

# Introduction to Ethics (Spring 2023)

## Course Schedule

This schedule is intended as a blueprint or roadmap and is subject to change based on the needs of the class. Any changes will be announced in class and will be posted on Perusall

Date	Learning goals	Readings due	Assignments due
<b>Unit 1: The Good Life</b>			
<p>The first unit takes on the broadest view possible. In that it introduces philosophy, the study of ethics, and standards of good argumentation, all while challenging students to engage with one of the most fundamental questions of the human experience: what, if anything, constitutes a (the?) good life. During this unit we will also begin to engage with several “metaethical” questions, or question about whether or not or in what way ethics is possible in the first place.</p>			
<b>Introduction/Meta Ethics/Problems of Meaning</b>			
Week 0 (Jan 15)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Why do we educate ourselves?</li> <li>- Introduce course &amp; define course goals</li> <li>- Courseware (Perusall)</li> </ul>	<p><b>Required</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-None</li> </ul> <p><b>Recommended:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Plato, <i>The Euthyphro</i></li> </ul>	
Week 1 (Jan 23)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-What is “Ethics? What is “Philosophy”</li> <li>- Cultural Relativism/Question in Metaethics</li> <li>-The Problem of Meaning</li> <li>-Challenges: The Absurd/Nihilism</li> </ul>	<p><b>Required:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-This Syllabus</li> <li>- Midgley, “Trying out One’s Sword” (in class)</li> <li>- Nagel, “The Absurd”</li> <li>- Schopenhauer, “On the Vanity of Existence”</li> </ul> <p><b>Recommended:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Schopenhauer, “On the Sufferings of the World</li> <li>- Fassio, “How to Read Philosophy”</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Reading Check-In (In class)</li> <li>- Reflection Assignment</li> </ul>
Week 2 (Jan 30)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Sources of Normativity &amp; Meaning</li> <li>- Divine Command Theory</li> <li>-The Euthyphro Problem</li> <li>-Aristotle, Virtue, and the Function Argument</li> <li>-“Technomoral Virtues”</li> </ul>	<p><b>Required:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Plato, <i>The Euthyphro</i></li> <li>-Aristotle, <i>Nicomachean Ethics</i>, Books I &amp; II</li> <li>-Vallor, <i>Technomoral Virtues</i> (excerpts)</li> </ul> <p><b>Recommended:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Aristotle, <i>Nicomachean Ethics</i>, Books VI and X</li> </ul>	
<b>The Good Life--Problems and Solutions</b>			
Week 3 (Feb 6)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Nietzsche &amp; the Affirmation of Life</li> </ul>	<p><b>Required:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Schopenhauer, “On the Sufferings of the World” (pgs 1-2)</li> <li>-Nietzsche, <i>Gay Science</i> (Preface,</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Reflection Assignment</li> </ul>

		Sections 1-13, 19, 21, 23, 26, 29, 42-44, 56-58, 76, 98, 107-134, 143-168, 276-290, 341) <b>Recommended:</b> -Nietzsche, <i>Gay Science</i> , all of books I-III	
Week 4 (Feb 13)	- Ruth Chang, Simone de Beauvoir, and Existential Ethics	<b>Required:</b> - de Beauvoir, <i>Ethics of Ambiguity</i> , Ch 1 (1-9, 13-20) - Chang, "Hard Choices" (1-3, 10-20) - Chang, "Hard Choices (TedTalk)" <b>Recommended:</b> - Chang, "Hard Choices" (Full Text) de Beauvoir, <i>Ethics of Ambiguity</i> , Ch 1 (Full Text)	Reflection Assignment
<b>Narrative Ethics</b>			
Week 5 (Feb 20) -- BU Monday	- Narrative Ethics - Death	<b>Required:</b> - Velleman, "Well-Being and Time" - Bradley, "Well-Being and Death" (excerpts) - Youtube clips on death <b>Recommended:</b>	-
<b>Unit 2: Doing the "Right Thing"</b>			
One answer to the question from unit one concerning the good life is that a good life is one that is filled with good choices. But what makes a choice a good one? How are we to decide what counts as a good choice? In this unit we will explore two of the most influential answers to that question—one from the utilitarian tradition of Jeremy Bentham and John Stuart Mill, and one from Immanuel Kant			
<b>Utilitarianism and Consequentialism</b>			
Week 6 (Feb 27)	-Hedonism & Utilitarianism	<b>Required:</b> - Epicurus, "Letter to Menoeceus" - Bentham, <i>Principles</i> , Ch I & IV	Reflection Assignment
Week 7 (March 6) -- BU Spring Break		-	
Week 8 (March 13)	-Hedonism & Utilitarianism	<b>Required:</b> - <i>The Queen vs. Dudley &amp; Stephens</i> - Mill, <i>Utilitarianism</i> Sandel, "Utilitarianism"	
<b>Objections to Utilitarianism/Kant and Kantianism</b>			
Week 9 (March 20)	- Singer - Nozick	<b>Required:</b> - Singer, "The Solution to World Poverty" Nozick, "The Experience Machine"	Reflection Assignment
Week 10 (March 27)	- Kant	<b>Required:</b> - Le Guinn, <i>The Ones who Walk Away from Omelas</i>	-Midterm (Wednesday, March 22)

		- Kant, <i>Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals</i> , Ch 1 <b>Recommended:</b> Kant, <i>Groundwork</i> , Preface	
Week 11 (April 2)	- Kant	<b>Required:</b> - Kant, <i>Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals</i> , Ch 2 - Korsgaard, read "Skepticism about Practical Reason" <b>Recommended:</b>	Reflection Assignment
<b>Unit 3: Problems in Practical and Political Ethics</b>			
Though we have discussed real world cases throughout the semester, in this final unit, we will engage with practical ethics even more directly. We will survey a small collection of current and pressing social and political issues and apply the skills we've gained over the past several weeks to try to find better ways of answering them.			
<b>Topics in Political Philosophy &amp; Applied Ethics</b>			
Week 12 (April 10)	Rawls/Justice	<b>Required:</b> - Sandel on Rawls - Rawls, <i>A Theory of Justice</i> (pgs 1-30) <b>Recommended:</b> - Rawls, <i>A Theory of Justice</i> , Ch 1-6 & 11-13	
Week 13 (April 17) -- No BU Class Monday	- Colonialism & Race	<b>Required:</b> - Gordon, "Living Thought, Living Freedom" (Public Lecture) - Gordon, "Race and Racism" - Fanon on Violence & the Person <b>Recommended:</b> - Fanon, Concerning Violence Fanon, <i>The Wretched of the Earth</i> (Ch 6)	
Week 14 (April 24)	Feminism, Gender, and Queerness	<b>Required:</b> - De Beauvoir, <i>The Second Sex</i> (Introduction) - "What is Gender" (Philosophy Tube) Butler, "Performative Acts" <b>Recommended:</b>	- Reflection Assignment
Week 15 (May 1) -- Last Week of Class	Technology & Genetic Engineering	<b>Required:</b> - Arthur, <i>The Nature of Technology</i> (Ch. 1) - Sandel, "The Case Against Perfection"	