30% of the final grade.**
4. **Experiential Learning Assignment:** During the last third of the term, students will be required to engage with an experiential learning assignment. This assignment will involve an outside of the class activity coupled with a short, written reflection paper. A detailed set of instructions and rubric explaining the requirements and expectations for these discussion post replies will be made available by the midpoint of the term. **The Experiential Learning Assignment is worth 5% of the final grade.**

ADDITIONAL COURSE EXPECTATIONS

1. **Essay Source Materials:** Any source materials appealed to in your essay assignments that do not come from assigned course texts, *must* be cleared with the instructor at least 1 week prior to the due date of the assignment. If you do not clear additional sources with the instructor 1 week prior to turning in your paper, you will be penalized (10% for each source not-cleared, *only if* the source is cited). None of the assignments for this class will require resources beyond the required readings.
2. **Text and Note Taking:** In each lecture, we will be taking an in-depth look at the assigned readings for that session. You are expected to have a copy of the text with you, and you will benefit from being able to mark the passages that are focused on in lecture.
3. **Course Slides:** There will be slides for many, but not all, lecture meetings, and these will be posted on the course's Canvas site *after* each lecture meeting. **Please Note:** while these slides will provide you with helpful material when drafting your papers, they will not cover everything that is discussed in either lecture or tutorial session meetings. In order to have the fullest understanding of the material, you will need to be present for each lecture meeting and take notes on the class discussion.

SUMMARY OF GRADED REQUIREMENTS

10%	Discussion Board Posts
5%	Discussion Board Replies
5%	Verbal Participation
20%	Essay Assignment #1
25%	Essay Assignment #2
30%	Essay Assignment #3
5%	Experiential Learning Assignment

Grading Scale		
Letter	4 pt. scale	100 pt. scale
A	4.0 (3.835-4.0)	94-100
A-	3.67 (3.495-3.834)	90-93
B+	3.33 (3.165-3.494)	87-89
B	3.0 (2.835-3.164)	84-86
B-	2.67 (2.495-2.834)	80-83
C+	2.33 (2.165-2.494)	77-79
C	2.0 (1.835-2.164)	74-76
C-	1.67 (1.495-1.834)	70-73
D+	1.33 (1.165-1.494)	67-69
D	1.0 (0.835-1.164)	64-66
D-	0.67 (0.495-0.834)	60-63
E	0.0 (0.0-0.494)	0-59

ESSAY SUBMISSION AND LATE SUBMISSION POLICY

In general, requirements for section attendance and make-up exams, assignments, and other work are consistent with university policies specified at:

<https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/attendance.aspx>.

More specifically, the following policies will be adhered to:

1. All in-section assignments will need to be completed during the section meeting in which they are assigned. If you have extenuating circumstances (consistent with the University guidelines detailed in the link above and are able to present a written excuse), accommodations may be made (but there are no guarantees here). You will need to contact the instructor within 48 hours of the section meeting that you will miss in order to determine whether accommodations can be made.
 2. All essays assignments will be submitted online via an Assignment/Turnitin.com link on the course's Canvas page. Essays must be submitted as either .doc or .docx files. Failure to submit in these formats will result in penalties and will require resubmission in the proper format.
 3. Late submission of papers will be penalized 3% for each day that the assignment is late. For instance, if a paper is due on Friday at 5:00pm, it will be counted as 1 day late if submitted between 5:01pm Friday and 5:00pm Saturday (submissions between 5:01pm Saturday and 5:00pm Sunday will count as 2 days late, and so on). Late submissions will be made via Canvas/Turnitin.
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COURSE WEBSITE

This course is supplemented by online content in the e-Learning environment known as "Canvas." To login to the e-Learning site for this course, go to <https://elearning.ufl.edu/>, click the **e-Learning in Canvas** button, and on the next page enter your Gatorlink username and password. You can then access the course e-Learning environment by selecting PHI 3930 from the **Courses** pull-down menu at the top of the page. **If you encounter any difficulties logging in or accessing any of the course content, contact the UF Computing Help Desk at (352) 392-4537.**

CLASS CONDUCT & CLASS ATTENDANCE POLICY

Students and faculty each have responsibility for maintaining an appropriate learning environment. Those who fail to adhere to such behavioral standards may be subject to discipline. Professional courtesy and sensitivity are especially important with respect to individuals and topics dealing with differences of race, culture, religion, politics, sexual orientation, gender, gender variance, and nationalities. Class rosters are provided to the instructor with the student's legal name. I will gladly honor your request to address you by an alternate name or gender pronoun. Please advise me of this preference early in the semester so that I may make appropriate changes to my records.

In accordance with UF-CLAS regulations, 51% of class meetings must be taught in-person. To uphold this policy, all of our Tuesday classes will be held in MAT 0014 & Zoom, but all of our Thursday classes will be held over Zoom only, with the exception of classes on 4/8 & 4/15. I intend to remain flexible about this arrangement in accord with the needs and wants of students enrolled in the in-person section, while adhering to CLAS requirements and guidelines.

ZOOM VIDEO & RECORDING PROTOCOLS

- You are not required to turn on your video during class lectures, but I encourage you to do so when asking questions or offering comments. It's nice to see you!
- On Thursday classes in which you are expected to talk about your discussion posts, you will be expected to have your video feed on, barring excusing conditions. If you have any concerns at all about having your video feed on, please contact me. I will be extremely sensitive to your concerns.
- While all course content materials (such as slides) will be posted, any video or audio recordings of the class sessions will not be posted.
- Students are not permitted to make audio or visual recordings of class lectures or discussion sections without the permission of the Professor and Teaching Assistant.
- Some class lectures and discussion sections may be recorded, and if they are, the following University of Florida guidelines apply:

Our class sessions may be audio visually recorded for students in the class to refer back and for enrolled students who are unable to attend live. Students who participate with their camera engaged or utilize a profile image are agreeing to have their video or image recorded. If you are unwilling to consent to have your profile or video image recorded, be

sure to keep your camera off and do not use a profile image. Likewise, students who un-mute during class and participate orally are agreeing to have their voices recorded. If you are not willing to consent to have your voice recorded during class, you will need to keep your mute button activated and communicate exclusively using the "chat" feature, which allows students to type questions and comments live. The chat will not be recorded or shared. As in all courses, unauthorized recording and unauthorized sharing of recorded materials is prohibited.

HONOR CODE & PLAGIARISM POLICY

Most instances of academic dishonesty can be avoided by thoroughly citing the resources you have used to help you understand the topic on which you're writing. **If you have read something that helped you understand the material, cite it!** Failure to cite sources is the most common (and easily avoidable) academic offence. Detailed citation instructions will be provided with your essay assignments.

UF students are bound by The Honor Pledge, which states:

“We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honor and integrity by abiding by the Honor Code. On all work submitted for credit by students at the University of Florida, the following pledge is either required or implied: “On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment.”

The Honor Code (<https://sccr.dso.ufl.edu/policies/student-honor-code-student-conduct-code/>) specifies a number of behaviors that are in violation of this code and the possible sanctions. Furthermore, you are obligated to report any condition that facilitates academic misconduct to appropriate personnel. If you have any questions or concerns, please consult with the instructor.

Plagiarism on any assignment will automatically result in a grade of “E” for the course. Plagiarism is defined in the University of Florida's Student Honor Code as follows:

“A student shall not represent as the student’s own work all or any portion of the work of another. Plagiarism includes (but is not limited to): a. Quoting oral or written materials, whether published or unpublished, without proper attribution. b. Submitting a document or assignment which in whole or in part is identical or substantially identical to a document or assignment not authored by the student.”

Students found guilty of academic misconduct will be prosecuted in accordance with the procedures specified in the UF honesty policy.

IMPORTANT CAMPUS & ACADEMIC RESOURCES

Accommodation for Students with Disabilities

Students with disabilities requesting accommodations should first register with the Disability Resource Center (352-392-8565, www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/) by providing appropriate

documentation. Once registered, students will receive an accommodation letter which must be presented to the instructor when requesting accommodation. Students with disabilities should follow this procedure as early as possible in the semester.

Health and Wellness U Matter, We Care

If you or a friend is in distress, please contact umatter@ufl.edu or 352 392- 1575 so that a team member can reach out to the student.

Sexual Assault Recovery Services (SARS) Student Health Care Center, 392-1161.

Counseling and Wellness Center: <http://www.counseling.ufl.edu/cwc/Default.aspx>, 392-1575

University Police Department: 392-1111 or 9-1-1 for emergencies

E-learning Technical Support, 352-392-4357 (select option 2) or e-mail to

Learningsupport@ufl.edu. <https://lss.at.ufl.edu/help.shtml>

Library Support <http://cms.uflib.ufl.edu/ask>

Writing Studio 2215 Turlington Hall, 846-1138. <http://writing.ufl.edu/writing-studio/>

EMAIL POLICY & OFFICE HOURS

(1) If you need some practical information about the course you should **look at most recently updated syllabus on canvas**. E-mails requesting information which is available on the most recently updated syllabus or on the website may not be answered.

(2) If you want to discuss a substantive philosophical question you should bring it up in class or come to office hours. I will not be able to respond to in-depth, substantive questions about the readings or assignments over email. However, I am *more* than happy to discuss substantive questions of these sorts in office hours. So, please come and see me! I will be happy to address short, logistical, non-substantive questions over email.

(3) Although I am happy to answer any questions that you might have regarding our assignments in office hours, I will not be able to read drafts of papers.

Emails received after 5pm may not be responded to until after 9am the following day.

COURSE EVALUATION PROCESS

Students are expected to provide professional and respectful feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing course evaluations online via GatorEvals. Guidance on how to give

feedback in a professional and respectful manner is available at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/students/>. Students will be notified when the evaluation period opens, and can complete evaluations through the email they receive from GatorEvals, in their Canvas course menu under GatorEvals, or via <https://ufl.bluera.com/ufl/>. Summaries of course evaluation results are available to students at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/public-results/>.

HOW TO DO WELL IN THIS COURSE!

1. **Be sure to read the assigned material before lecture.** This will help to ensure that our lecture time is quality time.
2. **After lecture, re-read the material for the session:** pay special attention to the questions that you had before. Hopefully the material will make much more sense to you now!
3. **Bring specific questions with you to discussion section meetings.** If there remain aspects of the readings or lecture you didn't fully grasp, your discussion section will provide you with an excellent opportunity to probe these issues further.
4. **See me in office hours:** Philosophy is tough! It's natural to have lurking (and new) questions after both lecture and section. That's what office hours are for! Come and see me. Don't be shy!
5. **Manage your time well.** Many students make the mistake of waiting until a few days before papers are due to start writing. This is not a helpful way to manage your time and efforts. Getting started early on your papers by formulating outlines and drafts will *really, really* help to improve your final product. Similar considerations apply to the final exam. The **same number of hours** devoted to the material BEFORE class can lead to a much more efficient use of your time, better understanding, and higher grades.
6. **Familiarize yourself with Philosophical Terms & Methods:** Here are links to Jim Pryor's guides to philosophical terms and methods, reading philosophy, and writing a philosophical paper. These are *very* helpful, short additional resources. I *strongly* recommend checking them out:

<http://www.jimpryor.net/teaching/vocab/index.html>

<http://www.jimpryor.net/teaching/guidelines/reading.html>

<http://www.jimpryor.net/teaching/guidelines/writing.html>

LECTURE & READING SCHEDULE (Including Assignment Due Dates):

- *This Schedule is Subject to Revision – please read all class announcements*

Tuesday, 1/12 – Course Overview & Syllabus Review

- *No Assigned Readings*

UNIT 1: THE ETHICAL CHALLENGES OF NON-HUMAN ANIMALS

Thursday 1/14 – Human & Non-Human Animals: Species & Moral Hierarchies

1. **René Descartes** – *Letters to William Cavendish and Henry More*
2. **Immanuel Kant** – “Our Duties to Animals”
3. **Peter Singer** – “All Animals Are Equal” (pp. 380-382)

Tuesday 1/19 – The Moral Standing of Non-Human Animals

1. **Peter Singer** – “All Animals Are Equal” (entire)

Thursday 1/21 – Against Speciesism without Equal Value

1. **Peter Singer** – “All Animals Are Equal” (cont.)
2. **Peter Singer** – “Reflections”
Discussion Group A1

Tuesday 1/26 – A Contemporary Case for Moral Anthropocentrism

1. **Carl Cohen** – “The Case for the Use of Animals in Biomedical Research”

Thursday 1/28 – Marginal Cases & Moral Conflations

1. **Alastair Norcross** – “Puppies, Pigs, and People: Eating Meat and Marginal Cases”
Discussion Group B1

UNIT 2: THE ETHICAL CHALLENGES OF ABORTION

Tuesday 2/2 – A Theologically-Inspired Case Against Abortion

1. **John Noonan** – “An Almost Absolute Value in History”

Thursday 2/4 – Defending Abortion & Women’s Rights

1. **Judith Jarvis Thomson** – “A Defense of Abortion”
Discussion Group C1

Essay 1 Due by 5:00pm on Sunday 2/7 via Canvas/Turnitin.com

Tuesday 2/9 – A Secular Case Against Abortion: Focusing on the Fetus

1. **Don Marquis** – “Why Abortion Is Immoral”

Thursday 2/11 – Feminism and Abortion

1. **Susan Sherwin** – “Abortion Through a Feminist Lens”
Discussion Group A2

UNIT 3: THE ETHICAL CHALLENGES OF AFFIRMATIVE ACTION

Tuesday 2/16 – Challenging Affirmative Action: Leveling & Compensation

1. **Louis P. Pojman** – “Why Affirmative Action is Immoral”

Thursday 2/18 – Defending Affirmative Action: Equalizing Opportunity

1. **Daniel Hausman** – “Affirmative Action: Bad Arguments and Some Good Ones”
Discussion Group B2

Tuesday 2/23 – Challenging Affirmative Action: The Costs of Preferential Treatment

1. **Shelby Steele** – “Affirmative Action: The Price of Preference”

Thursday 2/25 – Defending Affirmative Action: Realizing Integration

1. **Elizabeth Anderson** – “Racial Integration Remains an Imperative”
Discussion Group C2

RECHARGE & WRITING WEEK!

NO CLASS ON TUESDAY 3/2 & THURSDAY 3/4

Essay 2 Due by 5:00pm on Sunday 3/7 via Canvas/Turnitin.com

UNIT 4: THE ETHICAL CHALLENGES OF GLOBAL POVERTY

Tuesday 3/9 – Population Growth & a Tragedy of the Commons

1. **Garrett Hardin** – “Lifeboat Ethics”

Thursday 3/11 – Resisting the Lifeboat Model

1. **William W. Murdoch & Allan Oates** – “A Critique of Lifeboat Ethics”
Discussion Group A3

Tuesday 3/16 – The Moral Obligations of the Affluent

1. **Peter Singer** – “The Life You Can Save”

Thursday 3/18 – Challenging the Moral Obligations of the Affluent

1. **John Arthur** – “World Hunger and Moral Obligation”
 - **Discussion Group B3**

UNIT 5: CLIMATE ETHICS & COLLECTIVE HARM

Tuesday 3/23 – The Collective Harm Problem of Climate Change

1. **Walter Sinnott-Armstrong** – “It’s Not *My* Fault: *Global Warming and Individual Moral Obligations*” (pp. 332-337, 343-44)

Thursday 3/25 – Collective Climate Harm & Individual Responsibility

1. **Walter Sinnott-Armstrong** – “It’s Not *My* Fault: *Global Warming and Individual Moral Obligations?*” (cont.)
2. **John Nolt** – “How Harmful Are the Average American’s Greenhouse Gas Emissions”

Tuesday 3/30 – Collective Climate Harm & Individual Responsibility

1. **Avram Hiller** – “Climate Change and Individual Responsibility”

Thursday 4/1 – Collective Climate Harm – Individual & Institutional Responsibility

1. **Avram Hiller** – “Climate Change and Individual Responsibility” (cont.)
2. **Morten Byskov** – “Climate Change: Focusing on How Individuals Can Help is Very Convenient for Corporations”
 - **Discussion Postings Group C3**

UNIT 6: THE ETHICAL CHALLENGES OF GUN OWNERSHIP

Tuesday 4/6 – Defending a Prohibition on Gun Ownership

1. **Jeff McMahan** – “Why ‘Gun Control’ Is Not Enough”

Thursday 4/8 – Challenging the Prohibition of Gun Ownership

1. **Michael Huemer** – “Gun Rights and Noncompliance”

Tuesday 4/13 – Gun Ownership: Fundamental and Derivative Rights

1. **Jeff McMahan** – “A Challenge to Gun Rights”

Thursday 4/15 – TBD

- Reading TBD

Tuesday 4/20 – TBD

- No New Assigned Readings

Essay 3 Due by 5:00pm on Friday 4/23 via Canvas/Turnitin.com