

# ***Ethics***

PHIL ### Syllabus

CRN: ###

Instructor: Jacob Huls

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HOW TO CONTACT: Contact via email any time. I will try to get back to you as quickly as I can.

Office hours: By appointment. There will be scheduled office hours around tests and quizzes. I will notify you about these closer to those respective assignments

10:00 am–10:50 MW

Hall 214

Fall or Spring 20##

## **1. Course Description**

This is a sample ethics syllabus. It is intended to be modifiable to fit requirements for ethics classes depending on the university. The general goal of this syllabus is to give students an introduction to the important ethical questions, ideas, and views. We will start with the most fundamental debates: Are there moral truths? Are the objective moral truths? Does God ground ethical truth? How do we come to know ethical truths? Next, we will work our way up to less fundamental debates: What makes an action to be right or wrong? What makes an agent virtuous or vicious? Should you do the right thing only because it is the right thing, or should you do it because you enjoy doing the right thing? Next, we will have a few weeks of applied ethical questions: Is abortion morally permissible? Should we be vegans or vegetarians? Do you owe anything to your parents? In the final weeks of class, we will read two works of fiction. These readings will help us think about what it is to live a good and meaningful life.

## **2. Schedule and Readings**

### REQUIRED TEXTS:

- *The Fundamentals of Ethics* 2nd edition by Russ Shafer-Landau  
ISBN: 0199773556
- *The Death of Ivan Ilych and Other Stories* by Leo Tolstoy  
ISBN: 9780140449617
- *The Great Divorce* by C. S. Lewis  
ISBN: 0060652950

REQUIRED MATERIALS: Please bring a pen or pencil and plenty of paper to class. At the very least, make sure you bring plenty of paper and a pen/pencil to the final test.

*READINGS:* Most readings will come from our required texts. Some weeks, the readings will be uploaded to the “Readings” folder on Canvas. Please refer to the schedule below to see where the readings are posted.

The difficulty of the required readings vary. Some of the readings are relatively easy, while others are relatively difficult. You are not expected to fully grasp the readings. When you find that you are not understanding a particular part of the reading, keep going and prepare to ask questions in class.

Readings may be removed, added, or changed (although it is unlikely this will happen). But I will notify you about any changes at least two weeks before the readings are due.

## ***SCHEDULE***

### ***Week 1: Overview of Ethics and Logic***

- Mon #/#: Syllabus, overview of philosophy of ethics  
*Reading:* *The Fundamentals of Ethics* (hereafter FoE) pages 1–15
- Wed #/#: Logic  
*Reading:* None, but see some Logic Handouts in “Logic Handouts” folder on Canvas for extra help and practice

### ***Week 2: Metaethics I***

- Mon #/#: Relativism, nihilism  
*Reading:* FoE pages 289-317
- Wed: #/#: Arguments against moral objectivity  
*Reading:* FoE pages 320–337

### ***Week 3: Metaethics II***

- Mon #/#: Arguments for moral objectivity  
*Readings:* [“Ethical Realism or, Moral realism”](#) by Thomas Metcalf, Instructor Handout 1 (PDFs of both on Canvas in addition to the hyperlink)
- Wed #/#: How can ethics be objective?  
*Reading:* [“Euthyphro”](#) by Plato (PDF on Canvas in addition to the hyperlink)

### ***Week 4: Metaethics III***

- Mon #/#: Is God the Ground of Ethics?  
*Reading:* FoE pages 61–72

Wed #/#: How could we know objective moral truths?  
*Readings:* “A Darwinian Dilemma for Realist Theories of Value” pages 109–135 by Sharon Street, Instructor Handout 2 (both on Canvas).  
**(NOTE:** This reading will be relatively difficult. Read what you can, take a look at the handout, and prepare questions. Try to get a basic idea of the gist of Street’s argument [the handout should help with that] and I will make the rest of the argument as clear as possible in class).

### ***Week 5: Normative Ethical Theories I***

Mon #/#: Consequentialism I  
*Reading:* FoE pages 117–128

Wed #/#: Consequentialism II  
FoE pages 133–152

### ***Week 6: Normative Ethical Theories II***

Mon #/#: Kantian Ethics I  
*Reading:* FoE pages 154–165

Wed #/#: Kantian Ethics II  
*Reading:* FoE pages 168–184

### ***Week 7: Normative Ethical Theories III***

Mon #/#: Virtue Ethics  
*Reading:* FoE pages 252–270

Wed #/#: Thomistic Ethics  
*Reading:* “Aquinas’s Theory of Goodness” by Eleonore Stump (on Canvas)

### ***Week 8: Why should you do the right thing?***

Mon #/#: Stoic Ethics  
*Reading:* [Handbook of Epictetus](#) (PDF on Canvas in addition to Hyperlink)  
“Baby in the Well” by Paul Bloom

Wed #/#: You should enjoy doing the right thing  
*Reading:* Nicomachean Ethics selections (PDF on Canvas, very short reading); “Is common sense divided on ethics?” by Jacob Huls

**Week 9: Psychological and Ethical Egoism**

Mon #/#: Psychological Egoism  
*Reading:* FoE pages 89–102

Wed #/#: Ethical Egoism  
*Reading:* FoE 104–115

**Week 10: Applied Ethics I**

Mon #/#: Abortion  
*Reading:* [“A Defense of Abortion”](#) by Judith Jarvis Thompson (on Canvas in addition to hyperlink)

Wed #/#: Do you owe anything to your parents?  
*Reading:* “What do Grown Children Owe their Parents?” by Jane English

**Week 11: Applied Ethics II**

Mon #/#: Veganism and Vegetarianism  
*Reading:* [“Eating Animals”](#) by Daniel Korman (chapter 9 of the linked book—PDF also on Canvas)

Wed #/#: Prisons and Taxation  
*Reading:* [“Against Prisons and Taxes”](#) by Daniel Korman (chapter 7 of linked book—PDF also on Canvas)

**Week 12: Reflection and meaning I**

Mon #/#: Meaning in life  
*Reading:* “The Death of Ivan Ilych” by Leo Tolstoy

Wed #/#: Final repentance  
*Reading:* None, but might be good to glance at the end of “The Death of Ivan Ilych” before class

**Week 13: Reflection and meaning II**

Mon #/#: Can life have meaning without God?  
*Reading:* None, but probably a good idea to start the reading for next class.

Wed #/#: Heaven, hell, inward focus, outward focus  
*Reading:* “The Great Divorce” by C. S. Lewis

### ***Week 14: Recap for final test***

- Mon #/#: RECAP Q&A  
*How to prepare:* Look at the study guide and prepare questions
- Wed #/#: RECAP Q&A  
*How to prepare:* Look at the study guide and prepare questions

## **4. Assignments and Grading**

There will be three categories of assignments you will be graded on:

### **a. ATTENDANCE & PARTICIPATION (30% of total grade)**

Attendance will be taken at the beginning of class every session. Attendance + participation constitutes 30% of your total grade. Participation will be determined by the instructor's impression of how often you ask questions or answer questions (the Q&A and review sessions will be a good time to make up for participation). Participation counts for exactly 15% of your grade and attendance accounts for exactly 15% of your grade. You are granted *two free* absences without excuse. After you have missed two classes without excuse, you must contact the professor to request an absence.

**TARDINESS:** Being significantly late to class will generally count as an absence. If you show up a few minutes late and miss attendance, talk to the instructor after class to have your attendance recorded.

### **b. WEEKLY QUESTIONS (10% of total grade)**

Each week you will be asked to choose one of the readings to submit questions about. Questions will be due the night before class at midnight. For more about this assignment, see the "Substantive Questions" handout on Canvas.

### **c. TESTS (60% of total grade)**

There will be two tests for this class: one midterm and one final. The midterm test will be composed of a T/F section and a multiple choice section, and it will be taken in the testing center. The final test will have one T/F section, one multiple choice section, and one long-answer section. The final test will be taken during finals week. Both tests will be accompanied by study guides. We will have one week of in-class review before the final test.

**GRADING SCALE:** This course will use the following grading scale.

A (4.0): 94-100  
A- (3.7): 90-94  
B+(3.3): 87-90  
B (3.0): 83-87  
B- (2.7): 80-83  
C+ (2.3): 77-80  
C (2.0): 73-77  
C- (1.7): 70-73  
D (1.0): 60-70  
F (0.0): 0-6

**LATE SUBMISSIONS:** Late assignments will, generally, be considered with a penalty to be determined by the instructor. The later the assignment is submitted, generally, the greater the penalty will be.

**RE-DOs:** Case-by-case basis. Talk to the professor about redoing assignments.

**CHATGPT and AI:** The use of ChatGPT or generative AI is strictly prohibited. As such, all assignments (**with the exception of weekly questions**) will be written in class or in the testing center. The use of ChatGPT or AI in class will result in a grade of zero on the assignment it was used for, with possible further repercussions.

**EXTRA CREDIT:** There will be a number of extra credit options available throughout the semester. There will be one extra credit question at the end of both tests. Students who regularly ask questions will likely receive some extra credit at the end of the course.

## 5. Academic Honesty/Integrity

*Academic integrity is honest, truthful and responsible conduct in all academic endeavors.* The mission of Saint Louis University is “the pursuit of truth for the greater glory of God and for the service of humanity.” Accordingly, all acts of falsehood demean and compromise the corporate endeavors of teaching, research, health care, and community service through which SLU fulfills its mission. The University strives to prepare students for lives of personal and professional integrity, and therefore regards all breaches of academic integrity as matters of serious concern. The full University-level Academic Integrity Policy can be found on the Provost's Office website at: <https://www.slu.edu/provost/policies/academic-and-course/academic-integrity-policy.pdf>

Additionally, each SLU College, School, and Center has its own academic integrity policies, available on their respective websites.

## 6. Disability Accommodations

Students with a documented disability who wish to request academic accommodations must formally register their disability with the University. Once successfully registered, students also

must notify their course instructor that they wish to use their approved accommodations in the course.

Please contact the Center for Accessibility and Disability Resources (CADR) to schedule an appointment to discuss accommodation requests and eligibility requirements. Most students on the St. Louis campus will contact CADR, located in the Student Success Center and available by email at [accessibility\\_disability@slu.edu](mailto:accessibility_disability@slu.edu) or by phone at 314.977.3484. Once approved, information about a student's eligibility for academic accommodations will be shared with course instructors by email from CADR and within the instructor's official course roster. Students who do not have a documented disability but who think they may have one also are encouraged to contact to CADR. Confidentiality will be observed in all inquiries.

*Note: due to accreditation requirements, regulatory differences, and/or location-specific resources, the School of Law, the School of Medicine, and SLU Madrid have their own standard language for syllabus statements related to disability accommodations. Faculty in those units should seek guidance for syllabus requirements from their dean's office.*

## **7. Title IX**

Saint Louis University and its faculty are committed to supporting our students and seeking an environment that is free of bias, discrimination, and harassment. If you have encountered any form of discrimination on the basis of sex, including sexual harassment, sexual assault, stalking, domestic or dating violence, we encourage you to report this to the University. Discrimination on the basis of sex includes discrimination on the basis of assigned sex at birth, sex characteristics, pregnancy and pregnancy related conditions, sexual orientation and gender identity. If you speak with a faculty member about an incident that involves a Title IX matter, that faculty member must notify SLU's Title IX Coordinator that you shared an experience relating to Title IX. This is true even if you ask the faculty member not to disclose the incident. The Title IX Coordinator will then be available to assist you in understanding all of your options and in connecting you with all possible resources on and off campus.

If you are pregnant or experiencing a pregnancy related condition, the Title IX Coordinator can assist you in understanding your rights and options as well as provide supportive measures.

Anna Kratky is the Title IX Coordinator at Saint Louis University (DuBourg Hall, room 36; [anna.kratky@slu.edu](mailto:anna.kratky@slu.edu); 314-977-3886). If you wish to speak with a confidential source, you may contact the counselors at the University Counseling Center at 314-977-TALK or make an anonymous report through SLU's Integrity Hotline by calling 1-877-525-5669 or online at <http://www.lighthouse-services.com/slu>. To view SLU's policies, and for resources, please visit the following web addresses: <https://www.slu.edu/about/safety/sexual-assault-resources/index.php>.

*Note: due to accreditation requirements, regulatory differences, and/or location-specific resources, the School of Law, the School of Medicine, and SLU Madrid have their own standard language for syllabus statements related to Title IX. Faculty in those units should seek guidance for syllabus requirements from their dean's office.*

## **8. Outcomes**

The purpose of this course is to provide an introduction to some of the most historically important philosophical texts, ideas, and thinkers as well as to the distinctive activity of philosophy itself. Over the course of the semester, students will:

1. Learn what great thinkers have to say in response to enduring philosophical questions and how their answers represent philosophically and dialectically distinct answers to such questions. Students will consider a range of philosophical voices and perspectives--including classic texts from Plato and Aristotle, texts from thinkers in the Catholic tradition, and texts by thinkers historically underrepresented in the western canon. In reading and discussing such thinkers and texts students will be encouraged to consider and assess both the philosophical merits and costs of the various views they encounter.
2. Learn to *explain, analyze, and evaluate* arguments for philosophical answers to ultimate questions. Students will learn to give a close reading of philosophical texts with a view toward being able to explain and analyze the arguments they contain. By the end of the semester, students should be able to (i) identify the key premises, assumptions, and conclusions present in the texts they encounter and (ii) explain the content of the arguments' premises in a way that (iii) illuminates how these premises support an inference to the conclusion. Finally, students will learn to evaluate the arguments they encounter by, among other things, assessing them according to logical notions of validity and soundness.
3. Begin to shape their own answers to ultimate questions by applying distinctively logical and philosophical ways of thinking to them. To this end, students will learn to raise philosophical questions, to identify unexamined presuppositions, and to reflect on their own assumptions and commitments. Students will also work at philosophically articulating their own views by learning how to offer evidence, arguments, and responses to objections to their own answers to ultimate questions.
4. Learn to articulate their own worldview and practices in dialogue with different answers to ultimate questions. Students will be provided with opportunities to reflect on the way in which their own commitments, values, and practices may overlap with or diverge from the perspectives they encounter in their readings, in lectures, and in dialogue with one another.

**Ultimate Questions: Philosophy** is one of 19 Core Components. The University Core SLO(s) that this component is designed to intentionally advance are listed below:

**University Core Student Learning Outcomes**

The Core SLO(s) that this component is intentionally designed to advance are:

SLO 1: Examine their actions and vocations in dialogue with the Catholic, Jesuit tradition

SLO 2: Integrate knowledge from multiple disciplines to address complex questions

SLO 3: Assess evidence and draw reasoned conclusions

Additionally, the Core Component-level Student Learning Outcomes are listed below:

**Component-level Student Learning Outcomes**

Students who complete this course will be able to:

Explain and evaluate arguments for philosophical answers, including those in the Catholic tradition, to ultimate questions concerning the nature of humanity, reality and God, knowledge, and/or the good life

Apply an array of analytic methods, conceptual tools, logical principles, and other resources to their own inquiry into ultimate questions

Articulate and reflect on their own worldview and practices in dialogue with different answers to ultimate questions, including answers in the Catholic tradition