

Ethics: Contemporary Moral and Political Problems, PHL 230

Dr. David Kratz Mathies
Assoc. Prof. of Philosophy and Religion
Dept. of Philosophy and Religion
College of Liberal Arts & Sciences

Missouri Western State University
Office: Popplewell Hall 115D
Phone: 816-271-5688
E-mail: <dmathies@missouriwestern.edu>

Course Description:

This course will introduce students to the philosophical field of ethics, both in theory and in practical application to contemporary issues. Students will be introduced to terminology, concepts, and the variety of ethical theories—e.g., the deontological theory of Kantianism (among others), the teleological theory of utilitarianism (or consequentialism), and the aretaic theory of virtue ethics. Related issues of relativism and egoism will also be covered. The majority of the course will however be devoted to the application of theory in the detailed discussion of a list of pressing contemporary topics, such as capital punishment, abortion, euthanasia, gun control, economic justice, war, human rights, and environmental justice—as determined partly by student interest.

General Studies Goal:

Think critically and reason analytically.

(Please see the general studies description at the bottom of this syllabus.)

Course Objectives:

1. Students will become familiar with the variety of ethical theories (especially—but not limited to—deontological, teleological, and aretaic moral theories) and discuss their application to a range of contemporary moral and political problems.
2. Develop critical thinking and writing skills.
3. Apply those skills to the analysis of moral problems and the presentation of moral reasoning in ethical argumentation.

Requirements and Evaluation:

There will be 3 unit tests that will cover terminology, concepts, theories, major figures, and relevant details of issues discussed in class. After the first unit test (primarily on theory), tests will primarily serve as a place for students to develop written arguments on a topic discussed. These essays will be graded on the ability of the student to (1) make a compelling moral case (this includes effective writing, consideration of counter-arguments and counter-examples, and cogent reason-giving), (2) demonstrate awareness and application of relevant ethical theories, and (3) demonstrate knowledge of the relevant details of the particular issue (as well as the relevant arguments considered in the readings and class discussion). Study guides will be provided in advance; students should be certain to make use of these and prepare their arguments before the test (by making outlines of their arguments, reviewing relevant materials, and thinking of good examples to cite). There will be a cumulative final exam, worth the same as a unit test.

A list of books can be found in the texts section of this syllabus from which students will choose one to read and write a 3-4 page report on. (900 minimum wordcount—a fuller description of this assignment will be forthcoming.)

The major project for the course will be to write an argumentative research paper (7-8 pages—2,250 minimum wordcount). While keeping the basic requirements of the assignment in mind (research and presenting a compelling argument), students will be asked to be as creative as possible in answering the following question: How can you make the world a better place? (A fuller description of this assignment will be forthcoming.)

As a demonstration of experimental democracy, students will have the opportunity to vote in an online election to determine some of the normative issues to be covered in the course, as well as expressing preferences for a film to be viewed in class.

Students should also review the general requirements and evaluation section at the beginning of the Course Policies document.

Opportunities for Contributions to your Class Participation Grade:

Every day in class presents opportunities for students to improve their grade by asking or answering questions and otherwise contributing to class discussion; occasional reading quizzes offer further opportunity to add to class participation grade. Here is a list of some additional opportunities (others may be announced as they arise):

- 1) Writing a film review (chosen from the list) in time for the class vote.
- 2) Viewing any additional films from the list before the final exam date.

Requirements and Final Grade Calculation:

- Attendance and active class participation 20%
- Book report (minimum 900 words) 10%
- Major project (minimum 2,250 words) with class presentation 20%
- 4 written examinations (@ 12.5% each) 50%

Books and Materials:

Required Text:

Schafer-Landau, Russ. *Living Ethics: An Introduction with Readings*. Oxford UP, 2019.
ISBN: 9780190272197.

Book Report Options: TBA

Course Outline:

UNIT 1

Normative Theories

UNIT 2

Applied Ethical Topics

UNIT 3

Applied Ethical Topics

UNIT 4

Student Project Presentations

General Studies Requirements for Bachelor Degrees:

General Education at Missouri Western State University consists of a common core of curriculum offerings necessary to equip students for successful and fulfilled lives as educated and active citizens. The required general education curriculum consists of a broad range of courses that assures that all baccalaureate-seeking students acquire academic skills and knowledge necessary for understanding, communicating, and performing in a diverse and complex world. Students completing courses in the general education program will be provided the opportunity to acquire knowledge and skills to:

1. Write and speak clearly and effectively;
2. Think critically and reason analytically;
3. Locate, organize, evaluate, and synthesize information from print and electronic sources;
4. Understand and appreciate moral values and ethical choices;
5. Gain a greater awareness of the present by understanding other cultures and times;
6. Understand and enjoy aesthetic experiences and share in related activities;
7. Develop an understanding of fundamental mathematical concepts and their applications.
8. Understand common phenomena in the physical and natural environment and understand the methods by which they are studied through lectures and the connected laboratory experience;
9. Understand and appreciate the means of gaining and maintaining mental and physical health.

The Knowledge and Skill area #2 will be emphasized in this course.

Students should review the Course Policies document for the relevant university, departmental, and course policies for attendance, classroom behavior, academic honesty, student disabilities, harassment/discrimination/misconduct, make-up exams, and classroom recording.

For class meeting times and professor office hours, as well as the schedule of class readings, assignment deadlines, and test dates, please consult the Course Schedule document.

University, Department, and Course Policies

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General Requirements and Evaluation:

Students are responsible for the information presented in *all* course material—reading assignments, videos, *and* lecture. Class lectures will highlight and explain, but also expand on and supplement the reading. Neither the lecture nor the reading is a substitute for the other. Students are therefore expected to come to class having read the assigned materials and ready to discuss them as part of the learning process. Outlining or note-taking is strongly encouraged as one way to prepare for class discussion.

Please be aware that grading is not simply an assessment of mistakes (what you got wrong), but involves as well the quality (and even the quantity) of the work done. For essays and papers, this may involve effectiveness of writing, evidence of thoughtful preparation as exemplified by both the quantity and quality of details or supporting examples (including research where relevant), and creativity—as well as demonstrated mastery of the relevant course material. (Unless otherwise specified, all written assignments must involve engagement with—and explicit reference to—the assigned reading materials; omission of this requirement will be graded accordingly.)

Students should note that the university catalog defines a grade of C as ‘average’, a grade of B as ‘above average’, and a grade of A as ‘superior’. A grade of ‘B’ therefore represents not merely work that has adequately completed the assignment or answered the essay question on a test, but work that is also above average in quality; an ‘A’ correspondingly represents work that both exceeds assignment expectations and is *outstanding* in comparison with other student work.

Apart from the signed statement on plagiarism, no paper submissions will be accepted for this course. Late papers will be deducted 1 letter grade per day, including weekends and holidays. Except in the case of emergencies, requests for excused lateness submissions must be made in writing and in advance, and specifying the reason for the request. **Unless otherwise specified, absolutely no papers will be accepted after the final exam period.**

Attendance—University Statement:

“Missouri Western State University has the expectation that students should be active participants in their coursework. Regular class attendance is considered a key element of participation and an essential part of the educational experience.” (MWSU Catalogue)

Attendance—Course Statement:

Students are expected to attend class regularly and participate actively. Attendance will be taken at the beginning of every class. Students who arrive for class after attendance has been taken are responsible for coming to the instructor after class to make sure their presence is noted. Such students will be marked late (3 latenesses = 1 absence). Except in the case of emergencies, requests for excused absences must be made in writing, in advance, and specifying each date to

be excused, with appropriate documentation. Every *unexcused* absence will mean a deduction from the student's final grade as follows:

MWF classes: 1 unexcused absence = 1/3 letter grade deduction

TR classes: 1 unexcused absence = 1/2 letter grade deduction

Evening or summer classes: 1 unexcused absence = 1 letter grade deduction

Students with 4 or more weeks worth of absences will automatically fail the course, regardless of coursework quality:

MWF classes: 12 absences = automatic failure

TR classes: 8 absences = automatic failure

Evening or summer classes: 4 absences = automatic failure

Make-Up Exam Policy:

Contact the instructor before the scheduled test date or as soon as possible after the test about the prospect of a make-up. Make-up tests will be given solely at the discretion of the instructor. Depending on the circumstances, the instructor may require documentation explaining why the student missed a scheduled test date. Quizzes will generally not be available for make-ups — especially those that are considered part of the attendance and participation grade. (This applies regardless of whether the quiz was missed due to absence or lateness to class.) Scheduled quizzes that have independent allocation in the final grade may, at the discretion of the instructor, be accommodated by reducing the number of quizzes graded for the student with satisfactory excuse for missing.

Inclement Weather and Illness Policy:

In the event that the instructor is unable to make it to a scheduled class session, you will be notified through your university email account, when possible. The email will contain instructions for what you are to do in lieu of coming to class that day.

Classroom Behavior Guidelines:

See the Student Handbook section concerning Student Code of Conduct for additional details.

Classroom Recording Policy:

The course materials that I author, including, but not limited to, PowerPoint slides, Panopto recordings, Moodle screen shots, class hand-outs, web-based and social media content, and course syllabi, are my intellectual property and are protected by copyright law. Students in the course may download and make copies of my course materials for the course student's own use.

Students are not allowed to record course proceedings, publicly reproduce or distribute these materials or enable others to do so without my express written consent. Failure to comply with this direction may constitute a violation of the Student Code of Conduct as outlined in the Student Handbook and result in disciplinary action by the University.

Policy on Electronic Devices in the Classroom:

Students may wish to take notes on laptops or other electronic devices. Please be considerate of your classmates and make sure that your use of electronic devices is not a

distraction to others in the class. If I see you using an electronic device in class, I may ask you to look something up for the class.

Students with Disabilities:

Students seeking accommodations must first provide documentation of needed accommodations to the Accessibility Resource Center (ARC) located in Eder Hall, Suite 203. Once accommodations have been approved by the ARC, students are responsible for notifying their instructors of those accommodations. This should be done within the first two weeks of classes. Accommodations are not retroactive.

Meeting Basic Needs:

Any student who has difficulty affording groceries or accessing sufficient food to eat every day, or who lacks a safe and stable place to live, and believes this may affect their performance in the course, is urged to contact the Dean of Students, 226 Blum Student Union, for a list of resources and support. <https://www.missouriwestern.edu/studentaffairs/>

You can also contact Shana Meyer, Vice President for Student Affairs, slmeyer@missouriwestern.edu

The Campus Cupboard is a free resource with pantry and hygiene items, located at 214 Blum Student Union. The pantry is typically open Tuesdays and Thursdays from 2-4 pm and by appointment. You can stop by the Vice President for Student Affairs Office, Blum 228, or contact the Dean of Students, grimes@missouriwestern.edu with questions or concerns. Furthermore, please notify the professor if you are comfortable in doing so. This will enable your professor to connect you with the resources you need.

Pregnancy:

Missouri Western State University does not discriminate against any student on the basis of pregnancy, parenting or related conditions. Absences due to medical conditions relating to pregnancy, and recovery from pregnancy, will be excused for as long as deemed medically necessary by a student's doctor. Students will be given the opportunity to make up missed work. Pregnant or parenting students needing assistance should contact the Title IX Coordinator, Adam McGowan at 816-271-4432 in Blum Student Union 228.

A Note on Harassment, Discrimination and Sexual Misconduct:

Consistent with its mission, Missouri Western seeks to assure all community members learn and work in a welcoming and inclusive environment. Title VII, Title IX and University policy prohibit harassment, discrimination and sexual misconduct. Missouri Western encourages anyone experiencing harassment, discrimination or sexual misconduct to talk to someone from the Campus and Local Resources list found in the University Policies and Procedures (https://www.missouriwestern.edu/studentaffairs/wp-content/uploads/sites/129/2019/02/UniversityPolicies_Procedures.pdf) about what happened so they can get the support they need and Missouri Western can respond appropriately.

There are both confidential and non-confidential resources and reporting options available to you. Missouri Western is legally obligated to respond to reports of sexual misconduct, and therefore we cannot guarantee the confidentiality of a report, unless made to a confidential resource. Responses may vary from support services to formal investigations. As a faculty member, I am required to report incidents of sexual misconduct and thus cannot

guarantee confidentiality. I must provide our Title IX coordinator with relevant details such as the names of those involved in the incident. For more information about policies and resources or reporting options, please visit the following website: <https://www.missouriwestern.edu/titleix/sexual-misconduct-policy/>

Students have received information via email regarding training regarding Title IX. Student employees may have additional required training. Please follow the link in the email sent to your MWSU student account to complete the training. Students who do not complete the training will receive a hold on their account, prohibiting future semester enrollment until the training is complete. These training courses will ensure that all students are appropriately educated about these important regulations.

Academic Honesty, Due Process, and Grade Appeal:

- “Academic honesty is required in all academic endeavors. Violations of academic honesty include any instance of plagiarism, cheating, seeking credit for another’s work, falsifying documents or academic records, or any other fraudulent classroom activity.” (MWSU Student Handbook)
- “Violations of academic honesty may result in a failing grade on the assignment, failure in the course, or expulsion from school. When a student’s grade has been affected, violations of academic honesty will be reported to the Provost or the designated representative.” (MWSU Student Handbook)
- For more details concerning Departmental Grade Appeal Procedure, see “GRADE APPEAL PROCEDURE MATERIALS” which is filed in Popplewell 115.
- For more details see <https://www.missouriwestern.edu/studentaffairs/wp-content/uploads/sites/292/2014/02/handbook.pdf>
- For information about Academic Regulations and Standards Committee, go to <https://www.missouriwestern.edu/facsenate/academic-regulations/>

Students should be aware that there is ***no*** assignment for which it is acceptable to submit someone else’s words as your own work!

The university student handbook defines *plagiarism* as follows:

Plagiarism is a specific kind of academic dishonesty in which you take another’s ideas or words and claim them as your own. When you draw on someone else’s work, you must indicate the source of that material, whether you are repeating another’s words, argument or thought. Even if you paraphrase another’s work and are not using the exact wording, you are still required to indicate the source of the material. This material must be clearly identified with appropriate citations. If you do not do that, you have plagiarized those materials. Any time you copy and paste any writing that is not your own for an assignment, you must use quotation marks and give the source of that material. If you cut and paste without noting what you have done, you will be guilty of plagiarism. Even if the writing is your own, if it has been used for a previous assignment that should be indicated. (MWSU Student Handbook)

Note from this definition the following points:

1. Whenever you submit a paper, a powerpoint presentation, or any other written or oral assignment, you are making the implicit ‘claim’ that these are your words, unless marked otherwise.

2. Using proper citation, you are required to give credit for **everything** you make use of from a source: ideas, examples, statistics, and, of course, direct word-for-word quotation.

3. Direct quotations must be marked with **both** a proper citation **and** quotation marks (or indentation for longer block quotations).

4. Even making use of your own work for another class must be clearly marked.

To sum up, all assignments must be completed in your own words, with direct quotations clearly marked (either quotation marks or offset/indentation for longer quotes) and proper credit given for any use of sources (parentheticals, footnotes, or endnotes). Taking a substantial portion of a source—anything longer than a phrase—and substituting a word here or there is **not** paraphrasing. If you need to rely that much on a text, make sure you quote it and mark it.

Also make sure that **every time** you make use of someone else’s ideas or information, **even if** you do not directly quote from the text, you cite your source with appropriate academic referencing (e.g. MLA, APA, or Chicago style). If you are not sure, please consult an appropriate style guide or the professor—please note, however, that page numbers in citations are **obligatory** (where relevant and provided in the source material) rather than optional, regardless of style guide specifications.

Note finally that university policy stipulates as possible penalties for plagiarism either a zero for the plagiarized assignment or failure of the course. At the discretion of the professor, such fraudulent assignments may be documented and submitted to the Provost’s Office for further action, according to university policy. For specific details of the university’s Academic Honesty Policy and for information on the student due process procedure, please see Western’s *Student Handbook*, available online at <<https://www.missouriwestern.edu/studentaffairs/student-handbook>>.

All students must print out, sign, and submit the statement of understanding concerning this policy for the second day of class. Students will also be required to submit a similar statement in connection with specific assignments for the course.

Statement of Understanding Regarding Plagiarism in Assignments

(Name)

I have read the syllabus for the course and

I understand that all course assignments (both class presentations and papers) must be in my own words or with quotations clearly marked.

I understand that these are NOT examples of my own words:

rearranging whole phrases so that they appear in different order in the sentences and paragraphs of my source

taking source sentences and replacing some of the words with synonyms.

I understand that my options for making use of sources are:

restating the ideas in my own words—the way I would explain it to someone else, using words and phrases that I would use—and then marking it with a reference citation

using the direct quote (clearly marked with either quotation marks or indentation for a longer block quote) and then marking it with a reference citation.

I understand it is my responsibility to clearly mark quotes and submit all other work in my own words—with both ideas and quotes clearly cited with appropriate references—and that failure to do this will result either in my work receiving a grade of 0 or failing the course, as per university policy regarding plagiarism.

(Signed)

(Date)