

PHI 3641, Section 03EF
Conduct, Change, and Consequences: Making Ethical Decisions
Spring 2017

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Course Description and Objectives

This course is designed to familiarize students with some of the major ethical theories, with ethical issues surrounding innovation, and with some of the psychological obstacles to acting ethically. We will survey the main ethical theories – utilitarianism, deontological ethics, and virtue ethics – to provide a theoretical framework for our discussion of some of the different ethical issues surrounding innovations in fields such as bioengineering and Internet technology. Finally, we will consider how psychological factors inhibit ethical behavior, with an eye towards identifying strategies to combat them.

REQUIREMENTS SATISFIED BY SUCCESSFUL COMPLETION OF THE COURSE

Students in this course can earn 4000 words towards the UF Writing Requirement (WR). The Writing Requirement (WR) ensures students both maintain their fluency in writing and use writing as a tool to facilitate learning. Course grades have two components. To receive writing requirement credit, a student must receive a grade of C or higher and a satisfactory completion of the writing component of the course.

PHI 3641 satisfies the Ethics requirement for the Innovation Minor, serves as an elective for the Philosophy major or minor, and is a General Education – Humanities (H) course.

GENERAL EDUCATION OBJECTIVES AND LEARNING OUTCOMES

This course is a Humanities (H) subject area course in the UF General Education Program. Humanities courses provide instruction in the history, key themes, principles, terminology, and theory or methodologies used within a humanities discipline or the humanities in general. Students will learn to identify and to analyze the key elements, biases and influences that shape thought. These courses emphasize clear and effective analysis and approach issues and problems from multiple perspectives. A minimum grade of C is required for general education credit.

PHI 3641 accomplishes these goals by familiarizing students with key ethical theories, such as utilitarianism, deontological ethics, and virtue ethics as well as objections to them. With these theories as their framework, students will consider technological innovations and become adept at identifying the aspects of such innovations that raise ethical issues. We will consider and critically evaluate arguments for and against certain practices, such as germ-line engineering, through an ethical lens by taking into account respect for persons and autonomy as well as the likely consequences of such practices. Finally, PHI 3641 delves into some of the psychological and social pressures that inhibit ethical behavior with an eye towards identifying strategies for combatting them and promoting ethical behavior.

The General Education Student Learning Outcomes (SLO's) divide into three areas: CONTENT – students demonstrate competence in the terminology, concepts, theories and methodologies used within the discipline; COMMUNICATION – students communicate knowledge, ideas and reasoning clearly and effectively in written and oral forms appropriate to the discipline; and CRITICAL THINKING – students analyze information carefully and logically from multiple perspectives, using discipline-specific methods, and develop reasoned solutions to problems.

Students will satisfy the CONTENT SLO by demonstrating a mastery of key ethical theories and some of their difficulties, the ability to identify features of a new technology or innovation likely to give rise to ethical issues, and the ability to identify and to anticipate inhibitors of ethical behavior. The COMMUNICATION SLO will be achieved by three short writing assignments (600-800 words each), two papers (1100-1300 words each), two exams, and regular participation in discussion sections. Students will be required to explain various ethical theories and to evaluate them and then to use these theories to evaluate the ethical appropriateness of some innovative practices. Students will also demonstrate achievement of the CRITICAL THINKING SLO through the short writing assignments and papers, which will be on assigned topics designed to test students' critical thinking abilities. These writing assignments and papers will be graded according to the rubric found on the last page of this syllabus, which specifies as criteria for assessment competent command of the relevant texts and material discussed in class, perspicuous identification of the issues raised by the assigned topics, and development of a response that cogently supports the students' claims with little or no irrelevance.

In short, at the end of the course, students will be able to:

- Explain and evaluate traditional ethical theories
- Apply those theories to ethical questions and issues, especially those concerning innovations
- Analyze, evaluate, construct, and present persuasive arguments for particular ethical positions
- Identify and describe some inhibitors to ethical behavior

Required Texts

Rachels, James and Stuart Rachels. *The Elements of Moral Philosophy*, 8th Edition. (McGraw-Hill, 2014)

Various articles posted on the web, which can be found on Canvas under the 'Pages' tab. Web addresses also appear in the syllabus, under the 'Meetings and Readings' section.

Various articles on Canvas, accessible in the 'Readings' folder, located in the 'Files' folder. *I highly recommend that you print these out and bring them to class, as I refer to them frequently and expect you to answer specific questions about the texts.*

Recommended texts and resources

On writing well generally:

Strunk, William and E.B. White. *The Elements of Style*, 4th edition. (Pearson, 1999).

The full text can be found here:

<https://docs.google.com/viewer?a=v&pid=sites&srcid=ZGVmYXVsdGRvbWFpbXicmVhdG9uc2V3YzR1fGd4OjQ1MmU3OWFiNzAzZTk2M2M>

On writing a philosophy paper:

Pryor, Jim. "A Brief Guide to Writing a Philosophy paper" (2008).

The pdf is available on Canvas, but it can also be found here:

http://philosophy.fas.harvard.edu/files/phildept/files/brief_guide_to_writing_philosophy_paper.pdf

University Writing Program:

The writing service offers one-on-one service with a tutor who will help students learn to become better writers and editors. It is free for all current UF students. Please see <https://writing.ufl.edu> for more information.

Evaluation

- 3 Short Writing Assignments, each 600-800 words long and worth 10 points. These will be short argumentative essays, in which you will explain an ethical theory or a potential innovative practice and develop and defend a position of your own regarding it.
 - Due dates: Monday, January 23rd
Friday, March 3rd (in discussion section)
Monday, April 17th

- 2 papers, each 1100-1300 words long and worth 20 points. These will be longer argumentative essays where you will offer more extended analysis of an ethical theory or a potential innovative practice, which will involve defending a position of your own AND responding to some potential objections.
 - Due dates: Monday, February 20th
Friday, March 31st (in discussion section)
- 2 proctored non-cumulative exams, each worth 15 points. The first exam will cover ethical theories, and the second will concern those theories and their application to innovations as well as inhibitors to moral behavior. The format for these will be short answer and short essay questions.
 - Exam days: Wednesday, February 15th
Thursday, April 27th from 12:30-2:30

Further things to note:

- (1) Course grades have two components. To receive writing requirement credit, a student must receive a grade of C or higher and a satisfactory completion of the writing component of the course.
- (2) We will evaluate and provide feedback on all written assignments with respect to grammar, punctuation, clarity, coherence, and organization.
- (3) Weeks 6, 7, and 8 are extremely busy. The midterm is during week 6, your first paper is due in the beginning of week 7, and you have a short writing assignment due in week 8. Plan accordingly.
- (4) No short writing assignment or paper will be accepted after its due date without penalty except by 24-hour prior arrangement with the instructor, Dr. Palmer, or a documented university approved excuse. UF's policy can be found here: <https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/1516/regulations/info/attendance.aspx>
- (5) There will be no make-up exams except by specific arrangement with the instructor, Dr. Palmer, a minimum of one week prior to the scheduled exam date, unless the student can provide a documented university approved excuse. UF's policy concerning acceptable excuses can be found here: <https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/1516/regulations/info/attendance.aspx>
- (6) All papers will be submitted through Canvas and subject to anti-plagiarism detection via Turnitin software.

The table below provides the grading scale for this course as well as the corresponding grade values. For more on UF's grading policy, see: <https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/grades.aspx>.

Grade Scale	Grade Value
100-93 = A	A = 4.0
92-90 = A-	A- = 3.67
89-86 = B+	B+ = 3.33
85-82 = B	B = 3.00
81-79 = B-	B- = 2.67
78-76 = C+	C+ = 2.33
75-72 = C	C = 2.00
71-69 = C-	C- = 1.67
68-66 = D+	D+ = 1.33
65-62 = D	D = 1.00
61-60 = D-	D- = 0.67
59-0 = E	E = 0.00

Course Policies

Attendance: Lectures: Not attending the lectures will negatively affect your grade. A failure to attend will result in missing discussions about the material and the opportunity to ask questions. I recommend in the strongest possible terms that you attend every lecture. Regular attendance correlates with higher grades.

UF's official policy regarding acceptable excuses for failing to attend can be found here: <https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/attendance.aspx>

Discussion sections: Attendance is **required** and **recorded** in these. More than 2 unexcused absences will result in a one-step reduction of the course grade (for example, a reduction of a B+ to a B). More than 4 will result in a two-step reduction, more than 6 will result in a full letter grade reduction, and so on.

Electronic Devices: Smart phones are not permitted; laptops and ipads are fine *so long as* they are being used appropriately for the course, e.g. to take notes or to consult course material. Anybody found violating these rules will lose the privilege of using electronic devices in the classroom. Three (3) infractions of this policy, whether committed by one student or by several, may result in banning of electronic devices for the entire class.

Tardiness: As a courtesy to your classmates, your teaching assistants, and me, please be on time. Should your tardiness become a problem, I reserve the right to ask you to leave and to refuse any assignments due that day.

Online Course Evaluation: Students are expected to provide feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing online evaluations at <https://evaluations.ufl.edu>.

Evaluations are typically open during the last two or three weeks of the semester, but students will be given specific times when they are open. Summary results of these assessments are available to students at <https://evaluations.ufl.edu/results>.

Academic Dishonesty

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://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/process/student-conduct-honor-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 or TAs of this course.

CANVAS E-learning Environment

This course is supplemented by online content in the e-Learning environment known as "Canvas." You can log in to Canvas and access the course site at <http://elearning.ufl.edu/>. If you encounter any difficulties logging in or accessing any of the course content, contact the UF Computing Help Desk at (352) 392-4537. Do not contact the course instructor regarding computer issues.

- Pdf readings are in ‘Readings’ folder under the ‘Files’ tab.
- Check the ‘Assignments’ tab for paper assignments and short writing assignments.
- Check the ‘Announcements’ tab for new course content and general information.
- See the ‘Pages’ tab for links to readings

If you encounter any difficulties logging in or accessing any of the course content, contact the UF Computing Help Desk at (352) 392-4537. Do not contact the course instructor regarding computer issues.

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 accommodations. Students with disabilities should follow this procedure as early as possible in the semester. Please do not hesitate to contact me during the semester if you have any individual concerns or issues that need to be discussed.

Counseling and Wellness Center

Contact information: <http://www.counseling.ufl.edu/cwc/Default.aspx>, 392-1575; and the University Police Department: 392-1111 or 9-1-1 for emergencies.

Meetings and Readings

Read all assigned material carefully before coming to class. **Make sure to read the article for each class that it is assigned:** i.e. if an article is assigned for more than one class, read it before *each* class during which we'll be discussing it. Be prepared to bring up any questions or objections you have and to join in a general discussion.

Wednesday, January 4th – Introduction
Friday, January 6th – Discussion section

Ethical Theory

Week 1: What is Morality? And Critical Thinking

Monday, January 19th – Rachels Chapter 1, “What is Morality,” pp. 1-15
Wednesday, January 11th – “Critical Thinking” (pdf)/Philosophical Writing
Friday, January 13th – Discussion section

Week 2: Cultural Relativism

Monday, January 16th – *No Class*
Wednesday, January 18th – Rachels Chapter 2, “The Challenge of Cultural Relativism,”
pp. 16-34
Friday, January 20th – Discussion section

Week 3: Egoism and Morality and Religion

Monday, January 23rd – Rachels Chapter 5, “Ethical Egoism,” pp. 68-88
*****Short Writing Assignment 1 Due*****
Wednesday, January 25th – Rachels Chapter 4, “Does Morality Depend on Religion,” pp.
52-67
Friday, January 27th – Discussion section

Week 4: Utilitarianism

Monday, January 30th – Rachels Chapter 6, “The Utilitarian Approach,” pp. 89-99
Nozick’s “The Experience Machine” (pdf)
Wednesday, February 1st – Rachels Chapter 7, “The Debate over Utilitarianism,” pp. 100-
116
Friday, January 3rd – Discussion section

Week 5: Deontological ethics

Monday, February 6th – Rachels Chapter 8, “Are there Absolute Moral Rules?” pp. 117-
129
Wednesday, February 8th – Rachels Chapter 9, “Kant and Respect for Persons,” pp. 130-
140
Friday, January 10th – Discussion section

Week 6: Virtue Ethics and Midterm

Monday, February 13th – Rachels Chapter 12, “The Ethics of Virtue,” pp.173-190
Wednesday, February 15th – *****Midterm Exam*****

Friday, February 17th – Discussion section: Paper 1

Ethics and Innovations

Week 7: Germ line engineering

Monday, February 20th – Savulesco’s “New Breeds of Humans: the Moral Obligation to Enhance” (pdf)

[Suggested Reading: Bostrom’s “Human Genetic Enhancements: a transhumanist perspective:

<http://www.nickbostrom.com/ethics/genetic.html>

*****Paper 1 Due*****

Wednesday, February 22nd – Council of Responsible Genetics’ “Position Paper on Human Germline Manipulation” (4 pgs.)

<http://www.councilforresponsiblegenetics.org/ViewPage.aspx?pageId=101>

Friday, February 24th – Discussion section

Week 8: Germline Engineering

Monday, February 27th – Sandel’s “The Case Against Perfection” (pdf)

Wednesday, March 1st – Sandel’s “The Case Against Perfection”

Friday, March 3rd – Discussion section

*****Short Writing Assignment 2 Due*****

March 6th-10th: Spring Break

Week 9: Predictive Policing

Monday, March 13th – National Institute of Justice Pearsall’s “Predictive Policing: the future of law enforcement?” (pdf)

The Marshall Report Chammah’s “Policing the Future” (22 pgs.)

<https://www.themarshallproject.org/2016/02/03/policing-the-future>

Wednesday, March 15th – NYTimes Room for debate: Can Crime be Ethically Predicted?

<http://www.nytimes.com/roomfordebate/2015/11/18/can-predictive-policing-be-ethical-and-effective/be-cautious-about-data-driven-policing>

Friday, March 17th – Discussion section

Week 10: Predictive Policing

Monday, March 20th – ACLU Stanley’s “Eight Problems with Police ‘Threat Scores’” (12 pgs.)

<https://www.aclu.org/blog/free-future/eight-problems-police-threat-scores>

ACLU Harwood and Stanley’s “Power loves the dark” (18 pgs.)

<https://www.aclu.org/blog/speak-freely/power-loves-dark>

Wednesday, March 22nd – Wrap Up/Paper Writing Discussion

Friday, March 24th – Discussion section

Week 11: Apple and privacy

Monday, March 27th – NYTimes Isaac’s “Explaining Apple’s fight with the FBI”
http://www.nytimes.com/2016/02/18/technology/explaining-apples-fight-with-the-fbi.html?_r=0

Comey’s op-ed “We could not look the survivors in the eye if we didn’t follow this lead” (3 pgs.)

<https://www.lawfareblog.com/we-could-not-look-survivors-eye-if-we-did-not-follow-lead>

Comey’s “Expectations of Privacy: Balancing Liberty, Security, and Personal Safety” (13 pgs.)

<https://www.fbi.gov/news/speeches/expectations-of-privacy-balancing-liberty-security-and-public-safety>

Wednesday, March 29th – Apple’s response in a customer letter (7 pgs.)

<http://www.apple.com/customer-letter/>

<http://www.apple.com/customer-letter/answers/>

ACLU Yachot’s “7 Reasons a Government Backdoor to the iPhone would be Catastrophic” (12 pgs.)

<https://www.aclu.org/blog/speak-freely/7-reasons-government-backdoor-iphone-would-be-catastrophic>

Friday, March 31st – Discussion section

*****Paper 2 Due*****

Ethical Inhibitors

Week 12: Obedience to Authority

Monday, April 3rd – Milgram’s “Behavioral Study of Obedience” (pdf)

Presley’s “The Present and Future Obedience to Unjust Authority” (3 pgs.)

<http://www.rit.org/authority/futureobedience.php>

Wednesday, April 5th – American Psychological Association’s “Obeying and Resisting Malevolent Orders” (2 pgs.)

<http://www.apa.org/research/action/order.aspx>

Friday, April 7th – Discussion section

Week 13:

Monday, April 10th – “Moral Muteness of Managers” (pdf)

Wednesday, April 12th – “Moral Muteness of Managers”

Friday, April 14th – Discussion section

Week 14:

Monday, April 17th – “Moral Muteness of Managers”

*****Short Writing Assignment 3 Due*****

Wednesday, April 19th – Review for final

FINAL EXAM: Thursday, April 27th from 12:30-2:30

GRADING RUBRIC FOR PAPERS

A	B	C	D	E
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overall, the paper does an excellent job of responding to the topic question and reflects a more than competent command of the relevant texts and material discussed in class. • The introduction does an excellent job of identifying the issues raised by the topic to be discussed in the rest of the paper and offers a clear thesis statement. • The main ideas of the paper are clear and convincing • All the content of the paper supports its main ideas with no irrelevant material. • The paper's claims are all well supported. • The argument advances in a manner that is easy to follow. • The paper contains very few structural, spelling, grammatical, or punctuation mistakes, and none of these affect the clarity or cohesiveness of the argument. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overall, the paper responds well to the topic question and reflects a competent command of the relevant texts and material discussed in class. • The introduction does a good enough job of identifying the issues raised by the topic to be discussed in the rest of the paper and offers a clear thesis statement. • The main ideas of the paper are for the most part clear and convincing. • Almost all the content of the paper supports its main ideas with no irrelevant material. • The paper's claims are generally well supported. • The argument advances in a manner that is for the most part easy to follow. • The paper contains few structural, spelling, grammatical, or punctuation mistakes, and none of these affect the clarity or cohesiveness of the argument. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overall, the paper provides a merely sufficient response to the topic question and reflects a less than competent command of the relevant texts and material discussed in class. • The introduction does not adequately identify the issues raised by the topic to be discussed in the rest of the paper or does not include a clear thesis statement. • The main ideas of the paper are only partially clear and convincing. • The content of the paper generally supports its main ideas, though there is some irrelevant material. • Only some of the paper's claims are well supported. • The argument is difficult to follow in places. • The paper contains some structural, spelling, grammatical, or punctuation mistakes, and these affect the clarity or cohesiveness of the argument. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overall, the paper only partially responds to the topic and reflects an incompetent command of the relevant texts and materials discussed in class. • The introduction does not identify the issues raised by the topic to be discussed in the rest of the paper or does not include a thesis statement. • The main ideas of the paper are only marginally clear and convincing. • The content of the paper tends not to support its main ideas, and there is a good deal of irrelevant material. • None of the interpretations on which the paper's claims are well supported. • The argument is difficult to follow or incomplete. • The paper contains structural, spelling, grammatical, or punctuation mistakes, and these affect the clarity or cohesiveness of the argument. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overall, the paper does not respond to the topic and fails to draw upon relevant texts and materials discussed in class. • The introduction does not identify the issues raised by the topic to be discussed in the rest of the paper or does not include a thesis statement. • It is unclear what the paper's main ideas are supposed to be. • How the content of the paper is supposed to support its main ideas is unclear, and there is far too much irrelevant material. • None of the paper's claims are well supported. • The argument is very difficult to follow. • The paper contains structural, spelling, grammatical, or punctuation mistakes, and these significantly affect the clarity or cohesiveness of the argument.