

**PHI 305**  
**ETHICAL THEORY**  
**Fall 2007**

1. Contact Information:

NAME: Professor Douglas W. Portmore, Ph.D.

OFFICE: Coor 3362

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OFFICE HOURS: TTH 2:00-3:00 PM, and other days and times by appointment.<sup>1</sup>

2. Required Texts:

- David Copp (editor), *The Oxford Handbook of Ethical Theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006). ISBN: 0195147790. This text is available for purchase at the bookstore.
- Russ Shafer-Landau's "Values in a Scientific World," from his *Whatever Happened to Good and Evil* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004). This reading can be found under "Handouts" in Blackboard.

3. Blackboard and Email:

The course is supported by the ASU Blackboard website at myASU Courses (<http://myasucourses.asu.edu>). Blackboard is an online course management system. Using the Blackboard website, you will be able to access important course content online: handouts, announcements, lecture outlines, the syllabus, and the instructor's contact information. You will also be able to check your grades on various assignments and to send emails to your fellow students (but note that I receive a copy of any email sent through the system and will be monitoring emails to ensure that they pertain to the course). I will also use Blackboard to email you. Blackboard will be an important source of information, so please check Blackboard at least twice a week for new announcements.

In order to get key course announcements, you must not only check the Blackboard website but also regularly check your ASU-sponsored email. If you would like to use an alternate (non-ASU) email address, you must redirect your ASU email address to the one you more commonly use. To do so, go to [www.asu.edu/emma](http://www.asu.edu/emma). Click EPO update on the left, and then change your destination address. Make sure the email you redirect it to is currently active/valid. And please make sure that your mailbox is not full. As an instructor, I will not know if course emails are not getting to you, so the responsibility is on you.

For more information on using Blackboard, see the handout entitled: "MyASU and Blackboard."

4. Course Description: The course will introduce students to the nature, methods, and theories of moral philosophy. We will investigate a number of central questions, including: (1) What is

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<sup>1</sup> Unfortunately, I have a class immediately following this one that meets halfway across campus. This means that I will have to rush over to my next class as soon as our class ends. So I won't be able to talk to students after class. If you have something to discuss or a question to ask, please do so before class starts or during class, whichever is appropriate. Alternatively, you can always email me.

good/valuable? (2) What is the relationship between what it is right to do and what it is good to produce? (3) Does morality depend on God's volitions? (4) Are there moral facts? (5) Are moral properties natural or non-natural? (6) What role, if any, do intuitions play in moral inquiry?

5. Course Objectives: (1) To demonstrate to students how they can employ reason and argumentation to answer questions about value and morality. (2) To provide students with an understanding of the nature and methods of moral theorizing. (3) To foster students' abilities to think critically, analyze complex problems, evaluate arguments, and argue cogently for their own views. (4) To develop students' reading, writing, and oral communication skills. (5) To provide students with a survey of some of the leading contemporary positions in metaethics and normative ethics.

6. Course Requirements and Grading Policy:

Points will be allocated as follows:

- Attendance and Participation: 20 Points<sup>2</sup>
- Five Reading Responses (-5 for each 1 missing): -25 to 0 Points
- Argument Sketch for the Term Paper (optional): 0 to 20 Points
- Term Paper: 110 to 130 Points
- Midterm: 125 Points
- Final Exam: 125 Points

Total Points Possible: 400 Points

The plus/minus system will be used. Course grades will be assigned according to the following point distributions:

A+	400-388	Points	(100-97%)
A	387.9-372	Points	(96.9-93%)
A-	371.9-360	Points	(92.9-90%)
B+	359.9-348	Points	(89.9-87%)
B	347.9-332	Points	(86.9-83%)
B-	331.9-320	Points	(82.9-80%)
C+	319.9-300	Points	(79.9-75%)

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<sup>2</sup> But see item 8 below.

C	299.9-280	Points	(74.9-70%)
D	279.9-240	Points	(69.9-60%)
E	239.9-0	Points	(59.9-0%)

7. Attendance and Participation: Your grade will be a function of the following: (1) the extent to which you are regularly present, alert, and attentive in class; (2) the quality and regularity of your participation in class discussions; (3) the extent to which your participation indicates that you have prepared for class, having read the required readings, and (4) the extent to which you observe proper classroom etiquette—see below.

I will be taking attendance every class using a seating chart that will be established on the first day of class. Please remember to take your assigned seat each day. I will take attendance at 10:40 AM sharp. IF YOU COME IN LATE, IT IS YOUR RESPONSIBILITY TO COME UP AFTER CLASS AND INITIAL YOUR BOX ON MY SEATING CHART. IF YOU DON'T, YOU WILL BE COUNTED ABSENT.

Students are expected to participate regularly in class. It is partly the students' responsibility to make the class a lively one. And please note that good participation involves more than just speaking out during class; quality counts just as much as, if not more than, quantity. What you say should be informed and constructive. You should be able to speak intelligently about that day's reading assignment. During class discussions, you should be respectful of others even when they have radically different viewpoints. Do not monopolize class discussions; give others a chance to have their say. And, most importantly, please observe proper classroom conduct:

- Raise your hand and wait to be called on before speaking.
- You should make every effort to avoid coming in late or leaving early. If you ever are late for class, enter in complete silence and avoid walking between the class and the professor.
- Never leave during class unless you absolutely must. Leaving for a short break and then returning is not acceptable. The professor is not a TV set, but is a person addressing the class, and it is rude to leave when someone is addressing you.
- Likewise, it is rude and unacceptable to talk with classmates while the professor (or another student who has the floor) is talking.
- Visible and/or noisy signs of restlessness or inattentiveness are rude as well as disruptive to others—this includes, for instance, sleeping, reading the paper, listening to music, surfing the web on your laptop, etc. If you cannot sit still, stay awake, and pay attention, you should not be taking a college class and you will be asked to leave.
- Do not begin packing up your things or otherwise indicate that you think it is time for class to come to an end; wait for the professor or TA to dismiss class.
- Always address others in the class (including your fellow students) in a respectful manner.
- Failing to turn off pagers and cell phones before coming to class is unacceptable.

8. Failing the Course due to Excessive Absences:

Typically, a student who exceeds six absences will be given a failing grade (an “E”) for the course regardless of how he or she is doing on the other assignments. If the absences are excessive and yet the student can provide a documented medical excuse for those absences, then the student will receive an “I” or “W,” depending on the circumstances.

9. Readings and Reading Assignments: The readings for this course are extremely difficult, much more difficult than what undergraduate students are typically required to read. To compensate for this fact, we’ll be proceeding very slowly, taking as much as two weeks on some articles. But you’ll be expected to pull your own weight as well. You’ll be expected to read each article two to three times. Ideally, each article should be read twice before class: first, a quick read to get a sense of the article’s main thesis and argument and then a second careful read, taking notes on the following: (1) the author’s main thesis (or theses) and the arguments offered in its (their) defense; (2) definitions/explanations of key terms, distinctions, and examples that the author uses; (3) any potential objections or counterarguments that the author addresses along with his or her rebuttals; (4) your assessment of the author’s arguments; and (5) any thoughts or questions that you have about the reading. It is also a good idea to read the article again after we have finished discussing it in class.

There will be at least seven required readings, and possibly one to three more, depending on the pace at which students seem to be learning. You are required to turn in “reading responses” for five of these—which five is entirely up to you. For a given reading response, you need to briefly summarize the author’s main theses and arguments and then even more briefly respond to them—that is, give your reasons for agreeing or disagreeing with the author. At least two-thirds of each reading response should be dedicated to summarizing. These responses must be typed/printed on standard (8 ½ x 11) white paper, and they should typically be three to four double-spaced typed pages in length. Be sure to indicate your name in the upper right-hand corner. And please use a staple when turning in multiple sheets of paper. A reading response for a given article is due at the beginning of class on the day for which the article has been assigned.

The point of these reading responses is to motivate you to do the readings in advance and to get you thinking about the relevant issues prior to class. Please note that I do not expect you to fully understand the readings without the benefit of our class discussions. In those instances where you’re having difficulty understanding what an author’s thesis and/or argument is, state what you think it might be and/or why it is unclear to you. What I’ll be looking for is whether your responses demonstrate a serious attempt to come to grips with the relevant philosophical issues. The reading responses will be graded pass/fail. Those that are at least three pages long and demonstrate a serious attempt to come to grips with the relevant material will pass. Those that fail (because they are late, slipshod, or incomplete) will receive anywhere from -1 to -5 points—I will apply a -1 point penalty for each class period late.

If you fail to turn in and pass all five reading responses, I will deduct up to 25 points from your total score for the course (up to 5 points for each failed/missing reading response).

Given that the purpose of the assignment is only to get you thinking, and not to assess the quality of your understanding, I will not typically be commenting on your reading responses. I will, however, focus my efforts on providing you with helpful comments on those assignments where it will do you the most good (e.g., your midterm and your argument sketch).

10. Exams: There will be two exams: a midterm and a final—although the “final” is a final exam in name only, as it will concern only the material covered subsequent to the midterm and will count only as much as the midterm does. A week before each exam, I will pass out a finalized sheet of possible questions—a tentative list of all the possible exam questions for the course can be found on Blackboard under “Handouts.” Each exam will consist of a subset taken from the finalized lists. Please bring a bluebook and a PEN with you to the exam. The use of books or notes during the exam is NOT permitted. Please see item 21 below for the dates of the exam.

Ordinarily, no make-up exams will be given. However, exceptions will be granted if there are genuinely extenuating circumstances for which the student can provide supporting documentation. In the event of such circumstances arising, please contact me by e-mail as soon as possible—preferably before the regularly scheduled exam time. Those who fail to contact me within 48 hours will normally receive an “E” on the exam. Make-up exams must be taken within 7 days of the regularly scheduled exam.

11. Term Papers: Your term paper must consist in a thesis-defense paper between 2,000-3,000 words long on one of the assigned topics—see “Handouts” in Blackboard for the list of paper topics. Everyone taking the course for credit must write a term paper. Students may, if they wish, also turn in an argument sketch in order to get some feedback from me prior to turning in their term papers—see “Argument Sketch Template” and “Sample Argument Sketch” for guidance on constructing an argument sketch. Doing so is entirely optional, but students are strongly encouraged to do so. Note, however, that I will not accept argument sketches after their due date, which is given below (see item 21)—no exceptions.

Although this will be a thesis-defense paper, most of the paper topics require little more than an explication and critical assessment of some portion of the required readings. Students are not expected, nor encouraged, to do any readings outside of those that have been assigned for the course. If you do use any outside sources, please make sure to credit those sources properly, including listing them in a bibliography. Also, I would suggest consulting me regarding my opinion as to the quality and reliability of the outside source that you’re thinking of using. Please be sure to acknowledge sources properly using some standard [citation style](#), such as APA, MLA, or Chicago.

12. Policy on Academic Dishonesty and Violations of the Student Code of Conduct: Cheating and plagiarism will not be tolerated. My policy is to impose a failing grade for *the course* as a sanction for any act of academic dishonesty. In flagrant cases of academic dishonesty, I will recommend to the Dean or Director that the student be assigned a grade of XE. Furthermore, you should be advised that it is in the purview of the Provost and the Dean or Director to impose additional sanctions, including removal from the School or College, expulsion from the University, and the revocation of a degree. You should read ASU’s “[Student Academic Integrity Policy](#).”

For the purposes of this course, ‘plagiarism’ is defined as ‘using someone else’s work (his or her data, words, examples, arguments, terminology, original ideas, original sentence structures, original organizational schemes, etc.) in one’s own work without properly acknowledging the source’. Such use of someone else’s work without proper acknowledgment counts as plagiarism

even if it is done inadvertently or unintentionally. For a list of the sorts of things that I will consider to be plagiarism, see [here](#).

Students are also expected to abide by the “[Student Code of Conduct](#)” and to abide by the policies set forth in this syllabus, the university catalog, the schedule of classes, and the [Student Affairs web site](#). Misconduct will be reported to university authorities for appropriate action.

If you ever find yourself in a jam, where you feel like you have to resort to cheating, please come see me instead. I can be quite sympathetic and reasonable.

13. Policy on Incompletes:

Incompletes are given only when a student who is doing otherwise satisfactory work is unable to complete a course because of illness or other conditions beyond the student’s control. These are only given under the most extenuating of circumstances. For more information on university policy on the grade of “I” (incomplete), please see <http://www.asu.edu/aad/manuals/usi/usi203-09.html>.

14. Withdrawing from the Course:

An instructor may withdraw a student from the course with a mark of “W” or a grade of “E” in cases of disruptive classroom behavior.<sup>3</sup> “A student may withdraw with a grade of “W” from one or more classes beginning with the second week of classes through the tenth week of classes for the Fall and Spring semesters.” “Check the [Registrar's Semester Calendar](#) for specific course withdrawal dates.” Please refer to the ASU General Catalog for additional information.

15. Disability Accommodation:

If you have a physical, psychiatric/emotional, medical, or learning disability that may impact on your ability to carry out assigned course work – either papers or exams – I encourage you to contact Disability Student Resources (DRS). Their phone number is (480) 965-1234 (voice) or (480) 965-9000 (TTY). They can also be accessed on the web at <http://www.asu.edu/drs>. DRS will review your concerns and determine with you what accommodations are necessary and appropriate for you. All information and documentation of your disability is confidential and will not be released without your permission.

16. Policy on Late Work:

I am under no obligation to accept late work, and will not, under any circumstances, accept late argument sketches. And I will not accept work of any kind that is more than a week late, except under the most extenuating circumstances. Late work will be penalized for each day late. Late work must be submitted in class or electronically to [douglas.portmore@asu.edu](mailto:douglas.portmore@asu.edu) either as an Microsoft Word document (with .doc extension) or as a file in Rich Text Format (with .rtf extension).

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<sup>3</sup> As stated in the [Student Enrollment Services Policies and Procedures Manual](#) (SES), “[a]n instructor may withdraw a student from a course with a mark of ‘W’ or ‘E’ when the student’s behavior disrupts the educational process. Disruptive classroom behavior for this purpose is defined by the instructor.” See SES 201-19.

17. Getting Help: I'm more than happy to go out of my way to help those who are eager to learn. I am also happy to make appointments with students for whom my office hours are inconvenient. Please don't hesitate to schedule an appointment. To do so, you need only e-mail me. If you are not doing as well as you would like in the course and need suggestions on how to improve, please come see me immediately. If you don't come see me within a week of receiving a grade on some assignment, I will assume that either you are satisfied with your performance or that you know what you need to do to improve.
18. Getting Help with Writing: For students who need help with writing their papers, I suggest all of the following: (1) reading my "[Tips on Writing a Philosophy Paper](#)," (2) reading Strunk's [The Elements of Style](#), (3) coming to see me during office hours for help with a thesis, an outline, or a partial draft, and (4) setting up an appointment with a tutor at the [Writing Center](#).
19. Footnote 18 Contracts: The course may be taken for honors credit. In order to receive honors credit for my PHI 305, the student must complete all of the course requirements, including writing a longer term paper (one that is at least 3,500 words) that makes use of up to two additional readings, and the student must earn at least an A- for the course and at least a B+ for the term paper to receive honors credit. After deciding on a paper topic, the student is expected to consult with the instructor about the paper and about what, if any, additional readings are appropriate. This consultation must take place on or before the due date for argument sketches. If not, the student will not receive honors credit. These Footnote 18 contract requirements are integrated with the course requirements such that the student's performance on the longer term paper will be reflected in the final grade for the course whether or not the student receives honors credit.  
It's the student's responsibility to file the necessary petitions.
20. My Expectations:
- Students are expected to check their email and Blackboard regularly.
  - Students are expected to spend an average of 1½ hours outside of class working on class materials for each hour spent inside of class.
  - Students are expected to abide by the policies concerning student conduct set forth in the university catalog and the schedule of classes.
  - Students are expected to use a word-processor for all written assignments.
  - Students are expected to have, or be willing to acquire, basic computer skills. Students will need to be able to use Internet Explorer (or other web browser), Adobe Acrobat Reader, and some sort of word processing software.
  - Students are expected to do the assigned readings prior to coming to class, and students are responsible for all the material covered in the assigned readings even if not all of that material is discussed in class.
  - Students are expected to complete assigned work on time.
  - Students are expected to be present and on time for every class meeting or to have a very good excuse. Students who miss a class even for a legitimate reason are, nonetheless, responsible for the material covered in that class, and they are also responsible for being apprised of that day's announcements. Students that miss class should obtain lecture notes from a fellow

student and see me if they have any questions concerning the material that they missed. They should also check the course web site for any announcements that they may have missed.

- i. Students are expected to participate; it is partly the students' responsibility to make the course a lively one.
- j. Students are expected to be courteous to and respectful of both the professor and their fellow classmates.

21. Important Dates:

08/21/07: First class.

09/06/07: No class. (I'll be away at a conference.)

10/04/07: Finalized list of possible questions for the Midterm Exam distributed.

10/11/07: **Midterm Exam.**

10/26/07: Course Withdrawal Deadline (in person).

10/28/07: Course Withdrawal Deadline (ASU Interactive and SunDial).

11/13/07: Argument Sketches Due (optional). These must be submitted electronically to [douglas.portmore@asu.edu](mailto:douglas.portmore@asu.edu) by 10:00 AM (note the time) on this day either as MS Word documents (with .doc extensions) or as files in Rich Text Format (with .rtf extensions).

11/22/07: Thanksgiving

11/29/07: **Term Papers Due.** Finalized list of possible questions for the Final Exam distributed.

12/04/07: Last class.

12/04/07: Complete Withdrawal Deadline.

12/7/07: **Final Exam** on Friday from 10:00-11:50 AM in Coor L1-88.

22. Lectures Outlines: I use PowerPoint presentations during class. Redacted versions of these PowerPoint presentations are available on Blackboard under "Lecture Outlines." These lecture outlines are made available to you so as to facilitate your note-taking and to make it easier for you to participate in class discussions. The lecture outlines are available in Rich Text Format so that you can manipulate them using a word processor. Some students print them out and take notes on them during class. Other students take notes on their laptops in class, using these lectures outlines as their starting off points. Note, though, that the lecture outlines are redacted, such that certain key words, phrases, and examples are sometimes replaced with ellipses ('...'). Also, please note that you should do more than just fill in for the ellipses. The PowerPoint presentations are only *outlines* of my lectures. You should take notes on the entire lecture, using these outlines as an organizational guide.

23. Assigned Readings:

These are the assigned readings in the likely order that we will read them. Due dates for the assigned readings will be announced on Blackboard. This list is tentative. I may need to make additions, deletions, and/or substitutions as we proceed through the semester depending on the pace at which students are learning. Page references are to those in Copp's *The Oxford Handbook of Ethical Theory*.

a. Geoffrey Sayre-McCord's "Moral Realism," pp. 39-62.

b. Jonathan Dancy's "Nonnaturalism," pp. 122-146, skipping or skimming sections 2 and 3.

- c. Russ Shafer-Landau's "Values in a Scientific World," from his *Whatever Happened to Good and Evil* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004). This reading can be found under "Handouts" in Blackboard.
- d. Philip L. Quinn's "Theological Voluntarism," pp. 63-90.
- e. Michael R. DePaul's "Intuition in Moral Inquiry," pp. 595-623.
- f. Thomas Hurka's "Value Theory," pp. 357-379.
- g. David O. Brink's "Some Forms and Limits of Consequentialism," §§ 1-9, pp. 380-401.
- h. David O. Brink's "Some Forms and Limits of Consequentialism," §§ 10-20, pp. 401-423.
- i. David McNaughton and Piers Rawling's "Deontology," pp. 424-458, skipping or skimming sections 4 and 5.

24. Keys to Succeeding in this Course:

- (1) Turn in reading responses for the first five required readings. You don't want to have to turn in reading responses during the later part of the course when you'll be busy writing your term paper.
- (2) Write up answers to the possible exam questions as we progress through the course. Come see me immediately if you're at all unsure as to what the correct answer is. (You can use these written up answers to study for the exams.) Form study groups with your fellow students.
- (3) Turn in an argument sketch so as to get some useful feedback from me before you start writing your term paper.
- (4) Make sure you know the course material pertaining to your paper topic extremely well. If you don't, come see me for help.
- (5) Make sure you read my "Tips on Writing a Philosophy Paper" before you start work on your term paper.
- (6) Attend class regularly, participate in class discussions, print out the lecture outlines before coming to class, and take thorough notes during class, using the lecture outlines.