

Spring 2017 // PHIL 3011: Philosophy of Moral Education

Instructor: Colin Lewis

colin.j.lewis@utah.edu

910 / 409-1011

Office Hours: Mondays + Wednesdays @ 12:00 – 1:00 PM and by appointment

Course Description

Students will study the philosophy of moral education, examining questions such as what moral education is, why it is important, and how we might go about pursuing moral education. Additionally, we will consider whether morality is something that humans must learn or are naturally born with, whose responsibility it is to teach morality, and whether moral education itself is morally permissible by the lights of modern liberalism. To investigate these and related issues, we will look at a variety of positions on ethical theory from both Eurocentric and Asian perspectives, ancient and modern philosophy, as well as theories of moral development in the cognitive sciences, and learning in the education sciences. We will also examine and evaluate several approaches to moral education that are currently popular among education policymakers. Ultimately, students will be asked to synthesize all of the knowledge acquired over the course of the semester and present a mature, defensible argument supporting a thesis addressing an issue pertinent to the topic of moral education.

Course Objectives

In this course, we aim to (1) broaden one's knowledge of the history of ethics, moral education, and theories of moral development; (2) derive and critically evaluate the political, social, and cultural effects of the variety of views regarding moral education; (3) write arguments either challenging or supporting the claims we consider in the course; (4) broaden a general knowledge base of contemporary approaches to questions regarding moral education.

By the end of the course, students will ...

- improve their ability to think clearly and logically.
- improve their ability to write clearly and persuasively.
- improve their ability to recognize and evaluate arguments.
- understand a wide range of basic philosophical concepts.
- understand a wide range of philosophical, psychological, and educational issues and views about morality and moral education.
- be exposed to a wide range of philosophical writings on the course topics.

Required Texts – All texts will be provided via the Canvas webpage or otherwise accessible online.

Course Requirements / Grade Breakdown

In-Class Contributions (25%), Discussion Board (25%), Reading Engagements (30%), Final Paper (20%)

The structure of this course is arranged around six topics (see the Course Schedule for details). For each topic, students are expected to make substantive contributions both in-class and via assignments submitted online.

In-Class Contributions:

Philosophy is a dialogue, and we will aim to be active participants in a long-running discussion. At the most general level, students are expected to attend and be prepared for each class meeting. This means reading the assigned material and being prepared to both answer and ask questions about it. As an intermediate level course, students are expected not only to pay attention to the instructor, but also to help carry the academic conversation themselves (e.g. explain, at length, a theory or argument presented in a weekly reading assignment). Students can also receive credit for this element of the grading process by attending office hours to ask questions about and discuss the material from class. Finally, all interactions in this course should be performed with maturity and courtesy. This means not only abiding by the rules given in the *Student Handbook*, but also approaching other participants in the course (as well as the readings) with common decency.

Discussion Board (x6):

A large part of philosophy is reflection. Since we have limited time in class to exchange ideas, students may sometimes find that class meetings alone do not provide enough time to go over all of the course material and ask/discuss questions of interest. To that end, this course includes a discussion board component in addition to more traditional quizzes and writing assignments. The discussion boards allow you to reflect and post on the papers and topics that we cover in this course. They also allow you to exchange ideas with your classmates and raise questions in an open forum setting. You might think of this as the more "laid back" form of writing that we will do in this course, as it allows you to get your ideas out into the open in an informal setting. Each post is scored out of only two points, with full credit going to posts that demonstrate competent and original reflections upon the material. Partial credit goes to posts that display general understanding but lack substantive originality. No credit goes to those who either do not post or post material that is off-topic, incoherent, or violates forum etiquette (e.g. showing basic respect to your fellow forum users). The first time someone violates forum etiquette, they will receive a verbal warning and their score docked accordingly. If someone violates forum etiquette more than once, they will receive a non-negotiable "0" for the discussion board component. Students are expected to make at least two substantive posts per topic: one that asks about/discusses a question of their own design, and another that offers a content-laden response to a peer. Although posts are due by the end of a unit/topic (typically on a Thursday), it is in students' interest to post well before this deadline (otherwise there will be no time to make a reply post).

Reading Engagements (x3):

When? There are three reading engagements throughout the semester, one for each two topics, due on designated Fridays before 11:59 PM. Please look at the dates on the Canvas site. These assignments are designed to require you to engage closely with a single issue, but do not require extended treatment. They are less formal in nature than the final paper, but considerably more formal than the discussion posts (see the Introductory Materials folder under "Files" for an example). Only address topics mentioned in the reading list or approved in consultation with the instructor. **Only use assigned readings. Remember to list the relevant page numbers** with your engagements so that I may follow your topic and argument (and, of course, to avoid plagiarism).

How? Each engagement should be **about two-to-three paragraphs in length (roughly 250-550 words)**, and should do **one** of the following:

- (1) Offer a criticism of a particular view.
- (2) Respond to a criticism that might be leveled against a particular view.
- (3) Compare/contrast two competing views with a critical evaluation of which is more viable or how they might inform/be compatible with one another.

These reading engagements require a traditional essay structure in miniature: introduction, body and conclusion. They also cannot just parrot what is in the text, they must provide an argument. You are free to discuss whichever assigned sources you wish. You should explain the argument for a target position (e.g. why moral education is important, whether humans are innately moral, what theories of education are most useful, etc.). After explaining the position, briefly give your argument for why you agree or disagree with the position. Marks will be given for clearly explaining the position and giving a clear argument. Feel free to compare and contrast with other positions you have learnt over the semester. You may contact me ahead of time if you want to ask questions about a particular topic.

Where? To submit these assignments, click on "Assignments" and then the appropriate "Reading Engagement" items listed there. Submit there. Submit only one engagement per list item according to the submission guidelines in this document.

Why? Your best two scores will count toward your grade. This means it is possible to skip one of them, but I implore you not to do so, as it guarantees that any other low grade you have will be counted toward your average. As 30% of your final grade, you want to do as well as possible on these assignments.

Additionally, depending upon the manner in which the semester progresses, the class may be granted a "redemption rewrite." As the name implies, this will permit you to redo one of your reading engagements for a better score (if the rewrite is worse than the initial score, then the initial score will be retained, so there is no penalty involved). In the past, this has helped a number of students to better master the (sometimes difficult) skill of critical, analytic writing. Of course, the best way to improve is to ask questions and either come to office hours or schedule an appointment if you feel you are in need of assistance.

Final Paper (x1):

There will be one final paper (5-6 pages) due 29 April. Details about the paper will appear under the "Assignments" tab of our website. The length requirements listed are guidelines about the minimum and maximum length of the paper, but you should aim for this ballpark range. It must be turned in via Canvas according to the submission guidelines in this document. It will be graded based upon on how well you address the question asked in the assignment and how effectively you communicate your argument to your audience. I recommend sending a draft of your paper by 22 April so I can review your thesis and provide comments for improvement.

Submission Guidelines / Warnings for ALL WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS:

- (1) Anything that you submit online must be in .doc, .docx, .pdf, or .rtf format. I do not accept .wps or other file formats. If for any reason file attachments do not work, you may copy/paste the body of the text of your assignment into the empty text box on the submission page for each assignment.
- (2) I do not accept e-mailed assignments unless otherwise specified.
- (3) Save your files as, "LastName_FirstName_AssignmentName/#" so that I can identify your assignments as yours.
- (4) 12 pt font, standard typeface, double-spaced, and 1 inch margins.
- (5) Uploaded to our website, under "course content," is a file entitled "common writing mistakes." Read it and avoid these mistakes as best you can. Most important in that document are the sections about paper organization and about "weak language" (i.e. "In my opinion," "I think," or "I feel" language). The tips and warnings included in the document will help you to communicate your argument effectively to your audience.
- (6) All submitted written work will be scrutinized for plagiarism by the Turnitin software, as well as by the instructor. Any work found to have been plagiarized will be subject to penalization. See the section entitled "Plagiarism" for more details.

Grading Scale

A 93-100	C+ 77-79	D- 60-62
A- 90-92	C 73-76	E 59 and below
B+ 87-89	C- 70-72	
B 83-86	D+ 67-69	
B- 80-82	D 63-66	

Philosophy and Personal Beliefs

This is a philosophy course, which means (in part) that we will examine various arguments concerning moral education in particular and morality in general. Some of these arguments may directly contradict your personal beliefs about these issues. In fact, I expect this to happen. Nevertheless, I expect you to think about and assess claims from various perspectives that may be different from your own.

One method you may find helpful to adopt is to “try on” arguments that directly contradict your first intuitions. By this method, you will find the most compelling arguments in support of the claims with which you disagree – when you dismantle them, you will have a strong argument to support your own view.

One of my fundamental goals in this class is for you to enhance your understanding of different perspectives and your ability to critically analyze those viewpoints. Your grade will be based on your understanding of the readings, the philosophical concepts and tools they employ, and your analysis. It will not be based on the conclusions that you reach.

Schedule

Topic 1: What is moral education?

Class 1: Ethical traditions

-“[Ethical Theories Compared](#)” (handout)

Class 2: The tradition of moral education?

-“The Great Tradition in Education: Transmitting Moral Values” (Wynne)

-“Keeping them in the Courtyard: A Response to Wynne” (Lockwood)

Class 3: History of moral education West and East

-“[A Brief History of Moral Education, the Return of Character Education, Current Approaches to Moral Education](#)” (handout)

-“Confucius’ Thoughts on Moral Education in China” (Xie and Ge)

Class 4: Tropes in moral education

-“Traditional Morality, Moral Reasoning and the Moral Education of Adolescents” (Mills)

-“What is Effective Character Education?” (Lickona)

-“Moral Education and Character Education: Their Relationship and Roles in Citizenship Education” (Althof and Berkowitz)

Topic 2: Is moral education important?

Class 5: Well, is it?

-“Is Moral Education Really Necessary?” (Phillips)

Class 6: The school

-“Moral Education in the Life of the School” (ASCD Panel)

-Excerpts from Dewey (handout)

Class 7: Globalization

-“Moral Education in an Age of Globalization” (Noddings)

-“Moral Education: Preparing Teachers for Globalization” (Staudt)

Class 8: Pluralism and disagreement

-“Pluralistic Relativism” (Wong)

Topic 3: Are we born to be moral?

Class 9: Developmental theory 1

-“Piaget, Kohlberg, Gilligan, and Others on Moral Development” (Fleming)

-“Language, Culture, and Moral Development” (Tappan)

Class 10: Developmental theory 2

-“The Emotional Dog and its Rational Tail” (Haidt)

- Class 11: Human nature 1
-Readings from *Mengzi* (handout)
- Class 12: Human nature 2
-Readings from *Xunzi* (handout)
- Class 13: Nativism
-“Universal Moral Grammar: Theory, Evidence and the Future” (Mikhail)
- Class 14: Against nativism
-“Moral Nativism: A Sceptical Response” (Sterelny)

Topic 4: Is moral education morally permissible?

- Class 15: Critical thinking
-“[Ethics Without Indoctrination](#)” (Paul)
- Class 16: Defending Kohlberg
-“Moral Education and Indoctrination” (Schleifer 1976)
- Class 17: Education for a pluralistic society
-“Moral Education and Indoctrination” (Sher and Bennett 1982)
- Class 18: Education and imagination
-“Indoctrination, Imagination and Moral Education” (Tan)

Topic 5: Who should be the moral educators?

- Class 19: Setup
-“Moral Education of the Child: Whose Responsibility?” (Oladipo)
-Review material of Class 6
- Class 20: Family
-“Fostering Goodness: Teaching Parents to Facilitate Children’s Moral Development” (Berkowitz and Grych)
- Class 21: Religion
-“The Role of Religion in Moral Education” (Iheoma)
- Class 22: Friends
-“Parent and Peer Contexts for Children’s Moral Reasoning Development” (Walker)

Topic 6: How can we teach morality?

- Class 23: Stories
-“Emotions, Education and Time” (De Sousa)
- Class 24: Games
-“Designing Games to Teach Ethics” (Lloyd)
- Class 25: Etiquette
-“Manners, Morals, and Practical Wisdom” (Stohr)
- Class 26: Ritual
-“Return to Life: An Examination on the Function of Ritual in Moral Education in Chinese Colleges and Universities.” (Zhang and Xie)

Draft of final paper due: 22 April (**Optional** but recommended).

Final paper due: 29 April by 11:59 PM
- See relevantly-named folder in "Files"

Reading Engagements: due on designated Fridays by 11:59 PM.

Late Policy

No late work will be accepted. This is course policy. If you have a personal crisis, (i.e. you, your spouse, your child are in the hospital or imprisoned), provide documentation and we will work around it.

The reason for most students failing this course is laziness. Keep up to date and you will be fine.

ADA Accommodation

The University of Utah seeks to provide equal access to its programs, services and activities for people with disabilities. If you will need accommodations in this class, reasonable prior notice needs to be given to the Center for Disability Services, 162 Union Building, 1-801-581-5020 (V/TDD). CDS will work with you and the instructor to make arrangements for accommodations.

Content Accommodation Policy

“Students are expected to take courses that will challenge them intellectually and personally. Students must understand and be able to articulate the ideas and theories that are important to the discourse within and among academic disciplines. Personal disagreement with these ideas and theories or their implications is not sufficient grounds for requesting an accommodation. Accommodations requested on such grounds will not be granted. It is the student's obligation to determine, before the last day to drop courses without penalty, when course requirements conflict with the student's sincerely-held core beliefs. If there is such a conflict, the student should consider dropping the class.” (Student Handbook)

There is no content accommodation in this class.

Plagiarism

Plagiarism or other forms of academic misconduct may result in a failing grade for the entire course, and the case may be transferred to the University's Academic Misconduct Committee for further judgment. According to the Student code, "Plagiarism' means the intentional unacknowledged use or incorporation of any other person's work in, or as a basis for, one's own work offered for academic consideration or credit for public presentation. Plagiarism includes, but is not limited to, representing as one's own, without attribution, any individual's words, phrasing, sequence of ideas, information or any other mode or content of expression" (Student Code, p. 3). If you have further questions about what constitutes plagiarism or academic misconduct, ask the instructor and consult the University Code. Wikipedia, if cited, will result in reduced marks; if found unquoted, as with all other sources, will result in a zero mark.

Student Code

“All students are expected to maintain professional behavior in the classroom setting, according to the Student Code, spelled out in the Student Handbook. Students have specific rights in the classroom as detailed in Article III of the Code. The Code also specifies proscribed conduct (Article XI) that involves cheating on tests, plagiarism, and/or collusion, as well as fraud, theft, etc. Students should read the Code carefully and know they are responsible for the content. According to Faculty Rules and Regulations, it is the faculty responsibility to enforce responsible classroom behaviors, and I will do so, beginning with verbal warnings and progressing to dismissal from class and a failing grade. Students have the right to appeal such action to the Student Behavior Committee.” (Student Handbook)

Note:

Though it is not expected that the course will change after this syllabus is posted, extenuating circumstances do occur. Changes made to the course will occur at the instructor's discretion. As much advance notice will be provided as possible.