You can contact me by e-mail or phone to set an appointment time. I would prefer to handle substantive matters in person rather than by e-mail or on the phone, including questions or concerns about the readings, written assignments, and classroom discussions. This gives me a better opportunity to get to know you as individuals. I will, however, respond to short and simple requests via e-mail or phone.

Course Description

This course will introduce students to a variety of classic thinkers and texts in the Western tradition of philosophical and theological ethics. These sources will then serve as a resource for thinking critically about a variety of contemporary moral questions and problems. The final objective is to promote a more sophisticated grasp of the moral dimensions of human life and an increased awareness of our continued participation in a complex, living tradition of critical reflection on the good life. Students will be asked to engage one another and the instructor throughout the semester in a civil and critical dialogue as part of a project of mutual education.

Texts for Purchase


Important Web Links

Dr. Wilmot’s Homepage
Library Links for Ethics Research
Ethics Program Homepage

Course Requirements and Extra Credit Opportunities

a) Attendance and participation will constitute significant components of your final grade. You are expected to attend class and to be prepared to engage in critical discussion on the thinkers and topics assigned. This means that you need to read all of the material carefully prior to class. An inability to respond to my questions or to participate in our classroom conversations will adversely affect your final grade. Participation alone will constitute 15%
of your final grade. Unexcused absences and chronic tardiness will also adversely affect your final grade. For each unexcused absence above 2, your participation grade will be lowered by a step. More than 6 unexcused absences will result in a failing grade for the course. Your presence and participation are for your own benefit and for the benefit of your classmates. Learning is a social activity; we learn best when we learn together.

b) You must write 1 critical response paper (~3 pages). The topics are provided on the syllabus, and I will provide further details through WebCT. There will be 3 opportunities to write your short paper; you can decide when during the semester to complete this requirement based on the due dates on the syllabus. This short paper will constitute 20% of your final grade. There are no extensions for any of the short papers. If you miss the due date for one option, then plan to write on one of the remaining assignments. Failure to complete at least one of these options will result in a failing grade for this section of the course.

A collection of writing resources will be made available to you on WebCT under the title “Help with Writing.” I will also be happy to discuss the writing assignments during my office hours and in the classroom.

c) You must submit a 10-page paper as the final exam for the course. This paper will constitute 35% of your final grade. Your research paper must go through a draft process, which means that you need to receive feedback from the Writing Center on a first draft (Old Falvey Hall, Dalton Room 2002, ext. 9-4694), make appropriate revisions, and then submit your paper for a final grade. Please request one of the philosophy graduate students for your consultation as they will be in the best position to assist with this subject matter. You will need to make an appointment with the Writing Center well in advance for final papers, and it will become more difficult to get a consultation as the semester progresses. Late papers will lose a grade step for each day beyond the deadline. No papers will be accepted more than 2 days after the deadline.

A collection of writing resources will be made available to you on WebCT under the title “Help with Writing.” I will also be happy to discuss this assignment during my office hours and in the classroom.

d) There will be a midterm exam on the last class before fall break. This exam will constitute 30% of your final grade. The midterm will be taken in class. I will provide more detail about the midterm in class.

e) There will be 2 opportunities for extra credit work. You may take advantage of both opportunities. In order to get extra credit, you must write a 2-page critical response to a scheduled lecture in the 2005–2006 Ethics Lecture Series. In order to count as extra credit, this must represent thoughtful work on your part based on my judgment. Extra credit will work like this. If I accept the work as extra credit, then you will get a 1-step boost to your class participation grade. If you have an “A” in class participation, then I will give you a 1-step boost on your short paper grade. If you have an “A” on your short paper, then I will apply the 1-step boost to your midterm grade. Finally, if you have an “A” on your midterm, then I will give you a 1-step boost on your final paper.
Numerical Grade Conversion

The grades on individual components of this course will give as letter grades. At the end of the semester, each grade is converted into its numerical equivalent. The following is the breakdown:

\[
\begin{align*}
A &= 4.00 & A- &= 3.67 & B+ &= 3.33 & B &= 3.00 \\
B- &= 2.67 & C+ &= 2.33 & C &= 2.00 & C- &= 1.67 \\
D+ &= 1.33 & D &= 1.00 & D- &= 0.67 & F &= 0
\end{align*}
\]

I then multiply each assignment by the percentage of its worth and add up the components of the final grade. This is then reconverted to the equivalent letter grade. If the total falls between two of the above numbers, I round off to the closest. For example, if a student’s total is 3.276, I will give that student a 3.33 (B+).

Students with Learning Disabilities

It is the policy of Villanova University to make reasonable academic accommodations for qualified individuals with disabilities. If you are a person with a disability and wish to request accommodations to complete your course requirements, please make an appointment with me as soon as possible to discuss the request. If you would like information on documentation requirements, contact the Office of Learning Support Services at 610-519-5636. It is the student’s responsibility to request accommodations.

Academic Integrity

You are responsible for knowing and abiding by the Villanova Code of Academic Integrity (available here). If you have questions regarding aspects of this code, please feel free to discuss them with me. Violation of this code may result in a failing grade for the course depending on the severity of the case; at the very least, violation of the code will result in a failing grade on the assignment and a very significant reduction in your final grade for the course.

Laptops in the Classroom

While I am generally a fan of technology, I’ve become concerned that the use of laptops in the classroom tends to undermine class participation. I realize that some students feel more comfortable taking notes on their computers, and I will allow laptops to be used for this purpose; however, be warned: it is easy to disappear behind your laptop screens, and this will have a detrimental effect on your class participation grade, which is 15% of your final grade. On days when I am lecturing more, I will be more sympathetic regarding the use of laptops. On days in which we are having open discussion of the materials and topics, I would recommend closing your laptops and engaging in the conversation.

Changes to the Syllabus

This syllabus is subject to change at my discretion. I will, however, communicate changes clearly to you in class and in writing, and such changes, if any, will hopefully be minor.
Class and Assignment Schedule (parenthetical number identifies the textbook in which the reading can be found and are for the day indicated)

### Week 1
**AUGUST**

**Thurs. 8/25**
- Introduction to course: objectives, requirements, and expectations (discussion of academic integrity)

- Required: “Character Education of Children” (available on WebCT)

### Week 2
**Tues. 8/30**
- Required: (1) “Introduction,” pp. 1–25

- Suggested: (2) Chapter 1, pp. 1–17

### Aristotle and Augustine: Two Classic Teleological Approaches to Ethics

**SEPTEMBER**

**Thurs. 9/1**
- Required: (2) “Virtue Ethics,” pp. 36–41
- Required: (1) Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics*, pp. 106–22

- Suggested: “Aristotle’s Ethics,” esp. sections 1–5 (available [here](#))

### Week 3

**Tues. 9/6**
- Required: (1) Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics*, pp. 123–47
- Required: “Virtue Ethics,” sections 1 and 2 (available [here](#))

- Suggested: “Virtue Ethics,” sections 3 and 4 (available [here](#))

**Thurs. 9/8**
- Abbreviated schedule for St. Thomas of Villanova Day

- Required: “Sports Supplementation: Fair or Foul?” (available on WebCT)

- Wrap up discussion of Aristotle

### Week 4

**Tues. 9/14**
- Required: (1) Augustine’s *City of God*, pp. 148–63
- Required: “Catholic Virtue Theory” (available [here](#))

- Suggested: (1) “Prologue: Ethics and Religion,” pp. 26–39

**Thurs. 9/16**
- Required: (1) Augustine’s *City of God*, pp. 164–78
- Required: “Ethics: Sin, Vice and Virtue” (available [here](#))

### Week 5
**Tues. 9/20**
- Required: “Culture Wars” (available on WebCT)
Required: “Character Education, Take Two: Georgia’s ‘Respect for the Creator’ Principle (available on WebCT)

Wrap up discussion of Augustine

First writing option due on WebCT by 5 pm: 3-page critical response to Aristotle’s account of happiness as the end of the moral life

Wed. 9/21  Highly recommended: Lecture by Dr. Mark Graham, 3:30 pm (Connelly Center Cinema)

Applied Ethics: “Sexual Intimacy and Marriage”

Thurs. 9/22  Required: (2) Chapter 7, pp. 349–68

Week 6

Tues. 9/27  Required: (2) Chapter 7, pp. 368–85

Extra credit due on WebCT by 5 pm: 2-page critical response to Dr. Graham’s lecture

Thurs. 9/29  Required: (2) Chapter 7, pp. 385–96

Week 7

OCTOBER

Tues. 10/4  Required: (2) Chapter 7, pp. 397–419

Second writing option due on WebCT by 5 pm: 3-page critical response to Augustine’s critique of pagan virtue

Thurs. 10/6  Mid-term exam

Week 8

Mon.–Fri.
10/10–10/14  No classes—fall break

Kant and the Ethics of Duty: A Nonteleological Approach

Week 9

Required: (1) Kant’s *Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals*, pp. 259–67

Suggested: “Kant’s Moral Philosophy” (available here)
Thurs. 10/20  Required: (1) Kant’s *Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals*, pp. 267–81

**Week 10**  
Tues. 10/25  Required: (1) Kant’s *Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals*, pp. 281–308

Thurs. 10/27  Required: (1) Kant’s *Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals*, pp. 309–14  
Required: “Torture of a Kidnapper” (available on WebCT)

Wrap up our discussion of Kant

**Applied Ethics: “Punishment and the Death Penalty”**

**Week 11**  
NOVEMBER  
Tues. 11/1  Required: (2) Chapter 5, pp. 234–53

Thurs. 11/3  Required: (2) Chapter 5, pp. 253–72

**Week 12**  
Tues. 11/8  Required: (2) Chapter 5, pp. 272–89

Third writing option due on WebCT by 5 pm: 3-page critical response to Kant’s concept of the good will and its moral significance

Thurs. 11/10  No regular class

Required: Lecture by Dr. Mark Sagoff, “Science, Religion and the Environment,” 3:00 pm (Villanova Room, Connelly Center)

**John Stuart Mill’s Utilitarianism: Weighing Consequences**

**Week 13**  
Tues. 11/15  Required: (2) “Utilitarianism,” pp. 20–24
Required: (1) John Stuart Mill’s *Utilitarianism*, pp. 315–39
Suggested: “Moral Philosophy: Utilitarianism” (available here)

Extra credit due on WebCT by 5 pm: 2-page critical response to Dr. Sagoff’s lecture

Thurs. 11/17  Required: (1) John Stuart Mill’s *Utilitarianism*, pp. 339–52

**Week 14**  
Tues. 11/22  Required: (1) John Stuart Mill’s *Utilitarianism*, pp. 352–71
Thurs. 11/24  No class—Thanksgiving Holiday

**Week 15**

Tues. 11/28  Required: “Cameras Watching Students” (available on WebCT)
          Required: “USA Patriot Act” (available on WebCT)

          Wrap up our discussion of Mill

          **Applied Ethics: “Freedom of Speech”**

DECEMBER

Thurs. 12/1  Required: (2) Chapter 8, pp. 427–51

          **First draft of final paper due on WebCT by 5 pm**

12/1–12/16  Meet with a philosophy graduate student at the Writing Center to review
          first draft of final paper. If a philosophy graduate student is unavailable,
          then an undergraduate writing tutor is acceptable.

**Week 16**

Tues. 12/6  Required: (2) Chapter 8, pp. 451–68

Thurs. 12/8  Required: CATS
          Required: (2) Chapter 8, pp. 468–88
          Required: “A Call to Civil Society” (available on WebCT)

**Week 18**

Mon. 12/19  Revised version of final paper must be submitted on WebCT by 7 pm