

PHIL 160 | INTRODUCTION TO ETHICS

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This course is an introduction to normative ethics. More specifically, we will focus on questions about what to do and how to live from a moral point of view. We will spend a large portion of the course discussing specific moral questions—e.g. *Is it ever permissible to kill someone? How much of our income should we donate to charity? What are our obligations to animals?* But we will also look at proposals to give unified answers to all moral questions. Inevitably, we will pause to reflect on the moral questions themselves: *what are we asking for when we ask whether something is morally wrong? Is it reasonable to expect a fully general answer to those questions? What makes for a 'correct' answer to moral questions?*

We will not focus on giving particular answers to specific moral questions, but rather on learning how to give reasons for or against such answers. In addition to introducing you to the major moral theories and giving you some tools to answer specific moral questions, our goal will thus be to sharpen your ability to analyze, evaluate, and craft your own philosophical arguments.

PRACTICAL INFORMATION

Meetings: MW 12.20-1.10, Thompson 104

Course website: <http://perezcarballo.org/phil160>

Office hours: TH 3:30–4.30, and by appointment

You are welcome to email me with any questions you may have. As a general rule, I will ask you to come see me or your TA if your question is about substantive issues related to the course content. (If your question can be answered by a cursory glance at the course syllabus, however, I may not respond to it at all.)

Note that *I cannot guarantee a response to your email in less than two working days.* It is thus a bad idea to wait until the last minute to email me with a time-sensitive question.

READINGS

There are no required books for this class. All readings will be made available electronically. It is your responsibility to check the course website regularly for any changes to the reading schedule.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS & EXPECTATIONS

Each day of class you will be expected to be familiar with the material we will be discussing. Thus, you should leave yourselves *plenty* of time to do the readings. The readings for this course are challenging, and you should go over them more than once (for some helpful tips, read Jim Pryor's '[Guidelines on Reading Philosophy](#)'). Do not be discouraged if there are some things you do not understand. Just make a point of noting what it is you don't understand, and bring your questions with you to class or to your discussion section. In philosophy especially, the most rewarding discussions often result from the simplest questions. For this reason, you are required to attend lecture and discussion section.

Attendance

Class conduct

I expect your undivided attention to this class during both lecture and discussion sections. You are welcome to bring your laptops, tablets, etc. so long as you use them responsibly—that is, exclusively for taking notes and/or for reference purposes. Cell-phones, however, should be off before you walk into class.

Exams

In order to pass this course, you will have to complete two in-class exams and a final exam (check the [course calendar](#) for relevant dates). In addition, you must also submit eight weekly assignments. These will consist of answers to weekly questions. Questions will be posted on the Moodle site every week (except for the weeks where an exam takes place), and will be due before Thursday's lecture of the corresponding week.

Weekly assignments

Collaboration with peers

You are welcome to *discuss* the weekly assignments with other students in the class, but collaboration should *under no circumstance* amount to more than that. If in doubt, please contact me or your TA as soon as possible.

Turnitin policy

Note that, as a condition of continued enrollment in this course, you agree to submit your short assignments to the [Turnitin](#) service for textual comparison or originality review for the detection of possible plagiarism. All submitted assignments will be included in the [UMass Amherst](#) dedicated database of assignments at [Turnitin](#) and will be used solely for the purpose of checking for possible plagiarism during the grading process and during this term and in the future.

GRADING POLICY

Exams and assignments will be graded on a 1-100 scale. Your final grade will be calculated as follows:

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| <i>Exams</i> | 50% |
| <i>Homework assignments</i> | 40% |
| <i>Discussion section</i> | 10% |

LATENESS AND EXTENSIONS

No extensions will be granted unless you have a documented, legitimate excuse (e.g. an illness or an emergency). Contact your TA in advance, if the situation so allows, and as soon as possible if not. If there is a religious conflict or extenuating circumstances that require special consideration, please contact me or your TA well in advance. Late assignments will not be accepted.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

It goes without saying that EVERYTHING YOU SUBMIT MUST BE YOUR OWN WORK. I take academic honesty very seriously. General principles of academic honesty include the concept of respect for the intellectual property of others, the expectation that individual work will be submitted unless otherwise allowed by an instructor, and the obligations both to protect one's own academic work from misuse by others as well as to avoid using another's work as one's own. All students are expected to understand and abide by these principles. Each student must be familiar with the University's [Academic Honesty Policy](#). Any suspicion of plagiarism will be thoroughly pursued.

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

In order to help us make reasonable, effective, and appropriate accommodations to meet your needs, you should first register with [Disability Services](#). Once you do that, please come talk to me. It would be most helpful to receive the proper paperwork as soon as possible so we can make the appropriate accommodations in a timely manner.