

PHIL 27: Ethics in Society

M/W 1-1:50pm; Center 101

Prof. Manuel Vargas

Winter 2024

Overview

Welcome! This course focus on ethical thought and practice and how they relate to contemporary issues. The first half of the course focuses on some foundational questions for ethical theory, including the nature of values, the role of religion, the basis of morality, and the limits it may have on our lives. The second half of the course concerns ethical life in the context of wider society, including questions about the desirability of patriotism, whether it is permissible to do the wrong thing to secure some greater good, obligations concerning the handling of difference, and the proper aims of education.

This course satisfies a requirement for Warren College. The course is in-person only, with no remote option unless some extraordinary event necessitates our doing otherwise.

Contact info

mrvargas@ucsd.edu

Office: RWAC- Bldg 1, Arts & Humanities, Floor 4, room 0468

Student drop-in hours (aka office hours): M @ noon + by appointment. *Note: If you cannot make office hours, just send me an email listing three times when you have availability and I'll do my best to make something work.*

The greatest teaching assistants in the world

Weixin Cai < w3cai@ucsd.edu >, OH: W 2-4 @ RWAC 0441

Sections: Monday 9-9:50 and Monday 11-11:50

Sam Ridge < siridge@ucsd.edu >, OH: M 2-4 @ RWAC 0446

Sections: Monday 4-4:50 and Friday 2-2:50

Emiliano Salomon < esalomn@ucsd.edu >, OH: F 12-1 @ RWAC 0438

Sections: Monday 12-12:50 and Thursday 2-2:50

Evaluation

20%	In-class writing assignments
25%	Midterm 1
25%	Midterm 2
25%	Final exam
15%	Participation

Attendance in lecture and section is required. For sections, regardless of grounds for absence the first two absences are ignored, and for subsequent (demonstrated non-medical) absences there is a 20% deduction in participation for each subsequent failure to attend.

In-class writing assignments are small, in-class writing assignments that will regularly occur over the quarter. They may be about the reading, but will more frequently be about the ideas discussed in the course. They are graded on a high pass/low pass/no credit model. Unless

otherwise specified, they will be written and submitted in an exam book, that you will purchase in advance. (Buy a set of blue/green books in advance!)
Exams are all in-class, by longhand, using exam books (blue or green is fine).

Readings

Readings are available through Canvas. Readings provide the background context for the lectures, but class meetings will be primarily focused on the ideas discussed in the readings, and only secondarily on the readings themselves.

Tech, slides, etc.

- This class is intentionally low tech. Phones should be in pockets or bags, and use of technology is generally discouraged.
- When slides are used for lectures, they will be posted later in the week on canvas (not before, as this precludes Socratic-style education).
- Given that this class covers race/class/gender content as well as controversial topics about morality, it is ill-suited for podcasting. Ordinarily, recording will be permitted.
- Use of AI, ChatGPT, and equivalent for evaluated work is not permitted.

Provisional Schedule

Read the articles *prior* to the date of the class meeting.

Unit 1: Ethics

Week 1	Introduction, the plurality of values
1/8	Introduction: ambitions & rules of the game
1/10	Nguyen, Thi (forthcoming) "Value Capture" pp. 1-15, 17-21, 27-33, 42-45
Week 2	Grand narratives
1/15	MLK DAY: NO CLASS MEETING
1/17	<i>Lecture:</i> Some Grand Narratives about Morality <i>Reading:</i> Leiter, B "The Death of God and the Death of Morality"
Week 3	The inescapability of ethics
1/22	Korsgaard, C "The Authority of Reflection" pp. 92-102; 112-113
1/24	Korsgaard, C "The Authority of Reflection" pp. 118-123, 125-130
Week 4	What about subjective desire satisfaction?
1/29	Sumner, LW "Hedonism," pp. 81-98
1/31	MIDTERM 1 [in class]
Week 5	Demandingness
2/5	Singer, P. "Famine, Affluence, and Morality"
2/7	Wolf, S. "Moral Saints"

Unit 2: . . . and Society

Week 6	Ecological agency
2/12	Morton, J. "A Moral Psychology of Poverty?"
2/14	Lecture: Ecological Pictures of Agency and The Politics of Morality
Week 7	Patriotism
2/19	PRESIDENT'S DAY: NO CLASS MEETING
2/21	MacIntyre, A. "Is Patriotism a Virtue?"
Week 8	Dirty hands
2/26	Walzer, M "Political Action: The Problem of Dirty Hands"
2/28	MIDTERM 2 [in class]
Week 9	The demands of difference
3/5	Barnes, E. "Disability, Minority, and Difference"
3/7	de Vries, B "Autism and the Right to a Hypersensitivity-Friendly Workspace"
Week 10	The many functions of education
3/12	Hitz, Z "Learning, Leisure, and Happiness"
3/14	Hayes, C "Meritocracy and Its Discontents"
3/16	Last day to submit any other (i.e., non-final assign.) work for the course.
Finals week	
3/22 (F)	11:30am-2:29pm FINAL EXAM

General Information

Student drop-in hours/office hours

Office hours are listed under contact information. Alternatively, you can email me to set up an appointment to meet for individual or small group office hours.

Email Policy

The instructors and instructional assistants for this course are happy to reply to emails sent from UCSD email addresses. We do not reply to emails from non-UCSD addresses. Please note that there are two subjects the instructor will not discuss by email, even if they are sent from a UCSD account. These are:

- a) Requests for information about the exam or final assignment that arrive in the 24-hour period immediately preceding the exam.
- b) Requests to adjust your final class grade. If you have an issue with your grade please make an appointment to discuss it during my office hour next quarter.

Missed exams

There is no opportunity to make up exams. A missed midterm exam will entail that the score on the next exam is applied to both the missed exam and the exam that was taken. However, failure to

take the final exam, and/or failure to have taken at least one midterm, will constitute a failure to pass the course.

Evaluation

Assignments and their weights are expected to be as stipulated on the first day of class, but the instructor retains the right to make changes to the syllabus. If so, notification of those changes will be provided in advance.

Regrading

There is no option to regrade final exams, final assignments, or to complete assignments for bonus points. However, for students unhappy with their grade for non-final TA-graded assignments can apply to have it re-graded. There is a process to this. First, students must arrange a face-to-face meeting (zoom is fine) with their grader to discuss the basis for the original grade. Please note that email is not an acceptable substitute, and no regrading will occur without an initial face-to-face meeting. If the student and grader come to an agreement on the merit of the initial grade, or on an adjusted grade resulting from their meeting, no further student action is required. If the student still prefers a re-grade, he or she should provide the professor with the originally submitted work for re-evaluation.

For a re-grade to occur the professor will need to receive the submission within two weeks of the original assignment, or before the end of week 10, whichever is sooner. Whatever grade the second grader gives the essay will be the final grade, even if it is lower than the original grader's grade. The professor reserves the right to review and decide any re-grade cases.

Disabilities

Students requesting accommodations for this course due to a disability must provide a current Authorization for Accommodation (AFA) letter issued by the Office for Students with Disabilities (OSD) which is in University Center 202 behind Center Hall. Students are required to present their AFA letters to Faculty (please contact me privately) and to the OSD Liaison in the department in advance so that accommodations may be arranged. Contact the OSD for further information: 858.534.4382 (phone), osd@ucsd.edu (email), disabilities.ucsd.edu (web)

Academic Integrity

Integrity of scholarship is essential for an academic community. The University expects that both faculty and students will honor this principle and in so doing protect the validity of University intellectual work. For students, this means that all academic work will be done by the individual to whom it is assigned, without unauthorized aid of any kind. Plagiarism in this course is ordinarily grounds for failing this course. For more information about UCSD's policy on academic integrity go to: <http://senate.ucsd.edu/Operating-Procedures/Senate-Manual/appendices/2>

Slides, handouts, etc.

Any handouts, slides, or the like that are used in class and that have substantive content will be made available via Canvas in some or another form.

Technology

For remote courses, the expectation is that you will minimize educational distractions while in synchronous elements of the course (including social media, alerts, and the like).

For in-person, non-virtual meetings, electronics (including but not limited to cell phones and laptops) are not ordinarily permitted in lecture or during exams. If you believe you have compelling grounds for an exception, talk to the professor in advance. The second violation of this policy will trigger a 0% for the participation grade. Your TA will let you know what the policy is in discussion sections.

For remote classes, attendance in synchronous meetings constitutes permission to record your voice and image for the purposes of making a recording of the synchronous class meetings available to students of the course. Recordings made for the asynchronous elements of remote learning courses will be made available in Canvas.

For non-remote, in-person courses, recording lectures introduces several complicated issues about consent and student participation in class. For that reason, students may not record (audio or video) in this class except in accordance with documented ADA accommodations. Any recordings made in connection with a disability accommodation are for the student's personal academic use only and may not be distributed in any manner to any other individual.

Waitlist

Students will be admitted to this class according to their place on the waitlist.

Exams

By enrolling in this class, you agree to take the final exam, if there is one, by its scheduled day and time, unless registered with OSD. Failure to take the exam at that time constitutes failure to pass the course. For take-home assignments, you agree to submit them by the posted deadlines. Plan your end of term travel and other commitments accordingly.

Where can I get help?

In addition to the readings, class, office hours, and maybe even sections, we've also got handouts.

[How to Survive Your First Philosophy Class](#)

[How to Write Philosophy Papers](#)

If you have questions about any academic matters at all, please contact your TA or professor.

UCSD has some useful support resources for non-academic needs. Check out [Basic Needs](#) and [Mutual Aid](#) for help with some of the basics every student needs to support the life of the mind. And check out [Student Health and Well-Being](#) resources to keep you going.