



**PHIL-2306-102H1**  
**Introduction to Ethics**  
**Fall 2025 1<sup>st</sup> Session**  
**Hybrid**

**Instructor Information:** Walter Barta; [wbarta@com.edu](mailto:wbarta@com.edu) or 409-933-8214 (General Humanities Department Phone).

**Student hours and location:** 1st 8 weeks (8/18-10/9) on TTH at 2:00pm-3:20pm in LRC 257

**Office Hours:** Online Monday Evening or by appointment

**All Required Readings/Viewings will be provided by the professor in learning modules.**

**Optional Textbook/Materials:**

Russ Shafer-Landau, *Living Ethics: An Introduction with Readings*.

(1<sup>st</sup> edition or 2<sup>nd</sup> edition are both good, as there are minimal differences between them)

**Course Description:** An introduction to ethics, including basic moral reasoning, essential metaethical concepts, prominent ethical theories, and important ethical problems (with an emphasis on modern life, work, and culture).

**Course requirements:** attendance, discussions, quizzes, and exams

**COURSE OBJECTIVES CHECKLIST:**

- Attend for 8 Weeks
- Take 8 Quizzes:
  - 4 Theories Quizzes
  - 4 Problems Quizzes
- Take 2 Tests
  - 1 Theories Test
  - 1 Problems Test
- Lead/Scribe 2 Discussions
  - 1 Theory Lead
  - 1 Theory Scribe
  - 1 Problem Lead
  - 1 Problem Scribe
- Extra Credit
  - PRE/POST-Survey
  - (Others TBA)

**GRADING FORMULA (approximate):**

Objectives	%	Pts.
Theories Exam	~15%	~300
Problems Exam	~15%	~300
Theories Quizzes	~10%	~200
Problems Quizzes	~10%	~200
Theories Lead	~10%	~200
Theories Scribe	~10%	~200
Problems Lead	~10%	~200
Problems Scribe	~10%	~200
Attendance	~10%	~200
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>~100%</b>	<b>~2000</b>

**COURSE OUTLINE SCHEDULE:**

<b>W</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Readings</b>	<b>Extras</b>	<b>Tests</b>	<b>Discussions</b>
1	Intro	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• What Is Morality? Reasoning</li></ul>	<i>I, Robot</i> (Film) <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jbP4ls2w4oA">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jbP4ls2w4oA</a>	Pre-Survey Attendance Syllabus Reasoning Quiz1	Intro Signup Sheets
2	Theories of Values	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Skepticism</li><li>• The Good Life</li><li>• Consequentialism</li></ul>	<i>I, Robot</i> (BBC Drama) <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V2Nzw04Dy58">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V2Nzw04Dy58</a>	Quiz2	Ch. 3 Ch. 4 Ch. 5
3	Theories of Duties	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Social Contract Theory</li><li>• Kantian Duties</li><li>• Rossian Prima Facie Duties</li></ul>		Quiz3	Ch. 6 Ch. 7 Ch. 9
4	Theories of Agents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Natural Law</li><li>• Virtue Ethics</li><li>• Feminist Ethics</li><li>• Ethics of Care</li></ul>		Quiz4 Exam1	Ch. 8 Ch. 10 Ch. 11
5	Life and Death	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Abortion</li><li>• Euthanasia</li><li>• Death Penalty</li></ul>	<i>The Animatrix</i> (Film) <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p3E8w9919Rg">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p3E8w9919Rg</a>	Quiz5	Ch. 12 Ch. 15 Ch. 20
6	Distributive Justice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Economic Justice and Inequality</li><li>• Globalization and Immigration</li><li>• The Legacy of Racism</li></ul>	<i>Gattaca</i> (Film) <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H61SHRjxrZ4">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H61SHRjxrZ4</a>	Quiz6	Ch. 16 Ch. 17 Ch. 18
7	Pains and Pleasures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Animals</li><li>• Drugs</li><li>• Sexual Morality</li></ul>		Quiz7	Ch. 13 Ch. 21 Ch. 23
8	Existential Risks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Environment</li><li>• Terrorism (alt. Privacy)</li><li>• Genetic Engineering</li><li>• AI Ethics</li></ul>		Quiz8 Exam2 Post-Survey	Ch. 14 Ch. 19 Ch. 22

## ASSIGNMENT DESCRIPTIONS

<b>Attendance</b>	Students must attend in-person or watch online class discussions. Non-attending students may be dropped. (Note: attendance will be taken in-person and in the online learning system.)
<b>Readings</b>	Textbook and extra readings should be finished at the start of the week so that assignments can be worked on during the week and finished by the end of the week. (The first week will be a grace period). For Part 1: Moral Theories, read and/or view all readings/notes provided. For Part 2: Moral Problems, read and/or view all readings/notes provided. Powerpoints and Youtube Videos are available that supplement the readings. A few movies and/or podcasts will also be assigned. Extra textbook readings are optional, though helpful. (Note: Ch. 19 of the textbook is different for different editions.)
<b>Quizzes/Tests</b>	There will be a total of 8 quizzes, 1 quiz per week, each covering the key ideas and methods for the week. There will be a total of 2 exams, 1 exam per part of the course (Theories and Problems), multiple sections for each exam (matching sections and multiple choice sections), each covering a part of the textbook, requiring you to morally reason about the material in the course. Exams and quizzes will be primarily based on the textbook chapters, powerpoints, and video lectures (sometimes with applied questions referencing assigned movies or podcasts). The quizzes will be good practice for the matching sections of the exams; leading and scribing will be good practice for the reasoning sections of the exams. (Note: All quizzes and tests will require Respondus browser lockdown.)
<b>Discussions</b>	The discussion sign up sheet will be available on the first week of class. There will be 2 discussions that the students must schedule to lead and/or scribe for: first on a Moral Theory (~40 mins) during the first part of the course, a second on a Moral Problem (~40 mins) during the second part of the course. We will discuss the topic, related it to our own lives, and relate it to topics from popular culture. All leaders will introduce themselves, choose a topic and some pop culture topic (a film/show/book/etc. from pop culture) and from this develop arguments. Scribes will transcribe the discussion into a formal argument. For in-person courses, all students will read their assigned topic and prepare several questions/comments to bring to class to converse about, and the discussion leaders will be called on to lead debating the topic in class, and discussing the questions/comments with the professor, while the scribe will transcribe the discussion into a formal argument in real time. For online courses, discussion leaders and scribes will schedule a meeting time for a "podcast-style" discussion/debate with the professor which will be posted publicly. (This may require downloading Discord or another video calling application.) Non-leading students will attend or watch each week and attempt to add questions and/or comments to the discussions, providing an argument supported by something from the discussion.
<b>Extra Credit</b>	Students can take two short surveys, PRE and POST course, for extra credit. Other extra credit opportunities may be available (e.g., attending the school play, or some such similar local cultural event).

**Late Work, Make-Up, and Extra-Credit Policy:** late work is not guaranteed to be accepted. Contact professor in the event that make-up is necessary. And extra-credit survey will be available to take, and extracurricular extra-credit opportunities may be made available during the semester.

**Attendance Policy:** for in-person courses, attendance will be taken and will contribute towards ones discussion grade. For online courses, log-in activity will be used as attendance (particularly the viewing of class discussions). If a student does not complete the initial attendance quiz they will be dropped from the course. If a student has too many unexcused absences they may be dropped from the course per the professor's discretion. An absence may be excused if the professor is notified of the reason in advance.

**Communicating with your instructor:** ALL electronic communication with the instructor must be through your COM email. Due to FERPA restrictions, faculty cannot share any information about performance in the class through other electronic means. (Faculty may add additional statement requiring monitoring and communication expectations via D2L or other LMS)

**Student Learner Outcomes:** (methods of instruction and evaluation to be employed to include a variety of means to evaluate student performance)

<b>Student Learner Outcome</b>	<b>Maps to Core Objective</b>	<b>Assessed via this Assignment</b>
1. Read, analyze, and critique philosophical texts	Critical Thinking Skills (CT)	Reading Quizzes
2. Define and appropriately use important terms such as relativism, virtue, duty, rights, utilitarianism, natural law, egoism, altruism, autonomy, and care ethics.	Critical Thinking Skills (CT)	Vocabulary Quizzes
3. Demonstrate knowledge of major arguments and problems in ethics.	Critical Thinking Skills (CT)	Reasoning Test
4. Present and discuss well reasoned ethical positions in writing.	Communication Skills (CS3)	Discussion Lead/Scribe
5. Apply ethical concepts and principles to address moral concerns.	Critical Thinking Skills (CT)	Reasoning Test
6. Apply course material to various aspects of life.	Personal Responsibility (PR)	Discussion Lead/Scribe
7. Discuss ways of living responsibility in a world where people have diverse ethical beliefs.	Social Responsibility (SR)	Discussion Lead/Scribe

**Academic Dishonesty:** any writing that appears to be plagiarism, including self-plagiarism and the use of AI tools, will receive a zero for the assignment. Repeated plagiarism will receive a zero for the course.

**Student Concerns:** If you have any questions or concerns about any aspect of this course, please contact me using the contact information previously provided. If, after discussing your concern with me, you continue to have questions, please contact Dr. Brian Anderson, Chair, Humanities Department Chair at 409-933-8186 or [banderson@com.edu](mailto:banderson@com.edu).



## Institutional Policies and Guidelines

**Grade Appeal Process:** Concerns about the accuracy of grades should first be discussed with the instructor. A request for a change of grade is a formal request and must be made within six months of the grade assignment. Directions for filing an appeal can be found in the student handbook <https://www.com.edu/student-services/student-handbook.html>. *An appeal will not be considered because of general dissatisfaction with a grade, penalty, or outcome of a course. Disagreement with the instructor's professional judgment of the quality of the student's work and performance is also not an admissible basis for a grade appeal.*

**Academic Success & Support Services:** College of the Mainland is committed to providing students the necessary support and tools for success in their college careers. Support is offered through our Tutoring Services, Library, Counseling, and through Student Services. Please discuss any concerns with your faculty or an advisor.

**ADA Statement:** Any student with a documented disability needing academic accommodations is requested to contact:

Kimberly Lachney, Student Accessibility Services Coordinator

Phone: 409-933-8919

Email: [AccessibilityServices@com.edu](mailto:AccessibilityServices@com.edu)

Location: COM Doyle Family Administration Building, Student Success Center

**Textbook Purchasing Statement:** A student attending College of the Mainland is not under any obligation to purchase a textbook from the college-affiliated bookstore. The same textbook may also be available from an independent retailer, including an online retailer.

**Withdrawal Policy:** Students may withdraw from this course for any reason prior to the last eligible day for a "W" grade. Before withdrawing students should speak with the instructor and consult an advisor. Students are permitted to withdraw only six times during their college career by state law. The last date to withdraw from the 1<sup>st</sup> 8-week session is October 1. The last date to withdraw from the 16-week session is November 14. The last date to withdraw for the 2<sup>nd</sup> 8-week session is November 25.

**FN Grading:** The FN grade is issued in cases of *failure due to a lack of attendance*, as determined by the instructor. The FN grade may be issued for cases in which the student ceases or fails to attend class, submit assignments, or participate in required capacities, and for which the student has failed to withdraw. The issuing of the FN grade is at the discretion of the instructor. The last date of attendance should be documented for submission of an FN grade.

**Early Alert Program:** The Student Success Center at College of the Mainland has implemented an Early Alert Program because student success and retention are very important to us. I have been asked to refer students to the program throughout the semester if they are having difficulty completing assignments or have poor attendance. If you are referred to the Early Alert Program you will be contacted by someone in the Student Success Center who will schedule a meeting with you to see what assistance they can offer in order for you to meet your academic goals.

**Resources to Help with Stress:**

If you are experiencing stress or anxiety about your daily living needs including food, housing or just feel you could benefit from free resources to help you through a difficult time, please click here <https://www.com.edu/community-resource-center/>. College of the Mainland has partnered with free community resources to help you stay on track with your schoolwork, by addressing life issues that get in the way of doing your best in school. All services are private and confidential. You may also contact the Dean of Students office at [deanofstudents@com.edu](mailto:deanofstudents@com.edu) or [communityresources@com.edu](mailto:communityresources@com.edu).

**Nondiscrimination Statement:**

The College District prohibits discrimination, including harassment, against any individual on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, age, veteran status, disability, sex, sexual orientation, gender (including gender identity and gender expression), or any other basis prohibited by law. Retaliation against anyone involved in the complaint process is a violation of College District policy.