



3. Reading quizzes (10% of the course grade)

Ten short pop quizzes, usually at the beginning of class, and usually about that day's reading assignment. You may consult *printed out* or *handwritten* material, such as notes or the text, but not anything on a screen.

4. 'Murky Points' prompts (8 x 1% = 8% of the course grade)

At the end of each class, you may turn in written questions or comments about the content of that class period—especially about what was difficult or unclear, or what you disagree with. This is a way for you to get quick feedback (and to give me quick feedback). Each good faith submission receives full credit. These assignments cannot be submitted late. Only one prompt may be submitted per class.

5. Class participation (6% of the course grade)

Informed participation in class is strongly encouraged. Students may also earn participation credit by asking questions about the course topics during office hours.

### Policy on Late Assignments

Exams and quizzes cannot be taken late, except in the event of a UAH-sponsored activity or a personal emergency which you notify the instructor of as soon as possible. Paper assignments will be penalized by five percentage points for each day they are late, except in the event of a UAH-sponsored activity or a personal emergency.

### Grading Scale

A+ : 96%+	B+ : 87-89%	C+ : 77-79%	D+ : 67-69%
A : 93-95%	B : 83-86%	C : 73-76%	D : 63-66%
A- : 90-92%	B- : 80-82%	C- : 70-72%	D- : 60-62%

Receiving these percentages guarantees the corresponding letter grade. Students on the borderline of two grades will be bumped up only if they have completed all assignments and if the final exam reflects the higher score.

### Women and Gender Studies

This course has been approved as an 'elective' course in the Women's and Gender Studies minor. A significant component of course material covers women or gender, or it employs methodologies that are particularly useful in the interpretation of gender issues.

### Disability Accommodations

Students with disabilities should contact UAH's Disability Support Services at 256.824.1997, 256.824.6672 (Fax), or [dssproctor@uah.edu](mailto:dssproctor@uah.edu). (Website: <http://www.uah.edu/health-and-wellness/disability-support>) If you have a letter from the Disability Services Office indicating you have a disability that requires academic accommodations, please present the letter to me so we can discuss accommodations for the class.

### Plagiarism

All instances of suspected plagiarism will be reported to the Director of Student Conduct at UAH for investigation. If an investigation confirms that plagiarism took place, then the assignment will receive a score of zero and the student will be subject to University penalties. The following information summarizes UAH's understanding of plagiarism (from <http://libguides.uah.edu/plagiarism>):

"Plagiarism - failing to acknowledge our debts to others - is using others' ideas and words without clearly acknowledging the source of that information...."

"Give credit whenever you use

- another person's idea, opinion, or theory.
- any facts, statistics, graphs, drawings - any pieces of information - that are not common knowledge.
- quotations of another person's actual spoken or written words.
- a paraphrase of another person's spoken or written words.

"Common types of plagiarism include

- quoting material from another source without making citation.
- citing only one source while combining materials from several.
- citing fake sources to hide the amount of quoting/paraphrasing or to shortcut finding all the sources used.
- changing the content of sources to make it sound more relevant.
- copying the general structure, argument, or techniques of a source without attribution."

## Schedule of Reading Assignments

### Unit 1. Popular Meta-Ethical Theories

W 8.15: Introduction; Alex Rosenberg "Can Moral Disputes Be Resolved?" *New York Times*,  
<http://opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/2015/07/13/can-moral-disputes-be-resolved/>

M 8.20: James Rachels, "The Challenge of Cultural Relativism," pp. 1-7

W 8.22: James Rachels, "The Challenge of Cultural Relativism," pp. 8-13

M 8.27: James Rachels, "Does Morality Depend on Religion?" Sections 1 and 2

W 8.29: James Rachels, "Does Morality Depend on Religion?" Section 4

M 9.3: Labor Day

W 9.5: Exam Review

M 9.10: \*Exam #1\*

### Unit 2. Animals and Fetuses: Reasoning About Controversial Issues

W 9.12: Stuart Rachels, "Vegetarianism," Sections 1-3 (focus especially on Sections 1 & 2)

M 9.17: Stuart Rachels, "Vegetarianism," Sections 4-6

W 9.19: Loren Lomasky, "Is it wrong to eat animals?," Sections 1-3, pp. 178-193

M 9.24: Loren Lomasky, "Is it wrong to eat animals?," Sections 4-6, pp. 193-200

W 9.26: Don Marquis, "Why Abortion Is Immoral"

M 10.1: Don Marquis, "Why Abortion Is Immoral"

W 10.3: Jane English, "Abortion and the Concept of a Person"

M 10.8: Jane English, "Abortion and the Concept of a Person"

W 10.10: \*Exam #2\*

### Unit 3. Perfectionist Ethics

M 10.15: Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, pp. 1-6

W 10.17: Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, pp. 6-8

M 10.22: Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, pp. 8-14

W 10.24: Karl Marx, "Estranged Labor," *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*

### Unit 4. Utilitarianism

M 10.29: Henry Sidgwick, "Utilitarianism," pp. 253-257

W 10.31: Henry Sidgwick, "Utilitarianism," pp. 258-260

*F 11.2: Ethics Report #1 Due via Canvas*

M 11.5: Peter Singer, "Rich and Poor." Also check out Singer's website: <http://www.thelifeyoucansave.org>

W 11.7: \*Exam #3

*F 11.9: Ethics Report Peer Review Due via Canvas*

## Unit 5. Kantianism

M 11.12: Onora O'Neill, "Between Consenting Adults," pp. 252-260

W 11.14: Onora O'Neill, "Between Consenting Adults," pp. 260-272

M 11.19: Onora O'Neill, "Between Consenting Adults," pp. 272-277

W 11.21: No Class

M 11.26: Review/Wrap-Up

W 11.28: Ethics Report #2 Due via Canvas

Section 102.02 Final Exam Period/Ethics Report Conference: Friday, Nov. 30, 8:00am-10:30am

Section 102.03 Final Exam Period/Ethics Report Conference: Friday, Nov. 30, 3:00pm-5:30pm

(Double-check your section number to ensure that you don't miss your conference!)

## Ethics Report Assignment #1

Due on Canvas by Friday, November 2<sup>nd</sup> at 11:59pm

Worth 8 points (4% of the total course grade)

In this report you will discuss an important ethical issue of your choosing, in an essay that will be about four pages long. You must clear your ethical issue with me in person by the end of the day on September 15<sup>th</sup>. For each side of each issue, only one student gets to claim it for their report. First come, first served!\*

Your first report will critically discuss what you and the philosophers covered in the first part of the course have to say about the issue you chose. Your report must have the following form:

Section One: Explain your ethical issue. Why does it matter? (250 words maximum)

Section Two: (A) Explain what Cultural Relativism is and how a Cultural Relativist might think about your issue. (B) Critically assess this Cultural Relativist argument: Do you agree with how the relativist thinks about the issue? Why or why not? (250 words maximum)

Section Three: (A) Explain what the Divine Command Theory is and how a Divine Command Theorist might think about your issue. (B) Critically assess this religious argument: Do you agree with how the Divine Command Theorist thinks about the issue? Why or why not? (250 words maximum)

Section Four: (A) Explain what Aristotle's theory is and how Aristotle might think about your issue. (B) Critically assess this Aristotelian argument: Do you agree with how Aristotle might think about the issue? Why or why not? (250 words maximum)

Section Five: (A) Explain what utilitarianism is and how some version of utilitarianism bears on the issue. (B) Critically assess this utilitarian argument: Do you agree with how the utilitarian thinks about the issue? Why or why not? (250 words maximum)

Please type your report in a word processor, using 12-point font, double-spaced.

All claims about these theories and about the facts of your specific topic that are not obvious or part of common sense must have a citation to a reputable source.

\* I recommend that you consider topics relating to your main fields of study—what you are majoring or minoring in. You might consider asking a professor who teaches classes in your major if there are any interesting ethical issues that relate to these classes.

Here are some topic suggestions, in case you're having trouble choosing an ethical issue to write about:

whether torture is always unjust

whether sex work (prostitution) is wrong

whether any form of genetic engineering is wrong	wrong
whether 'gun control' laws are unjust	whether assisted suicide is wrong
whether legalized same-sex marriage is unjust	whether refusing to immunize your child against contagious diseases (like measles) is wrong
whether war is always unjust	whether causing the extermination of a species is wrong
whether developing nuclear weapons is wrong	whether drug- or cosmetics-experimentation on animals is wrong
whether using drones in war is unjust	whether some version of capitalism is unjust
whether watching pornography is wrong	whether some version of socialism is unjust
whether cursing around children is wrong	whether not trying to prevent climate change is unjust
whether capital punishment is unjust	whether it is always wrong for a journalist to publish classified government documents
whether solitary confinement is unjust	whether illegal immigration (e.g., overstaying on your visa) is wrong
whether the drug war is unjust	whether limiting immigration is unjust
whether recreational drug use is wrong	whether advertising to children is wrong
whether charging tuition for college is unjust	
whether racial preferences in dating is wrong	
whether racial preferences in hiring or college admissions is wrong	
whether racial profiling in policing is wrong	
whether burning the American flag is wrong	
whether keeping extra wealth—instead of giving it to those in need—is	

For other ideas and brainstorming help, I strongly recommend reading a newspaper op-ed piece called, "What will future generations condemn us for?" by the philosopher Kwame Anthony Appiah. It is available for free, here:

[http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/09/24/AR2010092404113\\_pf.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/09/24/AR2010092404113_pf.html)

## Ethics Report Peer Review

Due on Canvas by Friday, November 9<sup>th</sup> at 11:59pm

Worth 12 points (6% of the total course grade)

At the end of the day on November 2<sup>nd</sup>, you will be assigned three of your classmates' ethics reports to review. The point of this review activity is to (i) help you understand the standards that I will use to evaluate your paper; (ii) have you help three of your classmates to improve their reports, (iii) have you receive help from three of your classmates, and (vi) have you learn something interesting from others' reports!

Your assignment now is to answer the following questions for each of the three ethics reports that you are to review. Some of the questions can be answered in one word or one number, but some of them might require a few sentences.

Before you begin, remember that ethics is difficult and that it is possible for well-intentioned and intelligent people to reasonably disagree. So in your answers try to be friendly and helpful to each other. Minimize rudeness and snark. (Save *that* for internet strangers!)

### Peer Review Questions

Section One:

1. Does the report begin by explaining an ethical issue?
2. If so, how good is the explanation (on a scale of 0 to 10, with 10 meaning 'excellent')? Do you understand exactly what issue the author is talking about?
3. How could the explanation be improved? Be specific.
4. Does the report explain why the ethical issue matters?
5. How good is this explanation (on a 0-10 scale)? Do you understand exactly why this issue is supposed to matter?

Section Two:

1. Does the report explain how some version of Cultural Relativism bears on the issue?
2. If so, how good is the explanation (on a scale of 0 to 10, with 10 meaning 'excellent')? Do you think the author is correct about what a Cultural Relativist should say about the issue of the report?
3. How could the explanation be improved? Be specific.
4. Does the author critically assess this Cultural Relativist argument?
5. How could the author's critical assessment be strengthened?

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Section Three:

1. Does the report explain how some version of the Divine Command Theory bears on the

issue?

2. If so, how good is the explanation (on a scale of 0 to 10, with 10 meaning 'excellent')? Do you think the author is correct about what a Divine Command Theorist should say about the issue of the report?
3. How could the explanation be improved? Be specific.
4. Does the author critically assess this Divine Command argument?
5. How could the author's critical assessment be strengthened?

Section Four:

1. Does the report explain how Aristotle's Virtue Theory bears on the issue?
2. If so, how good is the explanation (on a scale of 0 to 10, with 10 meaning 'excellent')? Do you think the author is correct about what Aristotle should say about the issue of the report?
3. How could the explanation be improved? Be specific.
4. Does the author critically assess this Aristotelian argument?
5. How could the author's critical assessment be strengthened?

Section Five:

6. Does the report explain how utilitarianism bears on the issue?
7. If so, how good is the explanation (on a scale of 0 to 10, with 10 meaning 'excellent')? Do you think the author is correct about what a utilitarian should say about the issue of the report?
8. How could the explanation be improved? Be specific.
9. Does the author critically assess this utilitarian argument?
10. How could the author's critical assessment be strengthened?

## Ethics Report Assignment #2

Due on Canvas by November 28th at 11:59pm

Worth 12 points (6% of the total course grade)

In this report you will:

- (a) revise the first draft of your report, to improve it in light of the peer review feedback you received,
- (b) include a detailed list of improvements you made.
- (c) add information about utilitarian and Kantian attitudes to your topic, and
- (d) explain which ethical theory, if any, gives the best interpretation and verdict about your topic.

Recall that the first draft of your report had the following form:

Section One: Explain your ethical issue. Why does it matter?

Section Two: Assessment of Cultural Relativism

Section Three: Assessment of Divine Command Theory

Section Four: Assessment of Aristotle's Virtue Theory

Section Five: Assessment of Utilitarianism

In this second report, revise the first five sections in light of the peer review feedback. At the end of the paper, include a detailed list of improvements you made.

In addition, add the following sections to your report:

Section Six: (A) Explain how some version of Kantianism bears on the issue. (B) Critically assess this Kantian argument: Do you agree with how the Kantian thinks about the issue? Why or why not? (500 words maximum)

Please type your report in a word processor, using 12-point font, double-spaced.

**Ethics Report Assignment #3**  
Worth 8 points (4% of the total course grade)

Your final assignment is to present your report findings to the class by poster:

What is the best argument regarding your ethical topic, and how would you reply to a strong objection to it?

This will take place during the final exam period. (See Schedule of Reading Assignment for times.)

Posters must represent your argument in a clear and concise format. Do not print the full text of section eight of your Ethics Report.

Make sure to include:

- (a) your name,
- (b) a description of your topic,
- (c) your thesis,
- (d) your argument for your thesis,
- (e) a strong objection to the weakest part of your argument, and
- (f) your response to that objection.

Point will also be awarded on the basis of (g) how clear and easy to understand your poster is to your classmates and to me.

Posters may consist of a group of 8.5" x 11" sheets of paper, or of a single larger poster board. Posters will be posted to the walls of the classroom.

Note that there will be an in-class activity during this period that will be worth class participation and/or quiz points.