# PHIL 1400 Ethics & Society

## Instructor Information

Name: Saadiya Amin

Email Address: [saadiyaamin@unt.edu](mailto:saadiyaamin@unt.edu)

Office Hours: Online and by appointment

## Course Information

Class Schedule & Venue

PHIL 1400 – 001, General Academic Building 114, MWF 10:00 AM – 10:50 AM

PHIL 1400 – 002, General Academic Building 114, MWF 11:00AM – 11:50 AM

## Course Description

This is a survey course on basic ethical theories. We will explore contemporary issues including: capital punishment, abortion, euthanasia, war, drones, terrorism, torture, cloning, abortion, national security, civil liberties and civil disobedience, animal rights, the environment, addiction, AI, robotics, surveillance, social media, and gun rights/gun control.

Along the way, we will ask questions like: What is the role of philosophy, and more specifically, classical ethical theories and ideas of moral obligation, in addressing the moral controversies surrounding these issues?

This course satisfies the core category of Language, Philosophy and Culture, examining how ideas, values and beliefs express and affect human experience. Through careful study and analysis of issues concerning various moral themes fundamental to the human condition, this course also meets the university core objectives of fostering intellectual creativity, developing critical thinking skills, and fine-tuning written and oral communication skills.

Ethics and Society is also uniquely appropriate for developing skills of personal responsibility, including the ability to connect choices, actions, and consequences to ethical decision-making. Social responsibility is also developed, including the ability to engage effectively in regional, national, and global communities.

## Course Structure

This class will emphasize discussion and will thus require consistent participation and engagement during class time. Students are expected to complete their assigned weekly readings before coming to class. There will be a reading quiz each week, followed by discussions blending the subject matter and students’ thoughts and ideas. This means that the student must come prepared to be an active participant in class (having completed readings, reflected on them with critical thinking skills and finished any assignments), contribute to class discussion, take notes during class, and bring appropriate materials (*especially the assigned readings and notes on the reading*) to class.

## Learning Outcomes

By the end of the course students should be able to:

* Understand the content of prominent moral theories
* Construct novel and rigorous arguments for and against those theories
* Apply these moral principles to pressing dilemmas within current society
* Formulate clear, articulate arguments about this topic in written work
* Present/ discuss moral dilemmas within our current society grounded in ethical theories

## How to Succeed in this Course

To succeed in this course, you must attend all classes regularly, as consistent participation is essential for understanding the material and engaging with ethical concepts in context. You are expected to be proactive in your learning—this includes completing assigned readings, reflecting critically on the material, and bringing thoughtful insights and questions to class discussions.

Please do not hesitate to seek help when needed. You are welcome to email me, and we can set up a meeting.

Active engagement, both in and outside the classroom, is key to developing a deeper understanding of ethics and its relevance to society, so you are encouraged to keep the class conversations going with your friends and families as well.

Learning to think and write philosophically takes time and practice. Writing an essay, with a philosophical orientation, is one of the most important skills you will take away from this class. To this extent, please explore the link below:

<https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/general_writing/academic_writing/essay_writing/index.html>

<https://philosophy.fas.harvard.edu/files/phildept/files/brief_guide_to_writing_philosophy_paper.pdf>

Additionally, writing in general is a process and getting help early on is highly suggested. For more about this process, and to hone your writing skills, consider visiting the UNT Utilize the UNT Writing Center. See more here: <https://writingcenter.unt.edu/>

## ADA Accommodation

The University of North Texas makes reasonable accommodation for students with disabilities. To request accommodation, you must first register with the Office of Disability Access (ODA) by completing an application for services and providing documentation to verify your eligibility each semester.

Once your eligibility is confirmed, you may request your letter of accommodation. ODA will then email your faculty a letter of reasonable accommodation, initiating a private discussion about your specific needs in the course.

You can request accommodation at any time, but it’s important to provide ODA notice to your faculty as early as possible in the semester to avoid delays in implementation. Keep in mind that you must obtain a new letter of accommodation for each semester and meet with each faculty member before accommodation can be implemented in each class.

You are strongly encouraged to meet with faculty regarding your accommodation during office hours or by appointment. Faculty have the authority to ask you to discuss your letter during their designated office hours to protect your privacy. For more information and to access resources that can support your needs, refer to the [Office of Disability Access](https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/office-disability-access) website (<https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/office-disability-access>).

## UNT Academic Success Resources

UNT strives to offer a high-quality education in a supportive environment where you can learn, grow, and thrive. As a faculty member, I am committed to supporting you, and I want to remind you that UNT offers a range of mental health and wellness services to help maintain balance and well-being. Utilizing these resources is a proactive way to support your academic and personal success. To explore campus resources designed to support you, check out [mental health services](https://digitalstrategy.unt.edu/clear/student-support-services-policies.html) (<https://clear.unt.edu/student-support-services-policies>), visit [unt.edu/success](https://www.unt.edu/success/), and explore [unt.edu/wellness](https://www.unt.edu/wellness/index.html). To get all your enrollment and student financial-related questions answered, go to [scrappysays.unt.edu](http://scrappysays.unt.edu/)

## Supporting Your Success and Creating an Inclusive Learning Environment

I value the many perspectives students bring to our campus. Please work with me to create a classroom culture of open communication, mutual respect, and belonging.

All discussions should be respectful and civil. Although disagreements and debates are encouraged, personal attacks are unacceptable. Together, we can ensure a safe and welcoming classroom for all. If you ever feel like this is not the case, please stop by my office and let me know. We are all learning together.

For more information, please look at the following links.

([Code of Student Conduct](Code%20of%20Student%20Conduct)) (<https://policy.unt.edu/policy/07-012>)

## Required Text

Rachels, James, and Stuart Rachels. *The Elements of Moral Philosophy*. 10th ed., New York, Ny, Mcgraw-Hill Education, 30 June 2022.

Scalet, Steven, and John Arthur. *Morality and Moral Controversies: Readings in Moral, Social, and Political Philosophy*. New York, Routledge, 2019.

Supplemental Readings will be disseminated through Canvas.

## Course Requirements/Schedule

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | Assigned Readings |
| Week 1 | **Chapter 1: What is Morality? (Rachels and Rachels)** |
| Aug 18th | Introduction |
| Aug 20th | Discussion on Readings |
| Aug 22nd | Exercise |
|  |  |
| Week 2 | **Chapter 2: The Challenge of Cultural Relativism (Rachels and Rachels)** |
| Aug 25th | Piece together readings |
| Aug 27th | Discussion |
| Aug 29th | Exercise (Last Day to Submit Group Members is Aug 31st) |
|  |  |
| Week 3 | **Chapter 3: Subjectivism in Ethics (Rachels and Rachels)** |
| Sep 1st | Labor Day - NO CLASS |
| Sep 3rd | Piece together readings |
| Sep 5th | Discussion and Exercise |
|  |  |
| Week 4 | **Chapter 4: Does Morality Depend on Religion? (Rachels and Rachels)**  **Chapter 5: Ethical Egoism (Rachels and Rachels)** |
| Sep 8th | Piece together readings |
| Sep 10th | Discussion |
| Sep 12th | Exercise |
|  |  |
| Week 5 | **Chapter 6: The Social Contract Theory (Rachels and Rachels)** |
| Sep 15th | Piece together readings |
| Sep 17th | Discussion |
| Sep 19th | Exercise |
|  |  |
| Week 6 | **Chapter 7: The Utilitarian Approach (Rachels and Rachels)** |
| Sep 22nd | Piece together readings |
| Sep 24th | Discussion |
| Sep 26th | Exercise |
|  |  |
| Week 7 | **Chapter 8: The Debate over Utilitarianism (Rachels and Rachels)** |
| Sep 29th | Piece together readings |
| Oct 1st | Discussion |
| Oct 3rd | Exercise |
|  |  |
| Week 8 | **Chapter 9: Are there absolute moral rules? (Rachels and Rachels)** |
| Oct 6th | Piece together readings |
| Oct 8th | Discussion |
| Oct 10th | Exercise |
|  |  |
| Week 9 | **Chapter 10: Kant and respect for persons (Rachels and Rachels)** |
| Oct 13th | Piece together readings |
| Oct 15th | Discussion |
| Oct 17th | Exercise |
|  |  |
| Week 10 | **Chapter 11: Feminism and the Ethics of Care (Rachels and Rachels)** |
| Oct 20th | Piece together readings |
| Oct 22nd | Discussion |
| Oct 24th | Exercise |
|  |  |
| Week 11 | **Chapter 12: Virtue Ethics (Rachels and Rachels)** |
| Oct 27th | Piece together readings |
| Oct 29th | Discussion |
| Oct 31st | Exercise |
|  |  |
| Week 12 | Group Project Presentations |
| Nov 3rd |  |
| Nov 5th |  |
| Nov 7th |  |
|  |  |
| Week 13 | Group Project Presentations |
| Nov 10th |  |
| Nov 12th |  |
| Nov 14th |  |
|  |  |
| Week 14 | Group Project Presentations |
| Nov 17th |  |
| Nov 19th |  |
| Nov 21st |  |
|  |  |
| Thanksgiving Break Nov 24th – Nov 28th | |
|  |  |
| Week 15 | Group Project Presentations |
| Dec 1st |  |
| Dec 3rd |  |
| Dec 5th | Reading Day – NO CLASS |
|  |  |
| Week 16 – Final Exams Dec 8th – Dec 12th  NO CLASSES | |
| Dec 12th | Final Exam Due on Canvas |

Course schedule and calendar are subject to change. A change in course schedule will be communicated on Canvas. A change in calendar will be communicated through the Eagle Alert, if there is a campus closing that will impact a class as detailed in the [Campus Closures Policy](https://policy.unt.edu/policy/15-006). (<https://policy.unt.edu/policy/15-006>).

## Assessing Your Work

Following are the weights assigned to each grading assessment tool:

20 % Attendance

35 % In-class short quizzes

25 % Group project presentation

20 % Final exam

The following grading scale will be used:

A 90-100 %

B 80-89 %

C 70-79 %

D 60-69%

F 0-59%

Policy regarding use of Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI)

*In this course, I want you to engage deeply with the materials and develop your own critical thinking and writing skills. For this reason, the use of GenAI is not permitted. While these tools can be helpful in some contexts, they do not align with our goal of fostering the development of your independent thinking. Using GenAI to complete any part of an assignment, exam, or coursework will be considered a violation of academic integrity, as it prevents the development of your own skills, and will be addressed according to the* [*Student Academic Integrity policy*](https://policy.unt.edu/policy/06-003) *(*[*https://policy.unt.edu/policy/06-003*](https://policy.unt.edu/policy/06-003)*).*

*Late work: All work is expected to be submitted by the designated due date. Late assignments will be docked 5% for each day late (2 days late: 10% deduction, 3 days late: 15% deduction, etc.) Therefore, late assignments should be emailed to me as soon as they are completed in order to avoid further grade penalty.*

*Absence from class: As with attendance, exceptions will only be made for emergency situations. In all cases, timely communication with me is key.*

*Lastly, I expect all my students to abide by the Honor Code: “I commit myself to honor, integrity, and responsibility as a student representing the University of North Texas community. I understand and pledge to uphold academic integrity as set forth by* [*UNT Student Academic Integrity Policy, 06.003*](https://policy.unt.edu/policy/06-003) *(*[*https://policy.unt.edu/policy/06-003*](https://policy.unt.edu/policy/06-003)*). I affirm that the work I submit will always be my own, and the support I provide and receive will always be honorable.”*

## Attendance and Participation

*Research has shown that students who attend class are more likely to be successful. You should attend every class unless you have a university excused absence such as active military service, a religious holy day, or an official university function as stated in the* [S*tudent Attendance and Authorized Absences Policy (PDF)*](https://policy.unt.edu/policy/06-039) *(*[*https://policy.unt.edu/policy/06-039*](https://policy.unt.edu/policy/06-039)*). If you cannot attend a class due to an emergency, please let me know. Your safety and well-being are important to me.*

*Additionally, I have great respect for students who are balancing the demands of their coursework with the responsibilities of caring for family members. If you run into challenges that require you to miss a class, please contact me. There may be some flexibility we can offer to support your academic success.*