

# Moral Philosophy

PHI 3301

## Instructor Information

Instructor

Dr. Justin Morton

Email

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Office Hours

Tues/Thurs | 11-12  
(Email ahead of time)

## General Information

### Description of Course Content

You are all in college because you think it will make your life better. But what makes a life good?

When I was little, I used to pick on my little brother just for fun, and that was wrong. But why was it wrong?

Caligula was a notoriously sadistic Roman emperor. Suppose that he really thought he was doing the right thing in torturing someone—would it still be wrong? Or does its wrongness depend somehow on what Caligula believes?

These are some of the kinds of questions we will be considering this semester. We will investigate the nature of the good life, when and why acts are morally wrong, whether moral truths are objectively or only relatively true, and whether (and how) belief in God (or the Christian God in particular) can make a difference to these questions. We'll do this by working through several historical philosophers' works: Aristotle, Aquinas, Kant, Mill, and Nietzsche.

## Course Materials

### Required Materials

- Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, translated by Terence Irwin, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition. Hackett Publishing.
- Kant, *Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals*, translated by James W. Ellington. Hackett Publishing
- Mill, *Utilitarianism*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition. Hackett Publishing.
- Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals and Ecce Homo*, translated by Walter Kaufmann and RJ Hollingdale. Vintage Books.

All other materials will be made available throughout the term on Canvas, with the exception of any movies assigned.

### Optional Materials

I assign smaller portions of these *but I will provide the excerpts!* But you can still buy them if you want a hard copy.

- C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*
- Aquinas, *Disputed Questions on Virtue*, translated by Hause and Murphy. Hackett Publishing

## Coffee Hour

In the first few weeks of class, I'll be scheduling group coffee dates with students, where I buy coffee for 2-3 students at a time and we get to know each other. This is purely optional, but I'd love the opportunity to get to know you, and for you to get to know both me and a classmate or two! I promise I won't make it awkward.

## Course Schedule

Week	Topic	Reading/Assignments/Exams
<b>Week 1</b> Aug 22-26	Introduction and Syllabus/ Aristotle on the Good Life	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> Book 1 (read for Thursday)</li></ul>
<b>Week 2</b> Aug 29-Sept 2	Aristotle on virtue and related phenomena (continence, incontinence, etc.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> Book 2</li><li>• <i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> Book 7, chs 1-10</li></ul>
<b>Week 3</b> Sept 5-9	Aristotle on particular moral virtues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> Books 3 and 4</li></ul>
<b>Week 4</b> Sept 12-16	Aquinas on the theological virtues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Aquinas reading, sent out via email</li><li>• C.S. Lewis selection from <i>Mere Christianity</i>, sent out via email</li></ul>
<b>First Virtue Journal Entry (completed in class)</b>		
<b>Week 5</b> Sept 19-23	Aquinas on Pride Aristotle on Intellectual Virtues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Aquinas reading, sent out via email</li><li>• Selection from the book of Genesis</li><li>• <i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> Book 6</li></ul>
<b>Week 6</b> Sept 26-30	Aristotle on Friendship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> Book 8</li><li>• Start <i>Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals</i>, Section 1</li></ul>
<b>Week 7</b> Oct 4-7	Kant on the Good Will Kant on the Categorical Imperative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Continue <i>Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals</i>, Section 1</li><li>• <i>Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals</i>, Section 2 (selections)</li></ul>
<b>Week 8</b> Oct 10-14	Kant on (other formulations of) the Categorical Imperative Kant on Perfect/Imperfect Duty Kant's Ethics Applied	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Continue <i>Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals</i>, Section 2 (selections)</li><li>• Kant, "On a Supposed Right to Lie Because of Philanthropic Concerns" (supplement at end of <i>Grounding</i>)</li><li>• Mill, <i>Utilitarianism</i>, ch. 1</li></ul>

Week	Topic	Reading/Assignments/Exams
<b>Week 9</b> Oct 17-21	Tuesday: Flex day/review Thursday: Exam 1	<b>Exam 1 Thursday 10/20 in class</b>
<b>Week 10</b> Oct 24-28	Mill's Utilitarianism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Utilitarianism</i>, ch. 2</li> </ul> <b>***NO CLASS THURSDAY 10/27</b>
<b>Week 11</b> Oct 31-Nov 4	Mill's Utilitarianism	<i>Utilitarianism</i> , ch. 4 [Reading on Utilitarianism, TBD]
<b>Week 12</b> Nov 7-11	Nietzsche	<i>Genealogy</i> Book 1
<b>Week 13</b> Nov 14-18	Nietzsche	<i>Genealogy</i> Book 2
<b>Week 14</b> Nov 21-25	NO CLASS	THANKSGIVING BREAK
<b>Week 15</b> Nov 28-Dec 2	Tuesday: Summation Activities Thursday: Workshop papers	Reading TBD <b>Paper Outline due Thursday 12/1 before class</b>
<b>Week 16</b> Dec 5-9	Tuesday: Review for Final Exam *Note: No Thursday class (Dec 7 last official class day)	<b>Paper due Wednesday 12/7</b> <b>Second Exam will be during our final exam slot (currently Tuesday, 12/13 4:30-6:30 PM)</b>

## Evaluation

In-Class Activities | 15%

- One argument outline
- Several responses to the question of the day
- General participation in various class activities

Exams | 50%

- 2 short-answer/essay exams at 25% each

Paper | 25%

- 5% for turning in a complete outline early (Thursday 12/1 before class)
- 20% for the paper

Virtue Journals | 10%

**In-class activities** will vary, but everyone will (i) present one “argument outline” where they state one thing the author is trying to argue for, and how they argue for it. They’ll then ask a question to get class discussion started. There will also be a “question of the day” emailed out before each class. Everyone should informally prepare answers to this question, because (ii) I will ask a few students each class for their answer. Finally (iii) students are expected to participate in class discussion/activities in general. This will often be informal discussion, but could involve group work, workshoping papers, or a structured debate.

**Virtue Journal.** You will keep a journal throughout the semester chronicling your experiences trying to attain a virtue you will choose after our first few weeks of class. This is a pass/fail grade.

**Exams.** There will be two exams, and each will have a variety of short answer and essay questions. Taken in class.

**Paper.** The paper will be 3-4 pages and will argue for an original position concerning one of the topics we cover in the class. I may give *optional* prompts, but you will be free to come up with your own ideas too.