



# **Philosophy 2306**

## **Syllabus**

### **INTRODUCTION**

### **TO ETHICS**

PHIL 2306  
Class #: 12614  
Spring Branch Campus  
Room 711  
Mon Wed 9:30-11 am



Instructor: Cinnamon "Ann" Jenson  
Learning Web Profile:  
<https://learning.hccs.edu/faculty/cinnamon.jenson>  
Email: [cinnamon.jenson@hccs.edu](mailto:cinnamon.jenson@hccs.edu)  
Office Spring Branch, room 801:  
M W 2-5 pm  
West Loop: by appointment

#### **COURSE DESCRIPTION:**

I am excited to introduce you to some of the most interesting and thought-provoking topics in Ethics, a subfield of philosophy. The course introduces philosophical methods of inquiry and argumentation.

Ethics involves thinking about what we ought to do. We will survey numerous ethical theories from Ethical Realism, Conventionalism, and Skepticism, including Utilitarianism, Deontology, Cultural Relativism, Divine Command Theory, and Virtue Ethics. The complexities and dynamics that frame these theories will be emphasized as we read and discuss primary texts from past and present philosophers. We will apply traditional theories to contemporary debates in wealth and consumption, animal rights, capital punishment, abortion, gay marriage, and others.

#### **HCC CATALOGUE DESCRIPTION:**

This is a systemic evaluation of classical and/or contemporary ethical theories concerning the good life, human conduct in society, morals, and standards of value (Texas ACGM). This course provides a practical, community-minded introduction to questions of character and human excellence in a multi-cultural, global environment. Traditional and contemporary views concerning the nature of goodness, happiness, duty, and freedom serve as points of departure for this largely thematic inquiry into right conduct and ways of thinking that leads to that conduct (HCC Catalogue). This course stresses the HCC CORE Objectives of Critical Thinking, Communication, Social Responsibility, and Personal Responsibility.

#### **PREREQUISITES:**

Prerequisites: ENG 1301 or higher.

#### **FULFILLS HCC CORE CURRICULUM DEGREE REQUIREMENT:**

This course satisfies the Philosophy, Language, and Culture component area or the Component Area Option in the HCC Core Curriculum. If you are not sure that you need this course to graduate, please consult with your advisor

## Texas SLO: Course Student Learning Outcomes:

1. **Demonstrate knowledge** and an understanding of arguments, problems, and terminology in philosophy.
2. **Analyze and critique** philosophical texts in ways that demonstrate an awareness of argument structure and the evaluation of philosophical claims.
3. **Present** logically persuasive arguments orally and in writing that are relevant to philosophical issues covered in course material.
4. **Evaluate** personal and social responsibilities of living in a diverse world in terms of the philosophical issues raised in course material. **Apply** relevant ethical theories to daily activities, and to issues in contemporary debates.

## Class Learning Outcomes:

1. You will be able to **define**, **explain**, and **critique** arguments foundational arguments from notable philosophers and the problems they were grappling with in three major ethical theories: Cultural Ethical Relativism, Utilitarianism, Deontology.
2. You will be able to **analyze and assess** the validity, soundness, assumptions, consequences, and fallacies in philosophers' arguments and popular media. **Parse** and **Outline** arguments. **Identify** informal fallacies in your experiences. Practice critical thinking skills that will improve personal empowerment, engage in civic duty, think independently, and defend against faulty reasoning.
3. You will be able to **develop**, **express**, **support**, and **defend** your position in on various philosophical issues and contemporary ethical dilemmas while acknowledging its weaknesses and realizing that your position is *fallible* (that is, it can and should change given new evidence and information). Hopefully, you will also begin to feel comfortable making decisions in spite of an uncertainty of knowledge.
4. **Evaluate and apply** philosophical theories in your daily life. Practice *civic engagement* in activities and group work to synthesize your philosophy theories and ethical beliefs with others, and to apply these concepts to your experiences. This is a safe class environment: Critique the argument, not the person.
5. Additional skills will center on *professional development* in writing professionally, interpersonal communication skills and public speaking, researching, and using proper citations.

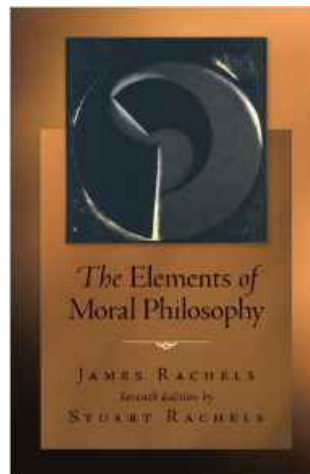
## READING.

**The Elements of Moral Philosophy. 2012.**

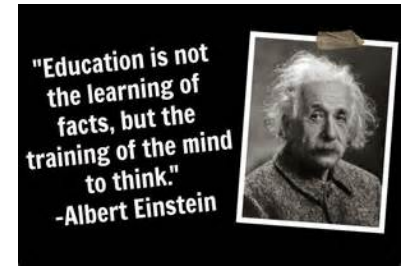
**James Rachels.**

**7th edition (or any edition). McGraw Hill.**

All additional reading material and the schedule is in MODULES, in Canvas. It helps to take notes when you are reading, and to formulate argument outlines and objections.



One of the most important professional development skills you will achieve in college is reading comprehension and your ability to evaluate arguments, and reinterpret them in your own words. Please embrace this challenge! You are expected to carefully read the assigned material before class.



**INSTRUCTIONS FOR ASSIGNMENTS, READING MATERIALS, AND HANDOUTS WILL BE POSTED IN “EAGLE ONLINE (CANVAS).” ALL ASSIGNMENTS SHOULD BE SUBMITTED TO “ASSIGNMENTS” IN CANVAS.**

**You must check Announcements in CANVAS often, especially if you miss class.**

**INSTRUCTIONS FOR ACCESSING EAGLE ONLINE (CANVAS):**

This is a *web-enhanced* lecture course that uses *Eagle Online Canvas*. The *Eagle Online Canvas* login page is: <https://eagleonline.hccs.edu/>

Or, from the main HCC website ([www.hccs.edu](http://www.hccs.edu)) --> on the top vertical toolbar click “student sign-ins” --> Sign in using your user ID and password--> click “Eagle online (canvas)” tool. You will automatically be assigned Canvas page to each of your classes at HCC.

Your Eagle Online username is your HCC email address. Your password is the same password you use to log in to PeopleSoft, HCC Webmail, and Active Directory (computer terminal login). For any questions about your Eagle ID or password, please go check online [www.hccs.edu/district/students/student-e-maileagle-id/](http://www.hccs.edu/district/students/student-e-maileagle-id/).

NOTE: Eagle Online works best with the latest version of Mozilla Firefox. Download it free, [www.mozilla.org/en-US/firefox/new/](http://www.mozilla.org/en-US/firefox/new/).

TECHNICAL SUPPORT: <http://www.hccs.edu/online/technical-support/> or 713-718-5275

**ASSESSMENTS:**

Attendance and participation	30%
Weekly Response Assignments (Canvas)	40%
Two Essays	10%
Current Debates group presentation	20%

**LEARNING REQUIREMENTS:**

**30% ATTENDANCE, IN-CLASS ACTIVITIES, PARTICIPATION, DISCUSSION.**

Philosophy is said to be one long conversation from Plato to you. By engaging in discussion, you add different perspectives to your knowledge. Philosophy is created by synthesizing ideas with others, applying philosophical themes to current issues, critiquing arguments, and by examining your reasons for your beliefs. Come to class prepared for discussion and civic engagement. If you come late to class, you may receive 80% attendance for that day.

10% of your grade is allotted for participation, which includes in-class quizzes on the reading materials

(quiz questions may or may not be given in the schedule in MODULES before class), and participation in group activities. It is required that you participate in group activities.

#### **40% WEEKLY RESPONSE ASSIGNMENTS.**

Each week you will complete one or two response assignments in the ASSIGNMENTS in CANVAS. The responses will ask you to write a few paragraphs on an assigned activity, such as watching a YouTube, listening to a podcast, taking a unit quiz, doing logic puzzles, or taking interactive ethics quizzes. All instructions are found in ASSIGNMENTS (which also link to the DISCUSSION BOARD). Unless stated otherwise, **ASSIGNMENTS ARE DUE SUNDAY AT MIDNIGHT**. You can always turn in late assignments up until the last day of class, but it is important to keep schedule. Late assignments will receive a 10% penalty. No late assignments will be accepted after the last day of class. Extra credit opportunities are made available in the DISCUSSION BOARD, for up to 5 points total.

#### **10% ESSAYS.**

2 short argument essays consist of approximately 2 pages. An argument essay asks you to summarize a philosopher's argument, critique the argument and then develop your own argument against it, using quotes, and citing properly. Each essay is designed to train you in a specific area of professional writing. **DO NOT USE WEBSITES** while writing your responses. Instructions and tips will be posted on Canvas. You must **CITE PROPERLY** whenever you explain a philosopher's argument, use quotes, or summarize an article. You must provide a **BIBLIOGRAPHY** in **APA FORMAT**. All assignments should be submitted to the ASSIGNMENTS in CANVAS. The essays have a **HARD DEADLINE**, and late assignments will receive a penalty of 10%.

#### **20% GROUP PROJECTS:**

You and your group will choose contemporary debates from a list of current debates. You will create and present a powerpoint with your group to teach the relevant issues in your current debate. Your grade will be determined by your portion of the group work, following a grading rubric.

**NO COMPUTERS, CELL PHONES, RECORDINGS, ELECTRONICS, OR FOOD PLEASE.**

#### **SCHEDULE:**

The schedule and reading materials are found in the **MODULES** section of CANVAS. **MODULES** will be your main portal that gives links to readings, assignment instructions, handouts, and discussion boards. Schedule is subject to change.

Week	UNIT 1	Reading. <b>DOWNLOAD</b> articles in bold.
Week 1	Introduction to Ethics Ethics Mindmap  The three main categories of ethical theories: Relativism, Realism, and Subjectivism	"Syllabus." <b>"Ethics Mindmap."</b>  See Modules for Handouts

Week 2	What makes an action right or wrong? * Why do people do what they know to be wrong?	<b>RACHELS: CHAPTER 1</b> * <b>Gansberg; Milgram.</b>
Week 3	Critical Thinking and Logic * Informal fallacies in Ethics	<b>Lewis Vaughn: “Logic Primer.”</b> * See Modules for handouts

Week	Unit 2: Ethical Conventionalism/Relativism	Reading. <b>DOWNLOAD</b> articles in bold.
Week 4	Introduction to Conventionalism. Why is diversity important? * Introduction to Cultural Ethical Relativism	The Danger of the Single Story. * <b>RACHELS: CHAPTER 2 (2.1 and 2.2)</b>
Week 5	Critique of Cultural Ethical Relativism. * <b>Rachels Essay due (hard deadline)</b>	<b>RACHELS: CHAPTER 2 (2.3-2.9)</b> * <b>Midgely; LeGuin short story.</b>

Week/Date	Unit 3: Ethical Realism	Reading.
Week 6	Introduction to Ethical Realism. * Utilitarianism: Bentham and Mill	<b>RACHELS: CHAPTER 7 THE UTILITARIAN APPROACH</b> * Jeremy Bentham; John Stuart Mill
Week 7	Higher vs. Lower pleasures. * <b>Mill Essay due (hard deadline)</b> * Critiques of Utilitarianism. Twilight Zone	<b>RACHELS: CHAPTER 8 THE DEBATE OVER UTILITARIANISM.</b> * Bernard Williams; Ursula K. LeGuin.
Week 8	Deontology: Kant * Comparison of Mill and Kant: Star Trek Trolley Problems	<b>RACHELS: CHAPTER 9 ARE THERE ABSOLUTE MORAL RULES?</b> * “Data, Kant, and Personhood”

Week/Date	Unit 4: Other theories	Reading.
Week 9	Spring Break	
Week 10	Professional writing primer. * Existentialism * <b>GROUP PROJECTS</b>	<b>“APA HANDOUT”; “HOW TO WRITE AN ARGUMENT ESSAY”</b> * <b>Camus: “Myth of Sisyphus.”</b> * <b>“Group Projects Instructions”</b>
Week 11	Some Conventionalist theories: Subjectivism: Hume *	<b>RACHELS: CHAPTER 3.1-3.6 SUBJECTIVISM</b> *

Week 12	Divine Command Theory *	<b>RACHELS: CHAPTER 4 DOES MORALITY DEPEND ON RELIGION</b>
	Egoism: Rand	<b>Louise Antony, Elizabeth Anderson</b> *
	Social contract theory: Hobbes *	<b>RACHELS: CHAPTER 5 EGOISM RACHELS: CHAPTER 6 SOCIAL CONTRACT THEORY.</b>
	Moral stages: Kohlberg * Ethics of care: Gilligan	<b>RACHELS: CHAPTER 11 FEMINISM AND THE ETHICS OF CARE</b> <b>Kohlberg, Gilligan.</b>

	<b>Current Debates Options</b>	<b>Additional topics = Student choice</b>
Week 13-15	Marriage Equality/ Gay Rights	Abortion
	Death Penalty	Euthanasia
	Wealth, work, and hunger	Human Enhancement.
	Animal Rights	Environmental Ethics
Week 16	Wrap-up: From Relativism to Realism	

#### **STUDENT POLICIES AND PROCEDURES:**

HCC Policies:

<http://www.hccs.edu/district/students/student-handbook/>

Your educational information is private and protected. FERPA Rules:

<http://www2.ed.gov/policy/gen/guid/fpco/ferpa/index.html>

#### **ATTENDANCE AND WITHDRAWAL POLICY:**

HCC Students are expected to attend class regularly. A daily record of absences will be maintained throughout the semester. NOTE: It is the responsibility of the student to drop, or officially withdraw from this course. Your instructor will withdraw a student if and only if provided a written request from that student. Additionally, system-wide rules affect withdrawals:

- (1) Students who repeat a course for a third, or more times, may face a significant tuition/fee increase at HCC and other Texas public colleges and universities.
- (2) The Texas Legislature passed a law limiting new students to no more than six total course withdrawals throughout their academic career in obtaining a baccalaureate degree. There may be future penalties imposed.
- (3) No student may withdraw from a course following the set "last date to withdraw. After that date and time, a student can only be given a grade earned, or an "I" for incomplete. Incompletes must be made up by the end of the following long semester, after which they will automatically change to a grade of "F". Students receiving an "I" for a course are ineligible for graduation until the "I" has been removed from a student's transcript.

#### **ACADEMIC HONESTY:**

An important skill that you need throughout your career is the ability to cite properly. The currency of academics is their ideas. That means that if you do not give credit to authors for their ideas, then you are stealing. I will provide instructions for citation and bibliography throughout your Argument Essay instructions. You may also use the APA manual online at: <http://www.apastyle.org/> For proper grammar, use the Elements of Style by Strunk and White, online at: <http://www.bartleby.com/141/>

Assignments that are plagiarized in part or whole will not be graded, and will receive a zero until re-submitted. You may resubmit any assignment for a late penalty of 10%.

See the following website for HCC's stance on academic misconduct.

<http://www.hccs.edu/district/students/student-handbook/> (See the section on "Scholastic Dishonesty"; p. 18)

See the following for additional information on plagiarism:

<http://plagiarism.org/> and <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/589/1/>

#### **STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES:**

The HCC Accessibility website is located at the following url:

<http://www.hccs.edu/district/departments/accessibility/>. You will find information about the types of assistance offered to students with special instructional needs on that web page. You will also find contact information for your college's ADA compliance and accessibility office. For questions, please contact Donna Price at 713.718.5165 or the ADA counselor at your college campus.

#### **THIS IS A SAFE ENVIRONMENT:**

Title IX protects any person from sex-based discrimination, regardless of their real or perceived sex, gender identity, and/or gender expression. Female, male, and gender non-conforming students, faculty, and staff are protected from any sex-based discrimination, harassment or violence.

For more information see: <http://www.hccs.edu/district/departments/institutionalequity/title-ix-know-your-rights/>

The Office of Institutional Equity: <http://www.hccs.edu/district/departments/institutionalequity/>

#### **EGLS3 – EVALUATION FOR GREATER LEARNING STUDENT SURVEY SYSTEM:**

At Houston Community College, professors believe that thoughtful student feedback is necessary to improve teaching and learning. During a designated time near the end of the term, you will be asked to answer a short online survey of research-based questions related to instruction. The anonymous results of the survey will be made available to your professors and department chairs for continual improvement of instruction. Look for the survey as part of the Houston Community College Student System online near the end of the term.

#### **ACADEMIC CALENDAR:**

<http://www.hccs.edu/district/events-calendar/academic-calendar/>