

Phil360.01E—General Ethics                      Fall 2025

Dr. Bill Bolin

Office & Hours: Talbot Hall 324, MTW 3:30p—5:00p and by appt.

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## COURSE DESCRIPTION

How ought one to live? While we won't come up with definitive answers to this question, we will read a number of philosophers to see how they justified their different approaches to it, and we will evaluate their reasoning. Along the way we will learn about four major schools of ethics: virtue ethics, deontology, utilitarianism, and care ethics. The course is organized so that conflicting, competing, and even complementary theories will be investigated and can be discussed in interesting and civil ways. Assignments include two essay exams, two short written responses to the reading, one longer project, and a few short quizzes over the reading. The following two books are required:

- Gawande, Atul. *Being Mortal: Medicine and What Matters at the End*. New York: Picador, 2014. Paperback ISBN 978-1250076229. eBook ISBN 9781627790550
- Schur, Michael. *How to Be Perfect: The Correct Answer to Every Moral Question*. New York: Simon&Schuster, 2022. Paperback: ISBN13: 9781982159320. eBook: ISBN13: 9781982159337

Other reading, provided for free in digital format, will include:

- Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*
- Immanuel Kant's *The Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*
- John Stuart Mill's *Utilitarianism*
- Virginia Held's *The Ethics of Care: Personal, Political, and Global*

## STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

- Students will write short response papers that demonstrate an understanding of established approaches to defining and understanding ethics.
- Students will complete a Transformative Project, assessing a regional service in light of two ethical approaches.
- Students will engage with multiple perspectives in exploring the human dimensions of real-world situations and problems.
- Students will be able to analyze, evaluate, or solve problems when given a set of circumstances, data, texts, or art.
- In written, oral, and/or visual communication, ETAMU students will communicate in a manner appropriate to audience and occasion, with an evident message and organizational structure.
- Students will understand and practice academic honesty.
- Students will demonstrate an understanding of societal and/or civic issues.

## COURSE OBJECTIVES

- To acquire an overview of the various approaches to understanding ethics in the discipline of philosophy.
- to acquire an overview of the various cultural and social influences on thinking about ethical behavior.
- to formulate articulate responses to the reading assignments and ensuing discussions.

## ASSIGNMENTS

**Exams:** You'll have a mid-term and a final, each covering roughly half of the semester. These exams will solicit short answers of 3 or 4 sentences, as well as longer, more richly detailed essay responses. These will be in-class exams, and you will need a blue or green exam booklet for each one.

**Response papers:** In addition, you'll write four written responses (300-400 words each) to some of the reading assignments involving each of the four ethical approaches. These responses are not designed to test how well you've read the assigned material. Rather, they serve as opportunities for you to apply important features of an ethical approach to a given current situation. Specific assignments are forthcoming in the course shell.

**Quizzes:** You'll take six quizzes to test your comprehension of some of the reading. These timed quizzes will be given in class during the first dozen minutes or so and cannot easily be made up. Each quiz will be announced as the semester progresses, so be attentive to their deadlines.

**Transformative Project:** This assignment will be similar to a response paper, but it will require your investigation of a service program and your assessment of that program's mission in light of utilitarianism and care ethics. Specific assignment details are forthcoming.

**Extra Credit:** An extra credit assignment will be available near the end of the semester.

As a rule I do not accept late assignments, so please be attentive to deadlines. If you must miss an upcoming deadline, you will need to contact me to make *prior satisfactory* arrangements for submitting the assignment. Failure to make prior satisfactory arrangements will result in your forfeiting the right to turn in that assignment. An extra credit assignment to be named later will be an opportunity to restore points from a missed assignment or quiz or simply to add points to the total grade.

## EVALUATION

| Assignment Values                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | Final Grade Ranges                                               |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Midterm Exam</b> 40 pts.<br><b>Final Exam</b> 40 pts.<br><b>Response Papers</b> 40 pts. (4@ 10 pts. each)<br><b>Quizzes</b> 60 pts. (6 @ 10 pts. each)<br><b>Transformative Project</b> 20 pts.<br><b>Extra Credit</b> 10 pts. | A=180--200<br>B=160--179<br>C=140--159<br>D=120--139<br>F=0--119 |

## ATTENDANCE

Regular attendance is important for several reasons, but it is especially important for you to keep up with the assignments in this class. The tentative calendar below offers only the most general description of activities; more detail will be provided in class as the semester goes on. If you are absent the day an assignment is due, you must contact me and make satisfactory arrangements for turning in the assignment. In most cases, such arrangements will uploading or emailing to me the assignment by the deadline. Failure to make *prior satisfactory* arrangements will result in

your forfeiting the right to turn in that assignment. As per university policy, excessive absences (three weeks' worth) may result in your being dropped from the course.

#### PLAGIARISM/ACADEMIC DISHONESTY STATEMENT

Instructors in the Department of Literature and Languages do not tolerate plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty. Instructors uphold and support the highest academic standards, and students are expected to do likewise. Penalties for students guilty of academic dishonesty include disciplinary probation, suspension, and expulsion. (ETAMU Code of Student Conduct 5.b[1,2,3]).

**AI use in course [Draft 2, May 25, 2023]** East Texas A&M University acknowledges that there are legitimate uses of Artificial Intelligence, ChatBots, or other software that has the capacity to generate text, or suggest replacements for text beyond individual words, as determined by the instructor of the course. Any use of such software must be documented. Any undocumented use of such software constitutes an instance of academic dishonesty (plagiarism). Individual instructors may disallow entirely the use of such software for individual assignments or for the entire course. Students should be aware of such requirements and follow their instructors' guidelines. If no instructions are provided the student should assume that the use of such software is disallowed. In any case, students are fully responsible for the content of any assignment they submit, regardless of whether they used an AI, in any way. This specifically includes cases in which the AI plagiarized another text or misrepresented sources.

13.99.99.R0.03 Undergraduate Academic Dishonesty 13.99.99.R0.10 Graduate Student Academic Dishonesty

Academic dishonesty on one assignment in this course will result in a failing grade for the course.

#### TENTATIVE CALENDAR

All texts listed below, excluding the Gawande and Schur books, are available for download in the course shell.

Aug. 26 Introduction: Intro to course procedures and to ethics; reflective writing; lecture on reading philosophy

Aug. 28 Introduction: Plato, *Crito*

Sept. 2 Timmerman, "Sometimes There Is Nothing Wrong with Letting a Child Drown"; lecture on reading arguments

Sept. 4 Introduction: King, "Letter from a Birmingham Jail"; lecture on virtue ethics

Sept. 9 Overview of Ethics: Schur, Intro and chapters 1-2

Sept. 11 Overview of Ethics: Schur, chapters 3-4

Sept. 16 Virtue Ethics: Aristotle, Book II, chapters 1-5

Sept. 18 Virtue Ethics: Aristotle, Book II, chapters 6-9; **RP1 due**

Sept. 23 Deontology: Kant, Preface and lecture on deontology  
Sept. 25 Deontology: Kant, First Section; O'Neill, "A Simplified Account of Kant's Ethics"

Sept. 30 Deontology: Kant, Second Section  
Oct. 2 Deontology: Kant Third Section; **RP2 due**

Oct. 7 Ethical Issues: Schur, chapters 5-6  
Oct. 9 Ethical Issues: Schur, chapters 7-8

Oct. 14 **Midterm Exam**  
Oct. 16 Utilitarianism: Mill, Chapter 1; lecture on utilitarianism

Oct. 21 Utilitarianism: Mill, Chapter 2  
Oct. 23 Utilitarianism: Mill, Chapter 3

Oct. 28 Utilitarianism: Mill, Chapter 4  
Oct. 30 Utilitarianism: Mill, Chapter 5; **RP3 due**

Nov. 4 Ethical Issues: Schur, chapters 9-10  
Nov. 6 Ethical Issues: Schur, chapters 11-12

Nov. 11 Ethical Issues: Schur, Chapter 13 and Coda  
Nov. 13 Care Ethics: Held, Chapter 1 and lecture on care ethics

Nov. 18 Care Ethics: Held, Chapter 1, cont.; **RP4 due**  
Nov. 20 Care Ethics: Gawande, Introduction and chapters 1 and 2; Quiz5

Nov. 25 Care Ethics: Gawande, chapters 3 and 4  
Nov. 27 Thanksgiving holiday

Dec. 2 Care Ethics: Gawande, chapters 5 and 6; Quiz6  
Dec. 4 Care Ethics: Gawande, chapters 7 & 8 and Epilogue; **Transformative Project due**

Dec. 9 at 1:15p-3:15p **Final Exam** ([Final Exam schedule](#)); **Extra Credit due**

### **University Specific Procedures**

**The Counseling Center at ETAMU, located in the Halladay Building, Room 203, offers counseling services, educational programming, and connection to community resources for students. Students have 24/7 access to the Counseling Center's crisis assessment services by calling 903-886-5145. For more information regarding Counseling Center events and confidential services, please visit [www.tamuc.edu/counsel](http://www.tamuc.edu/counsel)**

### **TECHNOLOGY REQUIREMENTS**

## LMS

All course sections offered by ETAMU have a corresponding course shell in the myLeo Online Learning Management System (LMS). Below are technical requirements

LMS Requirements:

<https://community.brightspace.com/s/article/Brightspace-Platform-Requirements>

LMS Browser Support:

[https://documentation.brightspace.com/EN/brightspace/requirements/all/browser\\_support.htm](https://documentation.brightspace.com/EN/brightspace/requirements/all/browser_support.htm)

YouSeeU Virtual Classroom Requirements:

<https://support.youseeu.com/hc/en-us/articles/115007031107-Basic-System-Requirements>

## ACCESS AND NAVIGATION

You will need your campus-wide ID (CWID) and password to log into the course. If you do not know your CWID or have forgotten your password, contact the Center for IT Excellence (CITE) at 903.468.6000 or [helpdesk@tamuc.edu](mailto:helpdesk@tamuc.edu).

**Note:** Personal computer and internet connection problems do not excuse the requirement to complete all course work in a timely and satisfactory manner. Each student needs to have a backup method to deal with these inevitable problems. These methods might include the availability of a backup PC at home or work, the temporary use of a computer at a friend's home, the local library, office service companies, Starbucks, an ETAMU campus open computer lab, etc.

## COMMUNICATION AND SUPPORT

If you have any questions or are having difficulties with the course material, please contact your Instructor.

### Technical Support

If you are having technical difficulty with any part of Brightspace, please contact Brightspace Technical Support at 1-877-325-7778. Other support options can be found here:

<https://community.brightspace.com/support/s/contactsupport>

### Syllabus Change Policy

The syllabus is a guide. Circumstances and events, such as student progress, may make it necessary for the instructor to modify the syllabus during the semester. Any changes made to the syllabus will be announced in advance.

### Student Conduct

All students enrolled at the University shall follow the tenets of common decency and acceptable behavior conducive to a positive learning environment. The Code of Student Conduct is described in detail in the [Student Guidebook](#).

<http://www.tamuc.edu/Admissions/oneStopShop/undergraduateAdmissions/studentGuidebook.aspx>

Students should also consult the Rules of Netiquette for more information regarding how to interact with students in an online forum: <https://www.britannica.com/topic/netiquette>

### ETAMU Attendance

For more information about the attendance policy please visit the [Attendance](#) webpage and [Procedure 13.99.99.R0.01](#).

<http://www.tamuc.edu/admissions/registrar/generalInformation/attendance.aspx>

<http://www.tamuc.edu/aboutUs/policiesProceduresStandardsStatements/rulesProcedures/13students/academic/13.99.99.R0.01.pdf>

### **Academic Integrity**

Students at ETAMU are expected to maintain high standards of integrity and honesty in all of their scholastic work. For more details and the definition of academic dishonesty see the following procedures:

[Undergraduate Academic Dishonesty 13.99.99.R0.03](#)

<http://www.tamuc.edu/aboutUs/policiesProceduresStandardsStatements/rulesProcedures/13students/undergraduates/13.99.99.R0.03UndergraduateAcademicDishonesty.pdf>

[Graduate Student Academic Dishonesty 13.99.99.R0.10](#)

<http://www.tamuc.edu/aboutUs/policiesProceduresStandardsStatements/rulesProcedures/13students/graduate/13.99.99.R0.10GraduateStudentAcademicDishonesty.pdf>

### **Students with Disabilities-- ADA Statement**

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please contact:

#### **Office of Student Disability Resources and Services**

East Texas A&M University

Gee Library- Room 162

Phone (903) 886-5150 or (903) 886-5835

Fax (903) 468-8148

Email: [studentdisabilityservices@tamuc.edu](mailto:studentdisabilityservices@tamuc.edu)

Website: [Office of Student Disability Resources and Services](#)

<http://www.tamuc.edu/campusLife/campusServices/studentDisabilityResourcesAndServices/>

### **Nondiscrimination Notice**

ETAMU will comply in the classroom, and in online courses, with all federal and state laws prohibiting discrimination and related retaliation on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, disability, age, genetic information or veteran status. Further, an environment free from discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression will be maintained.

### **Campus Concealed Carry Statement**

Texas Senate Bill - 11 (Government Code 411.2031, et al.) authorizes the carrying of a concealed handgun in Texas A&M University-Commerce buildings only by persons who have been issued and are in possession of a Texas License to Carry a Handgun. Qualified law enforcement officers or those who are otherwise authorized to carry a concealed handgun in the State of Texas are also permitted to do so. Pursuant to Penal Code (PC) 46.035 and A&M-Commerce Rule 34.06.02.R1, license holders may not carry a concealed handgun in restricted locations.

For a list of locations, please refer to the [Carrying Concealed Handguns On Campus](#) document and/or consult your event organizer.

Web url: <http://www.tamuc.edu/aboutUs/policiesProceduresStandardsStatements/rulesProcedures/34SafetyOfEmployeesAndStudents/34.06.02.R1.pdf>

Pursuant to PC 46.035, the open carrying of handguns is prohibited on all ETAMU campuses. Report violations to the University Police Department at 903-886-5868 or 9-1-1.