

# PHILOSOPHY 105/24334

## Introduction to Ethics

Professor – Dr. Barry F. Vaughan

Fall 2025, MCC Main MW 12:00-13:15 (BP 2N)

**Text:** Introduction to Ethical Theory, (*online* - <http://barryfvaughan.org>)

**Editor:** Barry F. Vaughan

We will supplement our text with some readings provided on the internet and on reserve in the library. Reading the assigned texts is ESSENTIAL for success in this class. You must therefore buy the book and read all material listed in the Reading Schedule below. Part of the study of Philosophy involves an examination of, and analysis of the literature of Philosophy. If you don't like to read, this class may not be for you.

### Course Goals:

This course is designed as an *introduction* to Ethical Theory: the systematic investigation of morality. No previous exposure to philosophical literature is expected. We will survey several of the basic theories of and problems in ethical theory by reading classical texts in an historical approach to the subject. By the end of the semester the student is expected to have a working knowledge of the main issues in moral theory and to be capable of logically defending a theory of morality. Since Ethics, like all philosophical disciplines, uses a technical vocabulary, students are also expected to become *philosophically literate* over the course of the semester.

At the end of each unit students should be able to 1) define the philosophical terms associated with that unit, 2) identify individual philosophers and their positions, 3) explain the views of the philosophers we study in your own words, 4) contrast the views of the philosophers with one another, 5) identify your own moral intuitions in reference to the theories we examine, and 6) begin to construct a logically coherent moral view of your own based on our studies.

As a general education requirement this course is designed primarily with non-majors in mind. However, beginning philosophy majors will find the content of the course a useful, if not necessary, foundation for more advanced courses.

Ethics, as a branch of Philosophy, deals with controversial adult material including human sexuality, the existence of God, principles of right action, etc. Students must be prepared to engage all material as presented/assigned. Alternate assignments, readings, lectures, etc. ***will not be provided.***

### Course Requirements:

**Attendance** - students are **required to attend class** as scheduled. Absences are excused in the case of illness (standard proof of illness is required) or other University sanctioned activities (see student handbook for details). If you know you will be absent on an exam day, *please* make arrangements to take the exam *early*. There will be **no make-up exams** for unexcused absences and **late assignments will be penalized**. If you miss an exam, please contact me immediately.

**Tardiness** - I am not particularly offended by tardiness (after all, you are paying for this course). I understand that sometimes factors beyond our control conspire to make us late. If you are late to class, come on in and find a place to sit. However, please be courteous to your classmates and do not make a disturbance if you are late. Finally, please do not allow tardiness to become a habit.

**Grades** - will be figured on the following basis:

- 1) Four unit **Exams** each worth 100 points (*lowest exam score dropped*).
- 2) Ten **Quizzes**, 10 points each.
- 3) **Extra credit** will be available to students on exams, the pre and post surveys, and in the form of bonus quizzes. Extra credit points *will not count against* your final grade.

**Grade Tracker:** use the grade tracker below to record your grades as we go through the semester.

Quiz 1 _____	Quiz 2 _____	Quiz 3 _____
Quiz 4 _____	Quiz 5 _____	Quiz 6 _____
Quiz 7 _____	Quiz 8 _____	Quiz 9 _____
Quiz 10 _____	Bonus 1 _____	Bonus 2 _____
Bonus 3 _____	Bonus 4 _____	Bonus 5 _____
Bonus 6 _____	Bonus 7 _____	Bonus 8 _____
Bonus 9 _____	Bonus 10 _____	
Exam 1 _____	Pre-Survey _____	
Exam 2 _____	Post-Survey _____	
Exam 3 _____		
Exam 4 _____		

**Grade Scale and Symbols:** based on five hundred total points, below is the percentage scale used to determine your final course grade and an explanation of the grade symbols used.

360-400 (90%-100%)	A <i>Excellent</i>
320-359 (80%-89%)	B <i>Above Average</i>
280-319 (70%-79%)	C <i>Average</i>
240-279 (60%-69%)	D <i>Minimal Passing</i>
0-239	F <i>Failure</i>
	Y <i>Withdraw Failing</i>
	W <i>Withdraw Passing</i>
	I <i>Incomplete</i>

### **IMPORTANT NOTE ON THE CAVAS GRADEBOOK**

If you are in the habit of checking the gradebook in Canvas, please note that it does **NOT** distinguish between **required** and **bonus** assignments. DO NOT FREAK OUT if you look in Canvas and it suggests that you have a failing percentage. As noted above, your final grade is based on the *total number of points* you accumulate over the course of the semester, **not** the percentage of points out of the total possible. **IGNORE THE PERCENTAGES IN CANVAS!** It is extremely difficult to fail this course if you do all of the assignments.

**Statement on Plagiarism/Academic Misconduct** – Due to the proliferation of academic material available on the internet, plagiarism is on the rise in American academic institutions. Plagiarism is the use of two or more consecutive words from someone else’s written work without proper citation, or passing off someone else’s words as your own. Plagiarism includes paraphrasing someone else’s work without giving proper citation of the source material. Plagiarism is **theft** of intellectual property and WILL NOT BE TOLLERATED.

Academic misconduct, in general, is a term for cheating *of any variety*. Obviously, the assignments you turn in and the examinations you take should reflect YOUR OWN work, and any attempt to circumvent this process is harmful. Therefore, any plagiarized, or otherwise academically inappropriate assignment, will receive an automatic 0 (or F), and the assignment cannot be made up or replaced. If two or more assignments are plagiarized or the product of academic misconduct in the course of a semester, the offending student *may* receive an automatic F for the course.

**Academic Misconduct on Canvas:** It is **INAPPROPRIATE** on a quiz or exam in Canvas to just look up answers in another browser window and then copy/paste, or rewrite what you looked up. A quiz or exam is designed to test what you *know* (i.e., the understanding in your mind), not your skills using search engines.

The use of Chat GPT, or *any* AI interface, for the purposes of this course, would be considered academic misconduct. **DO YOUR OWN WORK.**

### **Student Responsibilities:**

**Responsibility for Information** – Students are responsible for knowing and understanding all information contained in this syllabus. If you do not understand some portion of this document, please contact the professor for clarification. All student rights and responsibilities are governed through the MCC Student Handbook; students should be aware of all policies contained therein.

**Students with Disabilities** – It is the policy of Mesa Community College, in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, to offer reasonable accommodations to students with disabilities. If you are disabled and need accommodation you should contact the MCC Student Disabilities Office (MCC Disabilities Resources and Services Office at 480-461-7447 or email [drsfrontdesk@mesacc.edu](mailto:drsfrontdesk@mesacc.edu)) before any assignments are due. It is the student's responsibility to contact the Student Disabilities Office with any request for special services. Students experiencing difficulty accessing course materials because of a disability should contact the course instructor so that a solution can be found that provides all students equal access to course materials and technology. The DRS Office now also handles pregnancy related absences. If you have a need for pregnancy related accommodations, please contact the DRS Office immediately.

**Dropping/Withdrawal** – It is part of a **student's academic responsibility** to decide whether or not to drop or withdraw from a course once enrolled. If you find this course does not meet your needs or that you need to withdraw for other reasons you must secure a Drop/Add slip from the Registrar's Office, fill out the appropriate information, and bring it to the professor. If you need to withdraw but are unable to come to campus, please contact me via telephone or email. I will assume that all students who enroll in the course intend to finish. I **will not** automatically withdraw you from this course if you simply stop coming to class!

**Recording Lectures** – The content of course lectures, including, but not limited to, verbal, printed, "powerpoint" and other electronic communications are the copyrighted property of the professor. Recording class lectures is **prohibited** *without express written consent*. If you wish to record lectures, you must see me during office hours and sign a Proprietary Information Agreement.

**Cell Phones**– All cell phones ringers should be placed in the "off, "quiet" or "do not disturb" mode. **Do not** send or answer text messages or other online media while in class. Failure to adhere to this policy may result in punitive action.

**Instructional Grievance** – Students have the right to due-process if they feel they have been treated unfairly by their professor in regard to academic procedures (i.e., grading). Please refer to the process articulated in the Student Handbook § 2.3.5.

### **Contact Information:**

**Office Hours** – feel free to drop by my office any time if you wish to chat or discuss any material you do not fully understand. During office hours, my doors are always open to you! I am located in the building 43a or online: <https://maricopa.webex.com/meet/bvaughan>

M-TR 13:30 – 14:30, F 11:00-12:00, *or* by appointment

**Phone:** Office/voicemail: 480-461-7620

**Email:** [barry.vaughan@mesacc.edu](mailto:barry.vaughan@mesacc.edu) (the most reliable and fastest way to get in touch with me)

**Website:** <https://barryfvaughan.org>. On the course website you will find a large amount of useful information including a complete set of course notes, study guides, an electronic library of classic texts in Philosophy, an interactive dictionary, syllabi (just in case you lose this one), a forum area for your class, as well as links to other philosophy web sites.

### **Alternation of Syllabus Information:**

The information contained in this syllabus is subject to change. Students will be notified in class of any alteration of schedule, assignment, or grading policy.

### **MCC Early Alert Program (EARS)**

Mesa Community College is committed to the success of all our students. Numerous campus support services are available throughout your academic journey to assist you in achieving your educational goals. MCC has adopted an Early Alert Referral System (EARS) as part of a student success initiative to aid students in their educational pursuits. Faculty and Staff participate by alerting and referring students to campus services for added support. Students may receive a follow up call from various campus services as a result of being referred to EARS. Students are encouraged to participate, but these services are optional. Early Alert Web Page with Campus Resource Information can be located at: <http://www.mesacc.edu/students/ears>.

## *Tentative Daily Reading Schedule*

### **Unit 1 – Introduction to Ethics as Philosophy:**

Overview of Philosophy	
Overview of Ethical Theory	i-viii
The Problem of Moral Agency	

#### **Exam I**

### **Unit 2 (*Part 1*) – Ancient Thinkers Consider How We Should Live:**

Hesiod on the Morality of the Gods	1-16
Sophokles on Divine versus Human Morality	17-49
Sokrates on the Divine Command theory	50-68
Sokrates on Moral Decision Making	69-79
Sokrates on the Teachability of Virtue	80-118

#### **Exam II**

### **Unit 2 (*Part 2*) - Ancient Thinkers Consider How We Should Live:**

Plato on Knowledge of the Good	120-133
Aristotle on the Nature of Virtue	134-145
Epikouros on Pleasure ( <i>Hedonism</i> )	146-149
Epiktetos on Happiness ( <i>Stoicism</i> )	150-163

#### **Exam III**

### **Unit 4 – Modern Thinkers Consider How We Should Live:**

Hobbes on Human Nature and Self-Interest ( <i>Egoism</i> )	164-177
Jeremy Bentham on Maximizing Pleasure ( <i>Utilitarianism</i> )	178-181
Mill on Utilitarianism ( <i>Utilitarianism</i> )	183-196
Kant on Reason and Moral Awareness ( <i>Kantianism</i> )	197-210
Nietzsche on the end of Moral Philosophy ( <i>Nihilism</i> )	211-223

#### **Exam IV (*Comprehensive* Final)**

# HOW TO SUCCEED IN COLLEGE

“How can I be successful in a college course?” This is perhaps the most important practical question you can ask yourself at this point in your life. Whether you have just finished secondary school, or whether you are returning to education after a lengthy period, it is important for you to recognize that your success in higher education depends *entirely on you*. Higher education is not like secondary school. You are NOT required to attend college, and you are not required to succeed. You are here because you have chosen to be. You will be successful in college if, and only if, you CHOOSE to be. However, desiring to be successful will not guarantee your success. YOU MUST ACT IN YOUR OWN SELF-INTEREST. The following are some helpful suggestions on what you should be doing if you wish to be successful.

**1. Read and understand your course syllabus.** Your syllabus is a learning contract and it should spell out all the requirements for the course you have enrolled in. All MCC faculty are required to provide you with a syllabus that spells out the learning objectives for the course, the method of assessment for the course (i.e., how you will be graded), and any and all class policies that are required for your successful completion of the course (these are policies that go beyond the standard policies articulated in the Student Hand Book which are common to all MCC courses). It is YOUR responsibility to know and understand the content of your course syllabus.

**2. Attend all scheduled class meetings.** Your success in a particular class is strongly correlated with your attendance. The more you attend, the more likely you are to succeed.

**3. Read all assigned materials.** Unlike secondary school, higher education requires students to become independent learners. It is YOUR responsibility to read and understand ALL assigned material whether or not it is discussed in class. Just because something is not discussed in class does not mean it is not important or that you will not be evaluated on that material. You are responsible for completing all the assigned reading in your class.

**4. Observe all due-dates.** Complete all outside-class assignments and projects *prior to* their due date. The due date of an assignment is the time at which you are required to submit your work for evaluation by your professor. It is NOT the time to turn in a first draft or a cursory reading, or an incomplete project or worksheet.

**5. Be prepared for class.** It is expected that you will spend two (2) hours outside of class preparing for each one (1) hour you spend in class. Obviously, the amount of time required to prepare for a particular class may vary based on subject matter and your abilities. However, it is the general expectation in higher education that you are adequately prepared for all classes. Thus, if you are enrolled in four three credit-hour courses (a twelve credit-hour load), you should expect to spend a minimum of twenty-four hours *outside of class, preparing for class*. Your total weekly time budget should therefore include thirty-six hours per week *dedicated solely to your education*. The degree of your success in college is directly correlated to the time you spend on your education both inside and outside the classroom. Do not take more courses than your time budget will allow. If you spend more money than you make, you will be in debt. If you attempt to take more classes than you have time for, you will not succeed.

**6. ASK QUESTIONS!** In college you are expected to share responsibility for your learning. Your professor is supposed to be an expert in the content of their field. They are there to guide you in your learning. But your professor cannot learn for you. If you do not understand something in your reading, ask for it to be explained. If you do not understand something in the lecture, ask for it to be explained. Professors are content experts, not psychics. If you don't ask a question, they will likely assume you understand what is being read or discussed.

**7. Take advantage of office hours.** Your professor is required to provide academic support hours to support you. If you are having difficulty understanding your reading, if you are having difficulty with assignments, quizzes, exams, papers or projects, go to your professor's office hours and ASK FOR HELP. Your professor cannot help you if you do not ask for assistance.

**8. Do not multi-task while studying.** It is common for all of us to multi-task in our lives. We have cell phones, Facebook, Twitter, email, iPods, TV, radio and an endless list of other distractions constantly calling upon our attention. These are great tools and you should use them. **HOWEVER**, the more things you attempt to do at once, the less competent you will be at each task. I know you *think* you can multi-task well; but **you are wrong!** Our

brains did not evolve to multi-task in the ways you think and we are becoming aware of the limitations of our cognitive abilities as we invent new and more complex tools. Do not experiment with your time, money, and education. When you study you need to be focused. Follow these rules for success when you study.

**Do not** interrupt your reading/studying to:

- answer the phone or text,
- check Facebook or Instagram,
- read or post a Tweet.

**Do not** have the Television/radio/iPod playing when you are reading/studying. If you must have some background sound, use music (at a low volume) that does NOT have lyrics. Classical, jazz, even techno can provide background noise that allows your brain to focus on complex tasks like reading and problem solving. *Lyrics are the key.* Your brain is wired to pay attention to language. This priority has evolved over millions of years and it has not changed with the advent of micro-computing (though it is certainly probable that we will continue to evolve and our descendants may have abilities we do not). When there is language in the background, it WILL lower your level of concentration and limit your ability to solve problems, read complex material, and perform difficult tasks.

Following these guidelines will not ensure that you will succeed in college, but they will help! Do yourself a favor, take this information to heart and follow these suggestions.

## COVENANT ON CLASS DECORUM

The object of this course is for the student to become familiar with academic Philosophy. This goal includes not only theory but also rhetorical practice to be carried out in the classroom. In order to foster an acceptable atmosphere of educational edification the following maxims will be agreed to by **all** participants (*including* the professor):

1. I shall refrain from making personal attacks upon fellow interlocutors; likewise, I will not mistake an attack *upon an argument* I present as a personal attack.
2. I reserve the right to disagree with *any* argument on *any* subject regardless of whether or not it reflects my own, or the majority opinion. In like manner, I will *not assume* that an argument presented by a classmate or the professor necessarily represents their personal opinion.
3. I hereby agree to disagree *agreeably* so as to avoid personal injury or vendettas.
4. I reserve the right to participate in class discussions and arguments, and I shall endeavor to engage ideas and opinions that differ from my own thus enhancing my academic pilgrimage.
5. I hereby agree not to pout about or refrain from engaging arguments which seem weak or problematic. I accept as part of *my* academic responsibility the obligation to speak up whether I agree or disagree.
6. I reserve the right to take all classroom grievances to the person with whom I have the grievance, regardless of whether it is a student *or the professor* (if we cannot work out the problem there is an official grievance process which we can follow – details are in your student handbook).
7. I shall attempt to be open to, and respect all persons in the classroom even when we disagree.
8. I shall, to the best of my ability, respect and incorporate the maxims of this covenant and endeavor to uphold my end of all agreements made herein.

*If you do not feel that you can live up to the terms of this agreement, you should drop this course immediately!*