

INTRODUCTION TO ETHICS (PH150B)
PROFESSOR DANIEL STAR

Fall 2015 Semester, Boston University.

Lectures: Tuesday and Thursday, 9:30AM-11:00AM in CGS 129.

Office hours: Tuesday 2:30PM-4:00PM and Friday 11.00AM-12.30PM in STH 513A.

Email: dstar@bu.edu

COURSE DESCRIPTION: This course focuses on a set of interrelated questions about morality: What is morality? How should I live? What does morality require of us in our daily lives, if it requires anything at all? Is morality universal? Or, is it relative or subjective? What is the relationship between morality and religion? Answering such questions will help us to understand what the most important features of morality are. We will look both at traditional moral theories that attempt to specify what morality requires of us (Utilitarianism, Kantianism, Contractarianism and Virtue Ethics), and at the application of these theories to many specific moral issues. Apart from introducing you to a central branch of philosophy, this course should help you improve your reading, writing, and critical thinking skills.

DISCUSSION SECTIONS*

PH150B2 Monday 2:00PM-3:00PM in CGS 123 (Noa Ayalon)

PH150B3 Tuesday 2:00PM-3:00PM in CAS 208 (Noa Ayalon)

PH150B4 Wednesday 11:00AM-12:00PM in SED 406 (Jordan Kokot)

PH150B5 Thursday 3:30PM-4:30PM in EPC 208 (Jordan Kokot)

*You *must* register for, and regularly attend, one of these weekly discussion sections.

*There will be no discussion sections or office hours in the first week of term.

GRADUATE TEACHING FELLOWS

Jordan Kokot <jdkokot@bu.edu>

Office Hours: Tuesday 3:00PM-5:00PM in STH 502

Noa Ayalon <nlayalon@bu.edu>

Office Hours: Tuesday 8:00-9:00AM and Thursday 1:00-2:00PM in STH 502

COURSE WEBSITE

As the course proceeds, PowerPoint slides, essay instructions, etc. will be made available on the course website (where you can also find a copy of this syllabus):

<https://learn.bu.edu/>

*** NO LAPTOPS and NO MOBILE PHONES are to be used in any of our classes.**

Exemptions to the ban on laptops may be made in certain cases, but only if you see me in advance.

REQUIRED TEXTS

It is important that you own the specific edition of each book listed below.

- 1) James Rachels, *The Elements of Moral Philosophy*, 8th Edition, McGraw Hill, 2015
[referred to as *Elements* below]
- 2) Russ Shafer-Landau, *The Ethical Life*, 3rd Edition, OUP, 2015
[referred to as *The Ethical Life* below]

*You are also required to purchase, and *bring to every lecture*, a **TurningPoint Clicker** (also known as a "ResponseCard"). These can be purchased at the university Barnes & Noble bookstore.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS , GRADING, AND EXPECTATIONS

Short Essay: 15%

Long Essay: 25%

Mid-term Exam: 15%

Final Exam: 25%

Participation in Discussion Section: 15%

Attendance (including bringing clicker to class) in Lectures: 5%

*The mid-term examination will take place on **Thursday, October 15, 9:30AM-10:30AM**. The final examination will take place on **Tuesday, December 15, 9:00AM-10:30AM**. The examinations will be in our normal lecture room. **Please note that separate examinations will not normally be scheduled; you *must* make your travel plans so that you can take the mid-term and the final at the scheduled times and dates.**

*The participation portion of your grade must be *earned* by participation in discussion sessions. If you do not participate in the course, you may receive a zero for that part of the grade. Regular attendance of all students in lectures is compulsory; **in discussion sessions, regular attendance is also required**. Each student should have no more than four unexcused absences in discussion sessions in the entire semester – **students who have more than four unexcused absences may receive 0% for the participation component of their final grade**. An excused absence is an absence where the student has *sought* and *received* permission from the course professor *ahead of time* for being absent.

*It is *not* the responsibility of your Graduate Teaching Fellow to ensure that you properly submit work on time. **Late work will be marked down one grade. Very late work (i.e. work submitted later than a week after a deadline) will automatically receive an "F" grade, unless you receive an extension from me (the course professor, rather than your Graduate Teaching Fellow). Work that is never submitted will not only receive an "F" grade but will also count for 0%. Requests for extensions must be sent to me (the course professor) before the due date.**

***Academic misconduct, especially *plagiarism*, will not be tolerated.** If you have any questions whatsoever about what academic misconduct or plagiarism consists in, please ask me about this issue, or consult the University Academic Conduct Code at <http://www.bu.edu/academics/resources/academic-conduct-code/>

Note that the code states **“It is the responsibility of every undergraduate student to be aware of the Academic Conduct Code’s contents and to abide by its provisions.”**

Students are expected to have completed each set reading *prior to the relevant discussion class, and it is recommended that the reading in fact be done prior to the relevant lecture. Please note that “completing the reading” means more than glancing, skimming, perusing, or otherwise making mere eye contact with the printed page. Completing the reading requires carefully and critically reading selections in their entirety; it requires making an attempt to understand what an author is claiming, why he or she is claiming it, and beginning to think about whether those claims are justified. Completing the reading requires you to *attempt* all of this. You are not, however, expected to understand everything that you have read. It is *perfectly acceptable* to arrive at class confused, bewildered, or unsure about what some parts of the reading meant. In fact, this is to be expected. It is, however, *unacceptable* to come to class without having engaged with the material by making a sincere attempt to think about it.

***Please do visit me, as well as your Graduate Teaching Fellow, during our office hours.** You should feel free to either seek more clarity or try out any ideas at all in office hours – you will never be assessed negatively for doing so. Come prepared with specific questions. *Don’t be afraid to talk to us because you feel you might say something wrong.* **We are there to help you. Philosophy can be difficult, but it can also be a lot of fun!**

SCHEDULE OF LECTURES AND READINGS

Note: Additional readings may be either suggested or required as the course progresses.

Topic 1: Morality and Moral Reasoning

Thursday (Sep 3), Tuesday (Sep 8), and Thursday (Sep 10):

- Ch. 1, "What is Morality?" (*Elements*)

Topic 2: Relativism

Tuesday (Sep 15) and Thursday (Sep 17):

- Ch. 2, "The Challenge of Cultural Relativism" (*Elements*)

SHORT ESSAY: The essay question and a reading from *The Ethical Life* will be assigned during the lectures on Topics 1 to 2.

Due: Thursday October 1 at the beginning of class.

Topic 3: Subjectivism

Tuesday (Sep 22) and Thursday (Sep 24):

- Ch. 3, "Subjectivism in Ethics" (*Elements*)

Topic 4: Morality and Religion

Tuesday (Sep 29) and Thursday (Oct 1):

- Ch. 4, "Does Morality Depend on Religion?" (*Elements*)

Topic 5: Egoism

Tuesday (Oct 6) and Thursday (Oct 8):

- Ch. 5, "Ethical Egoism" (*Elements*)

*There will be *no class on Tuesday October 13* (Substitute Monday).

MID-TERM EXAM: This exam is on **Thursday October 15**, in our regular lecture room, at the normal lecture time. The exam will be one hour in length, and will be based on Topics 1 to 5.

Topic 6: Contractarianism

Tuesday (Oct 20) and Thursday (Oct 22):

- Ch. 6, "The Social Contract Theory" (*Elements*)

Topic 7: Wellbeing

Tuesday (Oct 27):

- Robert Nozick, "The Experience Machine" (*The Ethical Life*) and
- Chris Heathwood, "Faring Well and Getting What You Want" (*The Ethical Life*)

Topic 8: Utilitarianism

Thursday (Oct 29), Tuesday (Nov 3), Thursday (Nov 5)*, and Tuesday (Nov 10):

- Ch. 7, "The Utilitarian Approach" (*Elements*) and
- Ch. 8, "The Debate Over Utilitarianism" (*Elements*)

*Note: **Thursday, November 5** will be a special *guest lecture* by another professor.

LONG ESSAY: The essay question and reading from *The Ethical Life* will be assigned during the lectures on Topic 8. **Due: Tuesday, December 8 at beginning of class.**

Topic 9: Deontology and Kantian Ethics

Thursday (Nov 12), Tuesday (Nov 17), Thursday (Nov 19), and Tuesday (Nov 24):

- Ch. 9, "Are There Absolute Moral Rules?" (*Elements*) and
- Ch. 10, "Kant and Respect for Persons" (*Elements*)

* There will be *no class on Thursday November 26* (Thanksgiving Holiday).

Topic 10: Feminism and Ethics

Tuesday (Dec 1) and Thursday (Dec 3):

- Ch. 11, "Feminism and the Ethics of Care" (*Elements*)

Topic 11: Virtue Ethics

Tuesday (Dec 8) and Thursday (Dec 10):

- Ch. 12, "Virtue Ethics" (*Elements*)

FINAL EXAM: Tuesday, December 15, 9:00AM-10:30AM. The exam will take place in our usual lecture room. It will be ninety minutes in length. The questions will be based on Topics 6 to 11.

TurningPoint Clickers

We will be using TurningPoint clickers in this class. This will allow me to poll you during class and/or conduct quizzes. Your performance on these questions or your participation may be graded and these grades will be sent to the Blackboard gradebook.

In order to properly register your clicker, you will need to buy a clicker and a license, and you'll need to follow these exact steps. There are several methods for registration, but **only this method will get your grades reported to the gradebook**. You should bring your clicker to class every day because you will need to use it to have your answers recorded.

1. Log into Blackboard: <https://learn.bu.edu>.
2. Go into your course and select **Tools**.
3. Select the **Turning Account Registration** link. You will be taken to the **Turning Account registration website**.
4. Click **Create Account**. *If you already have an account and know your username and password, log in and skip to step 8.*
5. Enter your **BU** email address and click **Next**.
6. Check your email and **click the link** to verify your Turning Account.
7. After verifying your email, enter all required fields as noted by the asterisk on the Profile page. Click **Create Account**.
8. Click **Licenses** from the left menu. *If you previously had an account, check to see that the license expiration date is after the expiration date of this course. If your license will last the duration of the course, you don't need to buy a license, but you will need to buy a ResponseCard RF LCD, so you should proceed to the next step. If your license will last the duration of the course AND you already have a 03 or 04 ResponseCard RF LCD (check the back of your (ResponseCard RF LCD), skip to step 10.*
9. Visit the [BU bookstore](#) to purchase a 4-year license and a ResponseCard RF LCD and receive a \$15.00 rebate to enter at <https://rebates.turningtechnologies.com/> to get a discount off your bundle purchase.
10. If you have purchased a 03 or 04 ResponseCard RF LCD, return to your Turning Account within your Blackboard course after you receive your ResponseCard RF LCD.
11. Select **Devices** from the left menu.
12. Click **Add**.
13. Register your device by entering in the **Device ID** located on the back of the ResponseCard RF LCD below the barcode. Click **Save**. **You will see notification that your clicker has been registered.**

Clicker Troubleshooting

Before every class, confirm that you know the correct channel number and ensure The instructor will need to use a radio frequency receiver to receive your answers, and you'll need to be connected to the same channel. Ask the instructor what channel he or she is receiving on, and then change the channel on your clicker:

1. Press the **"Ch"** button.
2. Enter the **two digit** channel number.
3. Press the **"Ch"** button again. You should see a **green light**.

Still having trouble?

If you're still having trouble, then contact ithelp@bu.edu.