

PHIL 160H | INTRODUCTION TO ETHICS

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Bartlett 363

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: TTH 16.00-17.15, Bartlett 127

Course website: <http://perezcarballo.org/phil160H>

Office hours: T 2–3, 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 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 each of our meetings.

Attendance

Class conduct

I expect your undivided attention to this class during both lecture and discussion sections. Laptops, tablets, etc. are not allowed. Using laptops in class reduces understanding for those who use them and for surrounding students as well. Bring a notebook and pen or pencil as well as a hard copy of the day's reading. If you have a documented disability that requires the use of a laptop, please see me privately as soon as possible.

Papers

In order to pass this course, you will have to complete three papers (check the [assignments page](#) for relevant dates). The first paper will involve summarizing an argument from one of the readings. The second will involve summarizing an argument and considering an objection. The third will involve summarizing an argument, considering an objection, and offering a reply on behalf of the author.

Papers are due by 4pm of their due date. In order to count as having submitted your paper in time, you should both submit an electronic copy to [Moodle](#) and bring a hard copy to class on the day it is due.

Reading questions

In addition, there will be short reading questions, due roughly every two weeks. Questions will be posted on the course website. Assignments will be graded as either 'pass' or 'fail'. You should not expect to receive comments on all of your questions: for each of the reading questions, I will only send back brief comments on a randomly selected subset of the submissions.

Reading questions are due via email by midnight of their due date. Your answer

should be in the body of the email. The subject line should have the following format: [Phil 160H] Reading question N, where N is the number of the reading question you are turning in. It is your responsibility to submit your reading questions in the right format. Late assignments will not be accepted.

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 as soon as possible.

Collaboration with peers

Note that, as a condition of continued enrollment in this course, you agree to submit your papers 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.

Turnitin policy

GRADING POLICY

Your final grade will be calculated according to the table below. Note, however, that you must receive a passing grade *on each of the rubrics* in order to pass the course.

| | |
|---------------------------------------|-----|
| <i>Attendance & participation</i> | 10% |
| <i>Reading questions</i> | 15% |
| <i>First paper</i> | 15% |
| <i>Second paper</i> | 25% |
| <i>Third paper</i> | 35% |

LATENESS AND EXTENSIONS

Short assignments will not be accepted after the deadline. Extensions for the papers will only be granted if you have a documented, legitimate excuse (e.g. an illness or an emergency). Contact me 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 well in advance.

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.