



# SUFFOLK UNIVERSITY

MADRID CAMPUS

## PHIL 119 M1 – ETHICS

### **Instructor Information:**

**Instructor:** Robert Greenan

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### **Course Information:**

**Catalog Description:** A systematic introduction to the major thinkers and their positions on the main issues of ethics, such as: What is moral? What are moral values? How should we live our lives? Are there objective, universal, absolute moral standards? If so, what are they, and what is their basis?

**Instructor's Additional Course Description:** The purpose of this course is to introduce students to, and give them a firm grounding in, the theoretical foundations of Ethics. From the Greeks to the twentieth century analytical movements, students will trace the differing treatment of concepts such as 'good', 'the good', 'right', 'wrong', 'evil', and the notion of justice. A large part of the course will emphasize the difference between Ethics and Metaethics and the practical consequences of there being such a difference.

**Prerequisites:** None

**Credit Hours:** 4

This course follows the US Federal Government's Credit Hour definition: "An amount of work represented in intended learning outcomes and verified by evidence of student achievement that is an institutional established equivalence that reasonably approximates no less than:

- (1) One hour of classroom or direct faculty instruction and a minimum of two hours of out of class student work each week for approximately fifteen weeks for one semester or trimester hour of credit, or ten to twelve weeks for one quarter hour of credit, or the equivalent amount of work over a different amount of time; or
- (2) At least an equivalent amount of work as required in paragraph (1) of this definition for other academic activities as established by the institution including laboratory work, internships, practica, studio work, and other academic work leading to the award of credit hours."

For full up-to-date statement:

[https://cihe.neasc.org/sites/cihe.neasc.org/files/downloads/POLICIES/Pp111\\_Policy\\_On\\_Credits-And-Degrees.pdf](https://cihe.neasc.org/sites/cihe.neasc.org/files/downloads/POLICIES/Pp111_Policy_On_Credits-And-Degrees.pdf)

To complete this course, students will need to dedicate, at a minimum, the following amount of time to the listed activities:

Assignment/Activity	Engagement Estimate	Engagement Hours
Course Readings	400 pages x 8 minutes per page	53
Review Lecture Notes	8 pages/lecture x 20 lectures x 5 min per page	13
Homework	Weekly reading reports x 15 (3 hours each)	45
Mid-Term Review Preparation		5
Mid- Term Exam Preparation		10
Final Exam Review Preparation		5
Final Exam Preparation		10
Class Attendance	3 hours x 15 weeks	45
TOTAL		<b>186 HOURS</b>

**Textbook/Course Materials:**

Ethics: Essential Readings in Moral Theory, George Sher (Ed).

*Please Note:* Readings from the textbook will be assigned in advance depending on the level of the class and the speed at which the material is covered to the satisfaction of the instructor. During the semester hand-outs will also be distributed for the purposes of helping students in the collecting of a coherent set of notes on the subject, and where it is deemed relevant, academic papers and newspaper articles which help give practical perspective to an abstract or obscure notion.

**Ethics Goals and Objectives:**

Goals	Objectives	Assessments
1. Principles & Reasoning: Students will understand key philosophical concepts and their connections in the active formulation of an ethical argument.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Students will be able to identify major ethical theories from the philosophical tradition.</li><li>2. Students will be able to understand and employ the key concepts of a theory and explain how these fit together to form an ethical argument.</li><li>3. Students will be able to identify the assumptions and implications of an ethical argument, even if not presented in a traditional philosophical format or theoretical vocabulary.</li><li>4. Students will be able to understand the distinction between ethics and social norms (laws, conventions, traditions, codes of conduct, professional standards, etc.)</li></ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The goals stated in this section will be assessed at each stage of the course. Exams questions will require students to show a clear understanding of major philosophical theories and to distinguish them from other theories.</li><li>• Research papers require that students can develop and defend a coherent argument demonstrating fluency in the ways the different concepts relate to each other.</li><li>• Class participation will show whether or not students can comprehend ethical arguments presented in non-typical forms as well as more traditional ones.</li><li>• This is vitally important. A particular question will be set involving some aspect of the distinction between law, morality, ethics, etiquette and social norms.</li></ul>
2. Textual Analysis: Students will demonstrate ability to use texts in the development or exposition of an argument.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Students will be able to analyze “texts” in a broad sense, including traditional works in philosophy as well as other contexts in which ethical arguments may arise: literature, film, op-ed articles, political speeches, conversation, etc.</li><li>2. Students will be able to choose relevant passages to interpret and evaluate a text.</li><li>3. Students will be able to show sensitivity and a capacity for insight into the perspective of the author of the text, even when disagreeing with the author’s argument.</li></ol>	At every point in the course, the instructor will be assessing the extent to which students can be critical and self-reliant in their choice of “outside” reading. Reference is made elsewhere in this syllabus to the importance of this skill. It is not enough to follow a set list of reading. To insure that students do this, specific class discussions will be geared towards assessing the extent to which students are exploring readings themselves, selecting passages to read, and sensitively interpreting these. Students will be required to bring their own suggestions to class regarding reading they feel may be of value to classmates.

<b>Goals</b>	<b>Objectives</b>	<b>Assessments</b>
3. Application: Students will apply ethical reasoning to specific problems through a variety of moral perspectives, with sensitivity for the complexity of an issue or sources of moral disagreement (personal, social, political, cultural).	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Students will be able to apply ethical theory to a specific controversy, either historical, contemporary, personal, or hypothetical.</li> <li>2. Students will be able to appreciate the complexity of perspectives and contexts in ethical situations and can address these in applying ethical reasoning.</li> <li>3. Students will be able to analyze levels of disagreement and agreement among participants in a particular ethical controversy and consider the implications and alternatives to decisions about how to respond to the question at issue.</li> </ol>	<p>Students will not be able to pass exams or achieve a satisfactory participation grade without showing an understanding of the subtleties and controversies surrounding case studies like for example, the Nuremburg trials.</p> <p>The instructor will be requiring written answers to questions, which may be uncomfortable and/or require students to show a sympathetic understanding of issues they already feel sure of.</p>
4. Experiential and continuous learning: Students will understand how learning and experiences inside and outside the classroom are connected and interdependent.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. It is vital that students can draw on their knowledge of philosophic theory to address contemporary ethical dilemmas found in their own immediate area of experience.</li> </ol>	<p>Students will be required to select some cultural phenomenon and/or film, exhibition etc. and report on the relevance of this activity to the class.</p>

#### Additional Information

“Students will be aware of key concepts in ethics and philosophical reasoning, and will use critical thinking to apply these concepts in order to evaluate situations and controversies.”

#### **PHIL 119 Course Goals & Learning Objectives:**

<b>Upon successful completion of this course, students will know/understand</b>	<b>Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to</b>	<b>How the student will be assessed on these learning outcomes:</b>
The meaning of the word philosophy.	Read independently, identifying sources and justifying their choice.	Mid-Term Exam Final Exam
The importance of distinguishing ethics from meta-ethics	Distance themselves from clichéd and simplistic moral viewpoints.	Reading reports.
The difference between the principle types of philosophy.	Speak with authority on the complexity of morality and back up their answers with reference to Plato, Aristotle and Hobbes.	Class discussion.
Have an extensive knowledge of the various schools of ethical thought.	Be able to apply their knowledge to the great moral questions of our age.	Research paper.

### **Assignments/Exams/Papers/Projects:**

Students will be evaluated in the following areas:

First Mid-Term Exam: 25%

Final Exam: 25%

Research Project(s): 25%

Informed Participation (Reading Reports):25%

Selected assignments in this course may be used by our accreditation team for institutional assessment purposes and will be handled confidentially.

### **Grading/Evaluation:**

Students are expected to be self-conscious in their pursuit of sources of information and knowledge for this course. It will be considered self-evident in this course that at a third level learning institution students need not be told to visit the library and seek out for themselves books and articles relating to subjects covered in class.

### **Course and Classroom Policies:**

- Students may not eat in class.
- Students may not chat to each other during class and will be asked to leave for doing so.
- Course work is not accepted late, or by e-mail unless this is expressly agreed upon with the instructor.
- Computers may be used only if specific permission is received.
- Students arriving more than five minutes late for class may be marked absent. Those arriving more than 15 minutes late may be refused entry. Late arrivers must make sure they are marked as present as this can not be done afterwards.
- Students may not record the class in any form.
- Students may not use mobile 'phones during class or be able to see their mobile 'phones during class.
- Students who use their 'phone to monitor the time ought to buy a watch for this purpose which can be worn on the wrist or placed on the desk.

### **Participation/Attendance Policy:**

The SUMC Student Handbook states the following:

*Once a student is registered for a course, attendance at every meeting of every class is expected, including those held in the first week of the semester. A maximum of two unjustified absences is permitted. Each additional absence will cause the final course grade to be lowered by one-third of a letter grade, i.e., from A to A-; A- to B+; B+ to B, etc.*

*Excessive absences in a course will have a negative effect on the final grade. When a student is absent, the quality of his or her work in a course will deteriorate since material missed in class sessions can rarely be made up satisfactorily, even though the student remains responsible for that work.*

*Please note that even when a student has a justified reason for missing class, such as illness, the negative academic impact on learning will be the same as if the absence were for spurious reasons.*

*In this course, any absence due to illness should be justified by a note from the student's physician or other health professional confirming the day(s) on which the student was unable to attend class. A written excuse from a student's host parent or residence supervisor is also acceptable.*

*In the event that a class meeting is unexpectedly cancelled, students will be expected to continue with readings or other assignments as originally scheduled. Any assignments due or class activities (e.g., a quiz, exam or presentation) planned for such a cancelled class are due at the next class meeting unless other instructions are communicated.*

In the case of a student not turning up for an exam without giving notice, the student must provide documentary proof not only that they visited the doctor, are incapable of sitting the exam, but also that they were physically incapable of contacting the university to advise of the issue.

### **Disability Statement:**

If you anticipate issues related to the format or requirements of this course, please meet with me. I would like us to discuss ways to ensure your full participation in my classroom.

If formal, disability-related accommodations are necessary, it is very important that you be registered with the Office of Disability Services (ODS) at the main Campus in Boston so that I am notified of your eligibility for reasonable accommodations. We can then plan how best to coordinate your accommodations. Check the ODS web site at [www.suffolk.edu/disability](http://www.suffolk.edu/disability) for information on accommodations.

### **Student Resources:**

SUMC provides a range of student services, both academic and personal. To learn more about course-related tutorials and academic workshops, refer to the SUMC Student Handbook, Section 2 “Academic Policies and Services”. Section 5, “Living in Madrid”, contains information on the medical and mental health resources, including an English-speaking therapist, available to you.

### **Midterm Review:**

At midterm, around week 6, you will be given a midterm grade based on your progress to date and performance on assignments and midterm exam. Midterm grades of C- or below will be reported to the Madrid Campus Academic Standing Committee, with an explanation of what I believe has contributed to that grade: excessive absences, poor time management or study skills, lack of effort, difficulty with the course material or with writing or language skills, etc. The Academic Standing Committee or I may contact you to suggest strategies for addressing these difficulties. I strongly encourage you to visit me during my office hours so we may discuss how you can be successful in this class.

### **Academic Misconduct:**

[www.suffolk.edu/about/mission-history/policies-procedures/academic-misconduct-policy](http://www.suffolk.edu/about/mission-history/policies-procedures/academic-misconduct-policy)

Suffolk University expects all students to be responsible individuals with high standards of conduct. Students are expected to practice ethical behavior in all learning environments and scenarios, including classrooms and laboratories, internships and practica, and study groups and academic teams. Cheating, plagiarism, unauthorized collaboration, use of unauthorized electronic devices, self-plagiarism, fabrication or falsification of data, and other types of academic misconduct are treated as serious offenses that initiate a formal process of inquiry, one that may lead to disciplinary sanctions.

Student work will be thoroughly examined for academic integrity and may be scanned using plagiarism detection software. A faculty member suspecting academic misconduct will contact the student using the Suffolk email address to schedule a meeting and will make all effort to do so within five business days of detecting the incident. During the meeting, the faculty member will present the documentation that led to suspected academic misconduct. Resolution of the incident will be according to the procedures outlined in the SUMC Student Handbook.

### **Academic Grievances Policy:**

[www.suffolk.edu/student-life/student-services/student-handbook/university-policies-for-student-cas-sbs/grievances-academics](http://www.suffolk.edu/student-life/student-services/student-handbook/university-policies-for-student-cas-sbs/grievances-academics)

### **Course Schedule:**

The schedule, policies, procedures, and assignments in this course are subject to change in the event of extenuating circumstances, by mutual agreement, and/or to ensure better student learning.

### **Weeks 1 & 2:**

- Introduction to class procedure, philosophic method and material to be covered.
- Ethics versus Metaethics.

### **Weeks 3 & 4:**

- General Introduction to Ethics. Ethics as branch of philosophy. "Right" and "Wrong" as concepts. Moral Relativism and Moral Objectivism. Morality and 'selfishness'. Textbook: Chapters 15, 18, 19, 21.
- Reference will be made to the following:
  - Pojman: Introduction and Page 19.
  - Herodotus: Custom Is King.
  - Ruth Benedict: A Defence of Ethical Relativism
  - Mackie: Part One: The Subjectivity of Values. Pages 15-48

### **Weeks 5, 6, 7, & 8:**

- Ethical Egoism.
- Human Nature in Thomas Hobbes and Human Nature in Jean-Jacques Rousseau. The "savage" and the "noble one". Textbook: Chapters 1, 2, 3, 7.
- Ayn Rand: A defence of Ethical Egoism
- James Rachels: A critique of Ethical Egoism.
- The idea of 'good' v the idea of 'the good'
- Hedonism. Cyrenaic and Epicurean schools
- Textbook: 47, 48, 51
- Plato: Republic 503e – 518b
- Friedrich Nietzsche: Chapter 40
- Robert Nozick: The Experience Machine
- Textbook: Chapter 46

### **Weeks 9 & 10:**

- Utilitarianism
- Act and Rule Utilitarianism
- Jeremy Bentham
- John Stewart Mill
- Textbook: Chapters 22, 23, 24, 28, 45
- Machiavelli

### **Week 10 – End:**

- Virtue, Morality and Religion. The 'beloved by the gods' problem. Secular morality and 'ethics' without 'religion'
- Aristotle: Virtue Ethics
- Alasdair MacIntyre: The Nature of the Virtues
- Mackie Page 186
- Pojman: 247-249
- Plato: The Euthyphro Problem
- Bertrand Russell: A Free Man's Worship
- Kai Nielson: Ethics without Religion
- Specific Ethical Issues