

PHI 305 (FALL 2010): ETHICAL THEORY

1. Contact Information:

NAME: Professor [Douglas W. Portmore](#), Ph.D.

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E-MAIL: douglas.portmore@asu.edu (Please put “PHI 305” in the subject line. Use email for only quick logistical questions about the course. Questions about the philosophical material need to be raised in class or during office hours.)

OFFICE HOURS: See “Contacts” under the course’s Blackboard website at myASU Courses (<http://myasucourses.asu.edu>).

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. It’s available as a PDF file and you’ll need [Adobe Reader](#) to read it, which can be downloaded for free by clicking on the link provided.
- You will also need two [Examination Blue Books](#) (size 8½ x 7 inches)—one for each exam.

3. Blackboard and Email:

Blackboard/myASUCourses (<http://myasucourses.asu.edu>) is one of ASU’s Course Management Systems. You’ll need to access this site to obtain important course content: handouts, announcements, lecture outlines, and my contact information. You are expected to check the course’s Blackboard website at least twice a week. If you need help using Blackboard, please see: <http://help.asu.edu/search/node/bb9>.

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 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:

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| ▪ Attendance and Participation: | 20 Points |
| ▪ Argument Sketch or Thesis Statement (optional): | 0 Points |
| ▪ Term Paper: | 130 Points |
| ▪ Exam I: | 125 Points |
| ▪ Exam II: | <u>125 Points</u> |
| ▪ Total Points Possible: | 400 Points |

NO EXTRA CREDIT ASSIGNMENTS WILL BE OFFERED!

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%)
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 properly 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. Please sit in roughly the same place each class. I will take attendance at 10:45 AM sharp. IF YOU COME IN LATE, IT IS YOUR RESPONSIBILITY TO COME UP AFTER CLASS AND INITIAL YOUR BOX ON MY ROSTER. 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, observe proper classroom conduct:

- Raise your hand and wait to be called on before speaking.
- 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.
- Talking with classmates while the professor (or another student) has the floor is unacceptable.
- 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 may 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 to dismiss the 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 quite difficult, perhaps more difficult than what undergraduate students are typically required to read. To compensate for this fact, we'll be proceeding very slowly. Nevertheless, 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 the argument for it 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 and distinctions 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.
10. Lectures: My lectures go well beyond just an explication of the readings. I will often critically assess the arguments presented in the readings, and I will often introduce arguments, definitions, and distinctions that can't be found in the readings. Doing the readings cannot, therefore, substitute for coming to class. However, it is essential to do the readings and to do so on time. Otherwise, you will not be adequately prepared for the lectures.

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 to facilitate your note-taking. The lecture outlines are available in Rich Text Format (.rtf) 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 lecture outlines as their starting points. Note, though, that the lecture outlines are redacted, such that certain crucial words, phrases, and examples are missing. These omissions are indicated in the lecture outlines by the following: "[Redacted]." You should do more than just fill in the redacted portions of the outlines. The PowerPoint presentations are, after all, only *outlines*. You should take notes on the entire lecture, using these outlines as organizational guides. I do not distribute my PowerPoint presentations to students under any circumstances.

At the end of each lecture outline, you'll find a tentative list of all the possible exam questions pertaining to that lecture.

11. Exams: There will be two exams. A week before each exam, I will pass out a finalized sheet of possible questions for that specific exam. These will be taken (with perhaps a few corrections and/or clarifications) from the lists of possible exam questions that appear at the end of each lecture outline. Each exam will consist in a subset of questions taken from these finalized lists. Each exam will cover only the material subsequent to the previous exam (or, in the case of the first exam, the material subsequent to the start of the semester). Please see item 21 below for the dates of the exams. 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 of the exam will normally receive an "E" on the exam. The make-up exam will consist in a comprehensive final exam taken during the regularly scheduled final exam. The score received on this comprehensive final exam will substitute for the zeros received on any missed exams from which the student has been excused. You do not have to take the final exam unless you miss, and are excused from, one or more of Exams I and II. You may not take the final unless you have been excused from one or more of the first two exams.

Important instructions regarding the exams:

- a. Bring a new and unused EXAMINATION BLUE BOOK to each exam. Do not write anything on or in this examination blue book, not even your name, prior to the start of the exam. It must be the correct size: 8½ x 7 inches. DO NOT rip out pages from your blue book. If your blue book has missing pages, it will not be counted.
- b. Right before each exam, you will need to go up to the front of the room and exchange the blue book that you brought with you for one that has been stamped by me. If you turn in a blue book that has not been stamped, you will not receive any credit for that exam. Having an examination blue book that hasn't been stamped with you while taking the exam will be construed as cheating. EACH OF YOUR EXAMINATION BLUE BOOKS MUST BE STAMPED.
- c. BRING YOUR OFFICIAL ASU ID WITH YOU to the exam. You may be asked to present your ID at any time during the exam and/or when you turn in your exam.
- d. USE A PEN THAT WRITES IN PERMANENT INK for the exam. You must write in pen. If you write in pencil or in erasable ink, you forfeit the right to contest your score on that exam.
- e. BRING THE SHEET OF POSSIBLE QUESTIONS WITH YOU to each exam. You must bring this with you. I will not pass out any questions at the exam but only write on the board the letters/numbers of the questions to which you must respond. You must never write any notes on this sheet of questions, not before the exam or during the exam. Having notes on your sheet of questions while taking the exam will be construed as cheating and handled accordingly.
- f. WRITE YOUR NAME AND ASU ID NUMBER ON EACH EXAMINATION BLUE BOOK.
- g. The use of a pager, a computer, a calculator, a cell phone, or any other unauthorized electronic device during the exam will be construed as cheating. All unauthorized electronic devices should be turned off and stowed away out of sight. The visible presence of notes or books on or around your desk will be construed as cheating. All books, papers, and notes should be stowed away out of sight in some closed-up bag. YOU SHOULD HAVE ONLY THE FOLLOWING FOUR THINGS WITH YOU WHILE TAKING THE EXAM: (1) ONE OR MORE STAMPED BLUE EXAMINATION BOOKS, (2) THE SHEET OF POSSIBLE QUESTIONS WITHOUT ANY NOTES WRITTEN ON THEM, (3) A PEN, AND (4) YOUR ASU ID.
- h. I reserve the right to inspect your blue books during the exam to ensure that they are stamped and contain no crib sheets tucked inside them.

12. 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 a thesis statement or 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 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 material from the lectures and readings. Students are not expected to do any readings outside of those that have been assigned for the course, although there are some optional readings that are given under “Online Readings” that some students may find useful. 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 their quality if they're not one of the optional readings. Please be sure to acknowledge sources properly using some standard [citation style](#), such as APA, MLA, or Chicago.

You must read my “[Tips on Writing a Philosophy Paper](#)” and review my “[Grading Rubric for Philosophy Papers](#)” before you commence work on your term paper. Your paper must be stapled in the

upper left-hand corner with both a signed [Cover Sheet](#) followed by the [Grading Rubric for Philosophy Papers](#) attached to the front.

13. Policy on Academic Dishonesty and Violations of the Student Code of Conduct: Academic dishonesty will not be tolerated. My policy is to impose a failing grade for *the course* as a sanction for any violation of ASU's [Academic Integrity Policy](#). If a student guilty of a violation tries to withdraw from the course with a 'W' to avoid my sanction of an 'E', I will have the student reinstated in the course. I will also report any violation to the Assistant Dean for Academic Affairs using the following form: [Faculty Academic Integrity Violation Form](#). Depending on the circumstances, I may, in addition to imposing a failing grade for the course, recommend a more severe sanction, such as an XE for the course (failure due to academic dishonesty, which will be noted on the student's transcript), suspension, or expulsion. The Assistant Dean may also impose an additional and more severe sanction even if I don't recommend one.

You should carefully review the policies and resources on the following two websites: <http://provost.asu.edu/academicintegrity> and <http://clas.asu.edu/students/ai>. The following is quoted from the [Student Obligations to Academic Integrity](#) section of the [Academic Integrity Policy](#): "Each student must act with honesty and integrity, and must respect the rights of others in carrying out all academic assignments. A student may be found to have engaged in academic dishonesty if, in connection with any Academic Evaluation or academic or research assignment (including a paid research position), he or she:

- A. Engages in any form of academic deceit;
- B. Refers to materials or sources or uses devices (e.g., computer disks, audio recorders, camera phones, text messages, crib sheets, calculators, solution manuals, materials from previous classes, or commercial research services) not authorized by the instructor for use during the Academic Evaluation or assignment;
- C. Possesses, reviews, buys, sells, obtains, or uses, without appropriate authorization, any materials intended to be used for an Academic Evaluation or assignment in advance of its administration;
- D. Acts as a substitute for another person in any Academic Evaluation or assignment;
- E. Uses a substitute in any Academic Evaluation or assignment;
- F. Depends on the aid of others, including other students or tutors, in connection with any Academic Evaluation or assignment to the extent that the work is not representative of the student's abilities;
- G. Provides inappropriate aid to another person in connection with any Academic Evaluation or assignment, including the unauthorized use of camera phones, text messages, photocopies, notes or other means to copy or photograph materials used or intended for Academic Evaluation;
- H. Engages in [Plagiarism](#);
- I. Uses materials from the Internet or any other source without full and appropriate attribution;
- J. Permits his or her work to be submitted by another person in connection with any Academic Evaluation or assignment, without authorization;
- K. Claims credit for or submits work done by another;
- L. Signs an attendance sheet for another student, allows another student to sign on the student's behalf, or otherwise participates in gaining credit for attendance for oneself or another without actually attending;
- M. Falsifying or misrepresenting hours or activities in relationship to an internship, externship, field experience, clinical activity or similar activity; or
- N. Attempts to influence or change any Academic Evaluation, assignment or academic record for reasons having no relevance to academic achievement."

Students must also comply with the "[Student Code of Conduct](#)" and 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.

14. 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 his or her 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>.

15. 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.¹ The student may also withdraw him- or herself from the course. These "course withdrawals may be processed without college approval through the tenth week of fall and spring semesters.... Refer to the [University Registrar's Office Semester Calendar](#) for specific deadline dates." For more information, please [ASU's general policy on withdrawal from classes](#). A student who withdraws from the course in an attempt to avoid an 'E' (or 'XE') that was imposed as a sanction for a violation of the [Academic Integrity Policy](#) will be reinstated in the course and receive an 'E' (or 'XE'), not a 'W', for the course.

16. 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, I encourage you to contact the Disability Resource Center (DRC)—see <http://www.asu.edu/studentaffairs/ed/drc/>. The DRC will review your concerns and will work with you to determine 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.

17. 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 either as a Microsoft Word document (with .doc extension) or as a file in Rich Text Format (with .rtf extension).

18. 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.

19. 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](#).

¹ As stated in the [University Student Initiatives Manual](#) (USI), "[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 USI 201-10.

20. Honors Contracts: This course may be taken for honors credit by students in the Honors College. In order to receive honors credit for my PHI 305, the student must complete all of the course requirements and write 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 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 and by the appropriate deadlines.
21. Important Dates:
- 08/20/10: First class.
 - 09/06/10: Labor Day Holiday—no class.
 - 10/01/10: Finalized list of possible questions for the Midterm Exam distributed.
 - 10/08/10: **Exam I.**
 - 11/03/10: Course Withdrawal Deadline
 - 11/12/10: Thesis Statement/Argument Sketches Due (optional). These must be submitted electronically to douglas.portmore@asu.edu by 9:00 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).
 - 11/26/10: Thanksgiving Holiday—no class.
 - 11/29/10: **Term Papers Due.** Finalized list of possible questions for the Final Exam distributed.
 - 12/06/10: **Exam II.** Last class.

There will also be a make-up exam (a comprehensive final exam) for those who have been excused from one or more of Exams I-III during the regularly scheduled final exam time, which is I believe on Monday, December 13, 2010, from 9:50-11:40 AM in our regular room. Please see the [Final Exam Schedule](#) to confirm this.

22. 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. Douglas W. Portmore's "Consequentialism," forthcoming in Christian Miller (ed.), *Continuum Companion to Ethics*.
 - h. David O. Brink's "Some Forms and Limits of Consequentialism," §§ 1-9, pp. 380-401.
 - i. David O. Brink's "Some Forms and Limits of Consequentialism," §§ 10-20, pp. 401-423.
 - j. David McNaughton and Piers Rawling's "Deontology," pp. 424-458, skipping or skimming sections 4 and 5.

23. Keys to Succeeding in this Course:

- (1) Do the assigned reading and on time.
- (2) Attend class faithfully, sit up toward the front of the room, pay attention, participate in class discussions, and don't have any distractions in front of you during class, such as a newspaper, a magazine, or your laptop with your email client or web browser open.
- (3) Print out the lecture outlines before coming to class, and take thorough notes during class using the lecture outlines as a guide. Be sure to do more than just fill in the redacted portions of the lecture outlines.
- (4) After each class, review the relevant possible exam questions that are to be found at the end of each lecture outline and write up responses to the questions that we covered in that class BEFORE the start of the next class. If you have any questions regarding how to best respond to those questions, be prepared to ask your questions at the start of the next class and/or to bring your written responses to our office hours so that we can look them over to ensure that you are adequately understanding the material. We are happy to look over written-up answers to the possible exam questions during office hours, but only if it's more than eight days prior to the exam. Within the eight days prior to an exam, we are happy to help you with the possible exam questions, but we won't read over any written responses.
- (5) Adopt the attitude that studying for the exam is an ongoing process, something that you should be spending at least 4 hours each week doing. It is not sufficient to cram a day or two before the exam; you will not be able to absorb all the material in that amount of time.
- (6) If you're having trouble with the material, then come see me immediately. If you did poorly on an exam (or just didn't do as well as you would like), then come see me immediately and bring your exam and all the notes and materials that you used to prepare for that exam with you so that I can figure out how you can best improve. Note that if you wait until the end of the semester to come see me, there will be little that I can do at that point to help you turn things around. So please come see me early on. Again, there is no extra credit offered in the course, so if you don't turn things around early on, there may be nothing that you can do to salvage a decent grade in the course.
- (7) Turn in an argument sketch so as to get some useful feedback from me before you start writing your term paper.
- (8) Make sure you know the course material pertaining to your paper topic extremely well. If you don't, come see me for help.

24. Sensitive Material: The course will cover material that some may consider sensitive. This includes but is not limited to the definition of 'adultery' and whether it encompasses fellatio with someone other than one's lawful spouse, the evolutionary origins of male nipples and the female clitoris, the possibility that God doesn't exist and that you don't have an immortal soul, and other such potentially sensitive topics. The professor will call into question certain religious beliefs and will challenge students to think critically about their religious beliefs. The professor may also sometimes use profanity if it seems useful in illustrating some point.