

PHIL 103: Introduction to Ethics

Instructor: Dr. Annette Martín (she/her)
Lecture Times: TR 11:00-11:50am
Location: Lecture Center A, Room A006
CRN: 27657
TA: Alex Denley (they/them)

Email: am92@uic.edu
Drop-In Hours: T 3:30-4:30pm, or by appt
Office: University Hall #1402
Class Dates: Aug 22-Dec 2, 2022
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Course Welcome

Welcome to PHIL 103!

Is work good for us, or is it a necessary evil? What does it mean to act freely if our very thoughts and desires are heavily shaped by society? Who is responsible for addressing systematic injustice? Should the scope of our moral concern be exclusive to humans, or should animals and the environment enter into our moral considerations?

In this course we will grapple with these and closely related questions as part of becoming familiar with central ethical concepts like value, well-being, agency, moral responsibility, and moral standing. We will focus on giving you a basic understanding of these core concepts while also working on developing your ability to express and explain complex philosophical ideas through writing and discussion. Ultimately, the goal is to give you an opportunity to critically engage with ethical questions that are relevant to living in a world that is deeply shaped by systematic injustice.

These topics and questions are important ones, and I hope we will make good progress on them this semester. But I also want to acknowledge that it can be difficult to balance coursework with work, family care, mental health, and other unexpected issues that may emerge, particularly in the context of a waning, but ongoing, pandemic. *If unexpected challenges arise, or you are struggling to keep up with coursework, or you are having trouble accessing resources, please come talk to me.* Likewise, if there are aspects of the course that result in barriers to your achievement, please let me know as soon as possible. This way we can make a plan to get you what you need.

Below you will find an overview of the major components of the course, and you will find more detailed information about policies on the Blackboard site. Depending on how the semester progresses, I may decide that I need to make changes to the syllabus. When that happens, I will post the new syllabus on Blackboard. The Weekly Contents section of Blackboard will always reflect the latest updates to help you stay on top of everything you need to be successful in this course.

My hope is that, working together, we can make this a meaningful, enriching experience.

Materials

Pre-Requisites: None

Readings: There is no required textbook for this course. Instead, readings that are not readily available online will be made accessible through the [Course Box](#), and posted in the Weekly Contents section of the Blackboard site.

Technology: Review the “Getting Started” section of our Blackboard course site for specific information about technological requirements for the course. Note that we will be using Acadly in this course.

Recitation/Discussion Section: You must be enrolled in a recitation/discussion section in addition to the lecture for this course. There are two recitation sections: Section 1 meets Fridays from 2:00-2:50pm in Burnham Hall #316, and Section 2 meets Fridays from 1:00-1:50pm in Taft Hall #313.

Course Goals

This course has been designed around three main aims:

1. To encourage sustained, critical engagement with ethical questions pertaining to issues of systematic injustice through independent reading and writing, as well as discussion
2. To familiarize you with a set of core ethical concepts (namely: value, well-being, agency, autonomy, moral responsibility, and moral standing) through application of these concepts to real-world issues
3. To build the skills of expressing and explaining complex ideas in writing

How We Will Achieve These Goals

Daily Reading: Unless otherwise specified, there will be a reading, listening, or viewing assignment for every lecture session. You can find the assigned material in the course schedule at the end of this document, as well as in the Weekly Contents section on Blackboard. Each of these materials will come with a corresponding journal assignment that is *due by midnight the day before each class* (see below).

Daily Journals: Unless otherwise specified, *for every daily reading there will be a daily journal assignment that will be due by midnight the day before each class*. These journal assignments will be graded for effort, and are intended to offer an informal opportunity to practice articulating complex ideas through writing, and to begin grappling with the ethical issues we will be discussing.

Note that each student will have four journal sick passes that can be used at their discretion to receive full credit for a journal they did not complete, no questions asked. *To use a sick pass, simply submit the Journal Pass Form that can be found on Blackboard under “Course Links.”*

Participation in Lecture: A key part of this course is regular engagement with philosophical ideas, both on your own and during class time. During lecture, you will be asked to actively engage with the ideas we are discussing through, e.g., participating in polls and quizzes, asking or submitting questions, and sharing ideas with neighboring peers. *I will primarily be using Acadly to track your engagement during lecture.*

Participating in Recitation/Discussion Sections: Learning philosophy requires doing philosophy, and recitation sections provide a key opportunity to practice doing philosophy. You are expected to regularly attend recitation sections and to be an active participant in those discussions. Note that contributing to discussion does not require having a perfect grasp of the material. On the contrary, these discussions should be an opportunity to seek clarification, solidify your understanding of the material, and begin refining your critical responses to the ideas we are discussing. Your TA will determine how they choose to assess participation in recitation sections.

Take-Home Exams: There will be four take-home exams in this course, one for each major unit of the course (see the course schedule at the end of this document for deadlines). You will be asked to explain core ideas from the unit in writing, as well as to clearly communicate some of your own ideas about the central debates. While these will be designed to be able to be completed during an exam period, you will have about two days to complete each exam. During this time you are allowed to consult readings, course materials, and discuss questions with your peers. *What is important is that you write up your answers on your own, and do so in your own words.* Further instructions will be included in the exams.

Course Reflections: There will be three reflection assignments in this course (pre-course, mid-course, and post-course). These reflections will offer a way of documenting how your ideas and skills develop throughout the course, evaluating your own performance in the course, and providing feedback about the course.

How Your Learning Will Be Evaluated

The grading system for this course is set up so that (i) it should be easy to get a B in the course if you are regularly putting in effort into improving your work, and (ii) so long as you submit something for an assignment by midnight on Dec 9 (and adhere to standards of academic integrity), the worst grade you will receive for that assignment is the equivalent of a D grade.

Grade Breakdown

- **Take-Home Exams** – 48% (12% each)
- **Participation** – 25%
 - *Lecture Participation* – 10%
 - *Recitation Participation* – 15%
- **Daily Journals** – 24% (1% each)
- **Pre-, Mid-, and Post-Course Reflections** – 3% (1% each)

To make this easier to calculate, I will make the course worth a total of 1000 points, and assign points to each component of the course according to this breakdown. You must then earn at least 900 points to receive an A in the course, 800 to receive a B, 700 to receive a C, and 600 to receive a D.

To illustrate, each daily journal assignment will be worth 10 points. There will be 24 journal assignments, for a total of 240 points in this category (hence, 24% of the overall grade). Likewise, each of the take-home exams will be worth 120 points, for a total of 480 points in that category (or 48% of the overall grade).

Grading Policies

Anonymous Grading: In an effort to reduce the effects of implicit and explicit biases, assignments will, when possible, be graded anonymously.

Late and Missing Assignments: *If you are experiencing challenges that will affect your ability to complete work on time, please contact me or your TA as soon as possible so that we can work out a plan.* Unless we work out an alternative arrangement, you will have *two weeks to submit late assignments (including take-home exams) for grading.* Late assignments submitted within one week of the deadline will receive an 8% point deduction, whereas late assignments submitted within the second week after the deadline will receive a 15% point deduction. After two weeks, the late assignment will automatically receive 60% of the possible points (or the equivalent of a D grade), unless it is determined that the submission violates standards of academic integrity. Again, if you need to work out an extension, please contact us as soon as possible so that we can do so.

Note that, in general, as long as *something* is handed in for an assignment, and you adhere to standards of academic integrity, the worst grade any assignment will receive is the equivalent of a D grade. The last chance to submit late assignments for partial credit is midnight on December 9. Missing assignments will receive zero points.

Grade Changes: If you think that an assignment has been graded unfairly, you have one week after it is graded and returned to request a re-evaluation of your work. Note that your work will be freshly evaluated, and your grade could increase, decrease, or stay the same. *To be fair to all students, changes will not be made to your overall grade unless there is an arithmetic error.* If you think there has been an arithmetic error in calculating your grade, you must notify me or your TA by midnight on December 9.

Plagiarism and Academic Integrity: In order for UIC to be a place where research and learning can thrive, we all share a responsibility to uphold the highest academic standards. Accordingly, you are expected to adhere to the [Community Standards](#) of integrity, accountability, and respect.

If you are struggling to keep up with course work, have doubts about how to properly cite sources, or are uncertain about how to meet academic standards, please come and talk to me or your TA for this course. If we do have evidence that you have plagiarized or otherwise violated Community Standards in this course, I will submit an incident report to the Office of the Dean of Students. They will investigate and determine an appropriate outcome. Please review the [UIC Student Disciplinary Policy](#) for additional information about the process by which instances of academic misconduct are handled.

Creating An Inclusive, Accessible Learning Environment

My goal, and the goal of this institution, is to create learning environments that are equitable, inclusive and welcoming. This will require all of us to do our part to be thoughtful, listen to one another, and engage respectfully with each other.

If there are aspects of the instruction or design of the course that result in barriers to your inclusion or achievement, please notify me as soon as possible.

Disability Accommodation Procedures: UIC is committed to the full inclusion and participation of people with disabilities in all aspects of university life. If you face or anticipate disability-related barriers while at UIC, please connect with the Disability Resource Center (DRC) at drc.uic.edu, via email at drc@uic.edu, or call (312) 413-2183 to create a plan for reasonable accommodations. In order to receive accommodations, you will need to disclose the disability to the DRC, complete an interactive registration process with the DRC, and provide me with a Letter of Accommodation (LOA). Upon receipt of a LOA, I will gladly work with you and the DRC to implement approved accommodations.

Content Warnings: The content and discussion in this course will engage with themes related to systemic injustice. At times this may be emotionally and intellectually challenging to engage with. I will do my best to flag especially graphic or intense content in the Weekly Contents section of Blackboard. If you suspect that specific material is likely to be emotionally challenging for you, I'd be happy to discuss any concerns you may have before the subject comes up in class.

If you ever feel the need to step outside during a class discussion you may always do so. If you do leave the room for a significant time, please make arrangements to get notes from another student if possible, or reach out to your instructor.

Civility: A major part of doing and learning philosophy is engaging in dialogue. It is important that we engage with each other in respectful and constructive ways, especially when dealing with subjects that are of great practical and political import. That doesn't mean that we can't disagree – disagreement is also essential to philosophy! – but that we must engage thoughtfully and respectfully. If you are uncivil or behave disrespectfully, you may be asked to leave the class for the remainder of the class period. (See the [UIC Student Disciplinary Policy](#).)

Slurs: Occasionally, our authors may use, mention, or refer to slurs. We will have a policy in class of not uttering slurs (even if only mentioning them, and not using them).

Other Course Policies and Campus Resources

The course Blackboard site has additional information about course policies, technological requirements, philosophical resources, and campus resources. Please review the site for access to this information. If you have any questions or need help accessing other resources, please come talk to me.

Course Schedule

Note that *there will be a daily reading journal due by midnight the day before each class* (unless otherwise specified; see above for guidelines). This schedule is subject to change as needed. Exams and assignments beyond the standard daily journal assignments are listed in bold.

Topic	Wk	Lecture / Date	Assignment
Intro	1	Aug 23	(First day of class)

		Aug 25	Concepción, Appendix on "How to Read Philosophy" Haslanger, Sects. I and II of "Oppressions: Racial and Other" (pp. 98-107)
		Aug 26	Pre-course Reflection due by midnight
VALUE & WELL-BEING	2	Aug 30	Shafer-Landau, pp. 21-30, 35-48 (Ch. 1, part of Ch. 2, and Ch. 3)
		Sept 1	Barnes, " Disability and the Good Life " (YouTube video)
	3	Sept 6	Elster, "Self-Realization in Work and Politics", pp. 97, 99- top of 106 (through the end of c. (i)) Gheaus & Herzog, "The Goods of Work (Other than Money!)", Sects. 1-3 (pp. 70-79)
		Sept 8	Overthink podcast Ep. 29, "Alienation" (transcript available here)
	4	Sept 13	Thompson (The Atlantic), "Workism is Making Americans Miserable" Illing (Vox), "Bullshit Jobs: Why they exist and why you might have one" North (Vox), "The Death of the Job"
		Sept 15	Take-Home Exam #1
AGENCY & AUTONOMY	5	Sept 20	SEP, Introduction to "Autonomy in Moral and Political Philosophy" 0:00-35:03 of " Are We Measuring Our Lives in All the Wrong Ways? " (an interview with C. Thi Nguyen on the Ezra Klein Show; transcript available at link)
		Sept 22	Second half of " Are We Measuring Our Lives in All the Wrong Ways? " SEP, " Feminist Hard Cases " (Sect. 2 of "Feminist Perspectives on Autonomy")
		Sept 23	Mid-term Reflection due by midnight
	6	Sept 27	Meyers, "Personal Autonomy and the Paradox of Feminine Socialization"
		Sept 29	Stoljar, "Autonomy and the Feminist Intuition." Skip the sections on "Rationality and Autonomy," "The Self-Knowledge Condition," and "The Internal Coherence Condition."
	7	Oct 4	Martin, "An Expressivist View of Women's Autonomy" (<i>Content Warning: eating disorders</i>)
	Oct 6	Take-Home Exam #2	
MORAL RESPONSIBILITY	8	Oct 11	SEP, Introduction to " Moral Responsibility " SEP, Excerpts from "Blame" (Introduction and Sects 2-2.3.0)
		Oct 13	Listen to 0:00-21:00 of " Roles and Responsibilities with Robin Zheng " (transcript available)
	9	Oct 18	Silvermint, "Resistance and Well-Being," Sections I, V, and VI
		Oct 20	Vasanthakumar, "Epistemic Privilege and Victims' Duties to Resist their Oppression," Sections 1-5.1 (up to p. 475)
	10	Oct 25	Harvey, "Victims, Resistance, and Civilized Oppression" (skip the section on paternalism on pp. 20-22)
MORAL STATUS		Oct 27	Andre and Velasquez, " Who Counts? "
	11	Nov 1	Take-Home Exam #3
		Nov 3	McMahan, "Challenges to Human Equality," pp. 81-93 (Part I and first 2 paragraphs of Part 2)
	12	Nov 8	Voting Holiday - No Class
		Nov 10	Singer, "All Animals Are Equal"
		Nov 11	Vote on topics for Week 15 by midnight
	13	Nov 15	Kittay, "At the Margins of Moral Personhood" (<i>Content Warning: Kittay uses the "r-word" throughout; we will not use this term in class.</i>)
		Nov 17	Whyte and Cuomo, "Ethics of Caring in Environmental Ethics:"

			Indigenous and Feminist Philosophies"
	14	Nov 22	Take-Home Exam #4
		Nov 24	Thanksgiving Break - No Class
TBD BY VOTE	15	Nov 29	TBD by vote: Ethics of abortion; ethics of protest; ignorance and culture
		Dec 1	TBD by vote (Last Day of Classes)
		Dec 2	Post-Course Reflection due by midnight
		Dec 9	Late assignments must be submitted by midnight for partial credit