

# PHIL 27: Ethics & Society

M/W 1-1:50pm; Mosaic 0114

Prof. Manuel Vargas

Fall 2024

## Overview

Welcome! This course focus on ethical thought and practice and how they relate to contemporary issues. One set of issues concerns some foundational questions for ethical theory, including the nature of values, the basis of morality, our duties to others, and the proper role of these things in our lives. Another set of issues concerns concrete ethical questions in the context of contemporary society, including questions about our duties to respond to poverty, the desirability of patriotism, whether it is permissible to do the wrong thing to secure some greater good, the nature and significance of other animals, 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 a change in the modality of this course.

## Contact info

[mrvargas@ucsd.edu](mailto:mrvargas@ucsd.edu)

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

Student drop-in hours (aka office hours): W @ 11am-noon + by appointment. *Note: If you cannot make scheduled 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 Fantastic Five Teaching Team

Esraa Wasel <[ewasel@ucsd.edu](mailto:ewasel@ucsd.edu)>, OH: W 10-11am @ RWAC 0471

Sections: W 4pm, F, 10am

Sam Delorme <[sdelorme@ucsd.edu](mailto:sdelorme@ucsd.edu)>, OH: Th 12-1pm @ RWAC 0433

Sections: M 11am, M 12pm

Amir Liron <[aliron@ucsd.edu](mailto:aliron@ucsd.edu)>, OH: M 11:30am-12:30pm @ RWAC 0435

Sections: W 3pm, M 5pm

Gabriel Nyberg <[gnyberg@ucsd.edu](mailto:gnyberg@ucsd.edu)>, OH: W 10-11am @ RWAC 0432 + T 12-1 during exam weeks

Sections: W 12pm, W 2pm

Faron Ray <[fray@ucsd.edu](mailto:fray@ucsd.edu)>, OH F 10-11am @ RWAC 0433

Sections: F @ 9am, F 1pm

## Evaluation

20% In-class writing assignments

20% Midterm 1

20% Midterm 2

25% Final exam

15% Participation

Attendance is required in both lecture and sections. For sections, regardless of grounds for absence the first two absences are ignored. For subsequent absences (that are not on

grounds of documented medical considerations) 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, recording the contents would undermine the quality of discussion, making it ill-suited for podcasting. Therefore, recording is not permitted without explicit prior authorization by the instructor.
- 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.

#### **Week 1 Introduction: on the strangeness of morality, & the philosophical sensibility**

9/30 Introduction: ambitions & norms  
10/2 Luck, M. "The Gamer's Dilemma"  
Lecture: Intuition conflicts + options for ethical theories

#### **Week 2 Famine, consequentialism, and effective altruism**

10/7 Singer, P. "Famine, Affluence, and Morality"  
10/9 MacAskill, W. "Effective Altruism"

#### **Week 3**

10/14 Wenar, L. "Poverty is No Pond"  
10/16 Enoch, D "Why I am an Objectivist About Ethics (And Why You Are, Too)"

#### **Week 4**

10/21 Srinivasan, A. "Stop the Robot Apocalypse"  
10/23 **MIDTERM 1 [in class]**

#### **Week 5 The plurality of values**

10/28 Nguyen, Thi (forthcoming) "Value Capture" pp. 1-15, 17-21, 27-33, 42-45

10/30	Wolf, S. "Moral Saints"
<b>Week 6</b>	<b>Politics and morality</b>
11/4	MacIntyre, A. "Is Patriotism a Virtue?"
11/6	MacIntyre "A Disquieting Suggestion"
	<i>Lecture: Some Grand Narratives about Morality &amp; Politics</i>
<b>Week 7</b>	<b>The rational imperatives of morality</b>
11/11	VETERAN'S DAY: NO CLASS MEETING
11/13	Korsgaard, C "The Authority of Reflection" pp. 92-102; 112-113
<b>Week 8</b>	<b>The ecology of moral agency, continued [guest or pre-recorded lecture]</b>
11/18	Korsgaard, C "The Authority of Reflection" pp. 118-123, 125-130
11/20	<b>MIDTERM 2 [in class]</b>
<b>Week 9</b>	<b>Animals</b>
11/25	Zangwill, N. "Our Moral Duty to Eat Meat"
11/27	optional: Monsó and Andrews "Animal Moral Psychologies"
11/28-9	Thanksgiving holiday
<b>Week 10</b>	<b>Education</b>
12/2-4	Hitz, Z "Learning, Leisure, and Happiness"
12/6	Last day to submit any other (i.e., non-final-exam) work for the course.
<b>Finals week</b>	
12/9 (M)	<b>11:30am-2:29pm FINAL EXAM</b>

## 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](mailto:osd@ucsd.edu) (email), [disabilities.ucsd.edu](http://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.

[Satisfactory Academic Progress \(SAP\)](#) refers to the academic standards students must maintain to remain eligible for federal, state, and institutional financial aid. If you are receiving financial aid, please ensure you review the [SAP requirements and the appeals process](#).