

Syllabus
PHIL 223-12 (3 Cr.)
Medical Ethics
Fall 2023

Instructor: Dr. Kristopher G. Phillips

Office: Pray Harrold 702-B

Student Hours: M: 10a-11a, T: 12:00p-3:00p, W: 10a-11a & also by appointment

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Class Meets:

MW 2:00p-3:15p in Marshall 115

COURSE DESCRIPTION: An examination of the relationships between contemporary values in the medical profession and traditional ethical values. Students will engage in a discussion of the metaethical, normative and applied ethical questions relevant to moral philosophy and identify ways to put moral theory to work in the practice of medicine through the consideration and critical examination of controversial issues in the medical field.

This course fulfills the *Humanities Knowledge Area* for the General Education Program.

Course Learning Outcomes (GE):

- Contextualize and think critically about texts, ideas, and genres in the humanities.
- Use and construct arguments.
- Reflect on personal growth with respect to imagination, empathy, or social and political agency using the methods of the humanities.
- Draw connections between course content and contexts outside of the classroom using the disciplinary tools of the humanities.

Evaluation of these learning outcomes will be done through papers, in-class assignments and weekly reading responses.

TEXTS: All required course materials will be made available on Canvas. Please ensure that you have some way to access the texts in and during class – whether that is through a laptop, tablet, or by printing out the papers and bringing them to class, we will work through the texts together.

SOME GENERAL ADVICE: This course presupposes a willingness to work hard and think critically about some very difficult problems. Philosophy is hard, you'll see – there really is no shallow end to the pool here. Students who read reflectively and attend class regularly are more likely to remain interested in (and maybe even enjoy) the material, benefit from the class discussions, and develop the philosophical skills and level of comprehension required to continually improve on the exams and papers. Some notes will be provided every week, but these, the lectures, and class discussion will very likely be hard to follow if you don't do the readings or if you miss previous classes and do not pursue any of the options available for getting caught up. Please take advantage of student hours, get to know your peers, and chat about these issues with folks who are not in the class! I think you'll find that philosophy is best done through dialogue, so build a philosophical community!

SCHEDULE OF READINGS:

This list of readings is tentative. Specific reading assignments will be given on a day-to-day basis.

Weeks 1-2

Introduction

Nathan L. King: *Why Good Thinking Matters* (Canvas)

Virtues Self-Evaluation

Richard Fumerton and Diane Jeske: *Philosophical Analysis, Argument, & the Relevance of Thought Experiments* (Canvas)

Nov. 4 No class – Labor Day

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Weeks 2-8 Thinking Like an Ethicist: Personhood, Identity, and Values

John Locke: *Of Identity and Diversity* (Canvas)
Susan Brison: *Outliving Oneself: Trauma, Memory, and Personal Identity* (Canvas)
Chike Jeffers: *Du Bois, Appiah, and Outlaw on Racial Identity* (Canvas)
 ****Recommended:** Beverly Daniel Tatum: *The Complexity of Identity* (Canvas)
Geoff Sayre-McCord: *Metaethics* (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy)
W.D. Ross: *What Makes Right Acts Right?* (Canvas)
J. S. Mill: from *Utilitarianism* (Canvas)
Aristotle: from *Nicomachean Ethics* (Canvas)
Patricia Benner: *A Dialogue Between Virtue Ethics and Care Ethics* (Canvas)

October 16: No Class – Fall Break
[Midterm Exam]

Weeks 9-15 Topics in Professional and Medical Ethics

Topics TBD
Group Presentations and Final Paper Scaffolding
Nov. 22: No Class - Thanksgiving
[Final Paper]

ASSIGNMENTS, EVALUATION, POLICY:

Midterm Exam/Paper (25%)

The first exam will cover the material from the first half of the term (thinking like an ethicist), and will be a mix of short answer questions and a longer paper. I will give you ungraded short answer assignments as we reach relevant material in the class, and then provide you with feedback on your written answers. You should adjust your short answer responses in light of my comments and submit the revised answers with your paper (which will come at the end of each unit). You *must* indicate where you have made revisions to your paper. I will provide more information on the revision process in class.

I welcome revisions on the midterm exam as a whole in light of my comments. I firmly believe that we get better at writing, thinking, and so forth by returning to our work and refining it in light of feedback. I want you to succeed, but as this is likely to be your first (and perhaps your *only*) introduction to philosophy, I'd like to afford you the opportunity to get as much as you can out of this class. As the final paper is due during finals week, there will not really be an opportunity to revise that paper, but my hope is that by that point in the term you'll have a better idea of how to write a philosophy paper than you do during the first week, so you should be in good shape.

Second-Half Group Presentation/Handout or Powerpoint (10%)

For the second half of the term, I want you to take control over the material we will discuss. To that end, I ask that you lead the discussion for at least one day. Over the first half of the term, I will identify groups of three (or so) who have common interests and put you together in a group. Then I'll ask your group to identify a paper or two that you'd like the whole class to read. We will then work through the paper as a class, but your group will be tasked with leading the discussion – just as we've done in the first half of the course when I've led the discussion. I ask that your group prepare a handout or powerpoint presentation for the class identifying the thesis, central argument, and some possible objections for the class.

I expect everyone to attend everyone else's presentations (barring legitimate reasons for absence), to have done the assigned reading in advance of the class, and to be ready to discuss the material in class. The idea here is to help one another work through difficult material and to sharpen our own thinking about these issues through dialogue. That can only happen if folks are present and ready to discuss the material.

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Final Paper (25%)

Since you will have spent some time identifying topics in medical ethics that are of interest to you, and you will have helped lead a class discussion on at least one paper in the area in which you're interested, I want to see you write a short, focused final paper on the philosophical issues in that area. We will have time in class to workshop the paper. In total, your paper should be around 2000 words on any subject in medical ethics. Your paper will be evaluated on its relevance, clarity, and precision. We will discuss philosophical writing in class at great length.

In-Class Short Writings (15%) At random intervals in class I will ask you to break up into groups of 3-4 and analyze a piece of text, or produce a brief response to a topic/theme in class. Philosophy is notoriously difficult to read and understand, so we will practice identifying and reconstructing arguments, identifying the "voice" in a passage, and stepping back and considering why we are reading and discussing the material. This will be an in-class activity, so you must be in class and participate to receive credit. I will not allow you to make up any of these you miss for any reason, but I do understand that life happens. If you miss class for what seems to be a good reason, I'll excuse these missed assignments. I will say more about what counts as good reasons in class.

Ten Reading Responses (25%; 2.5% for each) In addition to your exams and argument analyses, I expect you to keep up on the reading. To facilitate discussion and keep you on track, you are expected to complete 10 weekly critical summaries. You are to complete the reading for the week (assigned by Wednesday) and write a 1-page critical discussion of the reading. It is not enough to summarize the reading; you must make some kind of critical contribution in order to receive full credit. You are to submit them to Canvas by **11:59p on Sunday**. The dropbox will close at that time, and I will not accept *any* late responses. But keep in mind that since I'm only requiring 10, you can miss up to 5 before it has any direct impact on your final grade in the class.

Late Work: I get that life happens and things sometimes take longer than we anticipate. As a result, I will accept late **papers/exams** for up to 24 hours after the deadline with no questions asked. I ask that you do your best to meet the deadlines – please consider that I too am a busy person with a life outside of school, and that I have to budget and schedule my time carefully. If too many people turn in papers late, it throws off my plans and creates more work for me. Please try to be mindful of the work you create for others. If you are going to need more than 24 hours, you must contact me we can discuss how to move forward.

I will not accept any late reading responses or in-class writings.

Grade Disputes: If you feel that your work has been unfairly assessed, I welcome you to ask that I reconsider. I am, after all, a human with a unique perspective and various background experiences and beliefs that may lead to different interpretations of your work than what you had in mind. I will do so **only if** you submit to me a one-paragraph explanation of why you believe that your work has been unfairly evaluated, along with the graded exam itself. You must indicate the grade you believe yourself to deserve and explain clearly why it is that you deserve that grade. Your dispute must be submitted within **one week** of receiving your grade.

Extra Credit and Final Grades: I will *not*, under any circumstances, offer extra credit. If you are concerned about your grade, consider taking advantage of the help available (e.g. come to my student hours). Please do so before the end of the semester. But also consider whether the grade really is the most important thing. I understand that there are practical considerations (including scholarships) but think about why you're in school – are you here to get grades, to learn, to better yourself, etc. Where do your priorities lie, and why?

Academic Dishonesty Academic dishonesty of any kind is expressly prohibited. Engaging in academic dishonesty of any kind will result in failure of the course, a referral to the [Office of Wellness and Community Responsibility](#) for disciplinary action, and a deeply uncomfortable final conversation at the end of the term. You're already paying an awful lot of money to take this class, and I am committed to helping you develop the philosophical, intellectual, and personal skills to the best of your ability. Engaging in any form of cheating really cuts against the whole purpose of the whole education thing.

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I don't like doing this, and let me be clear – I trust you. I am not going to look to bust you, and I do not see our professional relationship as adversarial. If you're struggling and you don't know what to do, how to cite sources, etc. **please come talk to me.**

A Note on AI, Large-Language Models, and Their Use Using AI tools appropriately is a big part of our cultural development at this point in our history. This class is focused on building your philosophical skills, especially interpreting, designing, and critiquing arguments and theories. AIs can sort of do some of these things, but there are myriad reasons *not* to employ them in place of doing the work yourself. One such reason is that allowing an AI to do any part of the coursework for you is not just cheating yourself out of the opportunity to get better at philosophy, it is failing to do what the assignment is asking you to do – display and develop *your* philosophical abilities. If there is good reason to believe an AI did the work for you, any of the following may well occur: you will be asked to meet to discuss the work and you will be asked to redo the work. In class we will discuss further reasons to refrain from having AI do the work *for* you, as well as ways that it *can* appropriately be employed.

Classroom Conduct: The classroom constitutes a community of which we are each an important part. The very foundation of philosophy as a discipline is the ability to charitably listen, understand and represent the views of ourselves and others. Philosophy as a discipline requires careful dialogue. As such, respect for your fellow student, your instructor, and the course is of critical importance. We can, should, and will disagree with one another often, but this *MUST* be conducted with respect. As such threatening behavior, offensive language (including “hate speech”) will not be tolerated.

OTHER IMPORTANT POLICIES & RESOURCES

University Policies In addition to the articulated course specific policies and expectation, students are responsible for understanding all applicable university guidelines, policies, and procedures. The [EMU Student Handbook](#) is the primary resource provided to students to ensure that they have access to all university policies, support resources, and student's rights and responsibilities. Changes may be made to the EMU Student Handbook whenever necessary, and shall be effective immediately, and/or as of the date on which a policy is formally adopted, and/or the date specified in the amendment. Electing not to access the link provided below does not absolve a student of responsibility. For questions about any university policy, procedure, practice, or resources, please contact the Office of the Ombuds: 248 Student Center, 734.487.0074, emu_ombuds@emich.edu, or visit the website at www.emich.edu/ombuds. [CLICK HERE to access the University Course Policies](#)

Disability Resource Center I warmly welcome any of you who have disabilities. Students with medical, psychological, learning or other disabilities desiring academic adjustments, accommodations, or auxiliary aids must contact the Disability Resource Center (DRC). The [DRC](#) works collaboratively with students, faculty, and staff to create an accessible, sustainable, and inclusive educational environment.

Recording Class I will not record class meetings and I ask that you also please refrain from recording the class meetings without prior permission both from me and from your classmates.

University Library Research support is available to all students, 24/7. This includes getting started with research, identifying sources to search, developing search strategies, evaluating resources, and more. See <https://www.emich.edu/library/help/ask.php> for all of the ways in which you can get help with research. Some University Library services have changed, and may continue to change, in response to the pandemic. Please check for current information at <https://www.emich.edu/library/news/covid.php>

University Writing Center The [University Writing Center](#) (UWC) offers writing support to all undergraduate and graduate students. In doing so, we value the diversity of our campus and honor all students and the languages they bring with them to the university.

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Holman Success Center Provides [Academic Support](#) through a variety of virtual and in-person services.

Title IX Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex under any education program or activity receiving federal financial aid. Sexual assault and sexual harassment is a form of sex discrimination prohibited by Title IX. [What you need to know about Title IX](#)

Student and Exchange Visitor Statement The Student Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS) requires F and J students to report numerous items to the [Office of International Students & Scholars](#) (OISS)

Disclaimer: Information contained in this syllabus, other than the grading, late assignments, makeup work, and attendance policies are subject to change, with advance notice, as I deem appropriate.