

PHIL 28 - Ethics and Society II
Individual Obligations and Collective Moral Problems
Summer Session II - 2020

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Office Hours: Wednesdays from 11am-12:30pm on Zoom, and by appointment.

Location and Time:

- Asynchronous elements of the course are mandatory and are accessible on Canvas.
- Attendance at synchronous meetings is optional. These take place on Zoom on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 3-4pm PST. Recordings of these meetings will be posted on Canvas after the fact. If you do not attend the live session, you should watch these.
- There will be no discussion sections. A discussion board will replace sections.

Course Description. In what ways are we as individuals responsible for collective moral problems? Do we have individual obligations to mitigate climate change? Are we duty-bound to vote even when we are unlikely to make a difference to an election's outcome? And how should we be thinking about societal problems such as racism? Is racism a problem pertaining to the beliefs and actions of individuals? Or is it a problem pertaining to groups and social structures? In this class, we will explore these and other questions to better understand how we as individuals should be thinking about our role in moral problems that are distinctively collective in nature. We will focus on four issues in particular:

Climate Change. Each of us makes a negligible contribution to climate change, and correspondingly, each of us can do very little to stop it. Does this mean we are not responsible for climate change as individuals?

Voting. Most elections are not decided by a small number of votes, and so it might seem that we as individuals do not have a reason to vote. How can we explain the rationality of voting? Is there a voting system that might make voting more rational for us as individuals?

Racism. What does it mean for an individual to be racist? What does it mean for a society to be racist? Is a society racist only when the individuals in it are racist, and how do different ways of understanding what racism is lead to different ways of understanding what we should do about it?

Online Shaming. Our social media posts have the capacity to go viral in a way that personal conversations and other private communications do not. Given this, is it ever permissible to engage in online shaming? What considerations determine whether the shaming of bad actors online is permissible?

This is a 4-credit course. Prerequisites are Phil 27 or Poli 27. Warren College students must take this course for a letter grade in order to satisfy the Warren College general education requirement.

Course Logistics. This course is fully remote, and because some of you may be in different time zones, all point-related elements of the course will be asynchronous. This means you cannot lose points for failing to log onto Zoom at a particular time for a synchronous class. Nonetheless, I encourage you to attend the synchronous class sessions if you can. They will provide you with a structured opportunity to get some of the work done that you have to do anyway, and they will include a Q&A period where you can ask whatever questions you have about the lectures, the readings, and the course assignments. Those of you who cannot attend the live sessions will not be able to steer the direction of the Q&A period, but the sessions will be recorded and posted on Canvas after the fact. You should watch these recordings if you do not attend the sessions in real time.

The required elements of the course are to (i) listen to the lectures, (ii) do the readings, and (iii) submit all the assignments. The assignments are weighted as follows:

- 15% Unit Quizzes (best 4 of 5)
- 15% Discussion Board Posts (best 4 of 5)
- 10% Canvas Polls (all will be marked for participation)
- 25% Paper 1
- 35% Paper 2

Click [here](#) to be taken to the portion of the syllabus containing further information on each of these assignment-types and the grading standards for each. Note that the discussion board posts and canvas polls replace what would otherwise be the “discussion section” portion of the course. The course schedule will also be a helpful resource for you. Click [here](#) to be taken to that portion of the syllabus.

Late Policy. Because of the compressed summer schedule, assignments need to be turned in on time. The late policies for each of the assignment types are as follows. Unit quizzes, discussion board posts, and Canvas polls must be completed on time to receive any credit at all. Paper 1 and paper 2 will be assessed a $\frac{1}{3}$ letter grade penalty per day late. This said, if you have a medical, family, or other real emergency, email me as soon as you can, and we will figure out a reasonable solution.

COURSE AIMS

- (1) Master the core philosophical concepts and distinctions covered in the course and demonstrate an understanding of the main debates discussed.

What does success look like? → Do you understand the concepts and distinctions covered in this course? Could you explain them to somebody else? Could you use them in the course of philosophical discussion or writing? Similarly, could you explain to someone else (either in conversation or in writing) the main issues at stake in the debates covered in the course?

How will I be assessed? → Short Unit Quizzes on Canvas will assess your grasp of the concepts and distinctions on the list referenced above. Note that you do not need to go beyond the readings and lectures to know what is required for these quizzes. Your grasp of the main debates covered in this course will be assessed both in Short Unit Quizzes and in the two paper assignments.

(2) Learn to reconstruct arguments presented by others.

What does success look like? → When reading an argument, can you identify the conclusion of the argument? Can you identify the premises? Can you distinguish the premises from the evidence that supports the premises? Can you explain in writing why the premises support the conclusion?

How will I be assessed? → Both of the papers you will write in this course will ask you to summarize an argument presented in one of our readings, and your grade on each of these papers will depend in part on how clearly and accurately you do this. Some examples of a clear and accurate argument reconstructions can be found [here](#) and [here](#). An example of what to avoid is [here](#).

(3) Learn to identify and articulate plausible objections to arguments

What does success look like? → When reading a philosophical paper, can you distinguish the parts of the paper that deal with objections from the parts of the paper that present the core elements of the view the author is recommending? Can you clearly articulate an objection to an argument in your own writing?

How will I be assessed? → Both paper assignments will ask you to articulate an objection in writing, and your grade on these assignments will depend in part on how successfully you do this. An example of a successfully articulated objection is [here](#). Your discussion board contributions will also give you an opportunity to practice articulating objections.

(4) Learn to articulate your own argument and defend it from an objection

What does success look like? → Can you produce an effective written argument of your own, including a response to an objection? Does your response to the objection help to render the initial claim defended more plausible? Examples of this done well are [here](#) and [here](#). An example of what *not* to do is [here](#).

How will I be assessed? → Both of the papers you write in this course will ask you to defend an argument against an objection, and your grade will depend in part on how successfully you do this. Your weekly discussion posts will also give you an opportunity to practice this skill.

(5) Learn to read philosophical texts

What does success look like? → Different people have different reading strategies, but you should develop some procedures to help yourself read effectively. For instance, perhaps you always label the main conclusion(s) of a text in the margins. Or perhaps you keep separate notes summarizing the main moves in the text's argument. A video showing how I typically read philosophical texts is [here](#). Please let me know if you have other strategies that work for you.

How will I be assessed? → The Unit Quizzes will give you a sense of the strength of your understanding of the course texts. In addition, the two main writing assignments will require you to have a solid understanding of the texts, so some assessment of your reading will work its way in there too.

OTHER POLICIES

Technology You Need. Because this course is taking place online, you will need to have access to a computer and internet. You will also need to make sure that you have access to Canvas, as all course materials will be posted there. My experience is that Canvas works much better on a computer than on smartphone apps, so I encourage you not to rely entirely on your phone if you can avoid it. If you do not have access at home to the technology you need for this course, please contact me right away.

Accessibility. If you will be requesting accommodations for this course due to a disability, you must provide a current Authorization for Accommodation (AFA) letter issued by the Office for Students with Disabilities (OSD). There is now an online system for arranging AFA letters, which you can access from the OSD website here: <http://osd.ucsd.edu/>. If you are unsure about how to proceed in getting accommodations in the context of a remote course, please contact me as early as you can. I will work with you and OSD to get you what you need, but since we are all learning to do things online that we used to do in person, an early start will be a big help. You can also contact OSD directly at osd@ucsd.edu or 858.534.4382.

Email and Canvas Announcements. I will make every effort to answer your emails within 24 hours, and if 24 hours have passed and you still have not heard from me, feel free to resend your message—your email was probably pushed down to the bottom of my inbox, and I will be grateful for the reminder. Generally speaking, it is best to reserve email for logistical matters rather than for substantive philosophical discussions. Come to office hours or email me for an extra appointment if you would like to have a substantive one-on-one discussion about course

material. Finally, please do not forget to check your own emails and Canvas messages regularly. I will often be sending out important announcements via Canvas or your UCSD email accounts.

Academic Integrity. Academic Integrity is expected of everyone at UC San Diego. This means that you must be honest, fair, responsible, respectful, and trustworthy in all of your actions. Lying, cheating, or any other forms of dishonesty will not be tolerated because they undermine learning and the University's ability to certify students' knowledge and abilities. Thus, any attempt to get, or help another get, a grade by cheating, lying or dishonesty will be reported to the Academic Integrity Office and will result in sanctions. Sanctions can include an F in the class and suspension or dismissal from the University. So, think carefully before you act. Before you act, ask yourself the following questions: a) is my action honest, fair, respectful, responsible, and trustworthy, and b) is my action authorized by the instructor? If you are unsure, don't ask a friend but rather ask your instructor, instructional assistant, or the Academic Integrity Office. You can learn more about academic integrity at academicintegrity.ucsd.edu.

(Source: Bertram Gallant, T. (2017). Teaching for integrity. UC San Diego Academic Integrity Office.)

Please be aware that assignments submitted to Canvas will be automatically reviewed by Turnitin, a third-party originality checker licensed for use by UC San Diego.

DETAILED COURSE SCHEDULE

General Guidelines:

- Start each unit by doing the Canvas poll (normally due Monday night).
- Then listen to the unit's introductory lecture.
- Complete the readings and pre-recorded lectures before the synchronous Zoom session for that day.
- Discussion board tasks and unit quizzes are due at the same time (weekly on Fridays at 11:59pm PST). I recommend working on these throughout the week so that it's easy for you to submit them on time. To facilitate this, discussion board tasks will sometimes have preliminary deadlines, which you will need to meet not to lose some points on the assignments.
- I will post lecture slides after the Zoom sessions on Tuesdays and Thursdays.
- Paper 1 is due on Monday morning of Week 3.

- Paper 2 is due on Friday at midnight at the end of Week 5.

Further details about the assignments are [here](#).

If you would like to listen to lectures with subtitles, please watch via the links below and turn on closed captions (CC) once directed to the YouTube video. If you do not want subtitles, you can watch the lectures directly in Canvas.

Unit 1: Introduction and Basics

Assignments Due:

- Canvas Poll 1 - **Due Tuesday August 4, 11:59pm PST**
- Unit Quiz 1 - **Due Friday August 7, 11:59pm PST**
- Discussion Board Task - **Due Friday August 7, 11:59pm PST**

DAY 1 – Tuesday, August 4

- Listen to:
 - [Lecture 1.1](#) (15 mins) - Introduction to the Course
 - [Lecture 1.2](#) (8 mins) - Topics Overview
 - [Lecture 1.3](#) (22 mins) - What is a Good Argument?
 - [Lecture 1.4](#) (25 mins) - Ethics FAQ
 - Zoom Class Meeting 1 Recording (if you do not attend synchronously) [[Watch on Canvas only, because I do not want to put up recordings of you all on YouTube.](#)]

Unit 2: Individual Responsibility for Climate Change

Assignments Due:

- Canvas Poll 2 - **Due Monday, August 10, 11:59pm PST**
- Unit Quiz 2 - **Due Friday August 14, 11:59pm PST**
- Discussion Board Task - **Due Friday August 14, 11:59pm PST**
- **PAPER 1 - Due Monday August 17th, 11:00am PST**

DAY 2 – Thursday, August 6

- Listen to:
 - [Lecture 2.1](#) - Individual Responsibility for Climate Change: Introductory Lecture
 - [Lecture 2.2](#) - Walter Sinnott-Armstrong
 - Zoom Class Meeting 2 Recording (if you do not attend synchronously)
- Read:
 - Sinnott-Armstrong, Walter (2005) - "It's Not My Fault: Global Warming and Individual Moral Obligations"

DAY 3 – Tuesday, August 11

- Listen to:
 - [Lecture 2.3](#) - Melany Banks
 - Zoom Class Meeting 3 Recording (if you do not attend synchronously)
- Read:

- Banks, Melany (2013) - "Individual Responsibility for Climate Change"

DAY 4 – Thursday, August 13

- [Lecture 2.4](#) - Julia Nefsky and Transition to Unit 3
 - Zoom Class Meeting 4 Recording (if you do not attend synchronously)
 - Read:
 - Nefsky, Julia (2017) - "How You Can Help Without Making a Difference"
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Unit 3: The Rationality of Voting

Assignments Due:

- Canvas Poll 3 - **Due Monday, August 17, 11:59pm PST**
- Unit Quiz 3 - **Due Friday August 21, 11:59pm PST**
- Discussion Board Task - **Due Friday August 21, 11:59pm PST**

DAY 5 – Tuesday, August 18

- Listen to:
 - [Lecture 3.1](#) - The Rationality of Voting: Introductory Lecture
 - [Lecture 3.2](#) - Alexander Guerrero
 - Zoom Class Meeting 5 Recording (if you do not attend synchronously)
- Read:
 - Guerrero, Alexander (2010) - "The Paradox of Voting and the Ethics of Political Representation"

DAY 6 – Tuesday, August 20

- [Lecture 3.3](#) - Lisa Hill
 - Zoom Class Meeting 6 Recording (if you do not attend synchronously)
 - Read:
 - Hill, Lisa (2002) - "On the Reasonableness of Compelling Citizens to Vote: the Australian Case"
-

Unit 4: Racism in the Individual and in Society

Assignments Due:

- Canvas Poll 4 - **Due Monday, August 24, 11:59pm PST**
- Unit Quiz 4 - **Due Friday August 28, 11:59pm PST**
- Discussion Board Task - **Due Friday August 28, 11:59pm PST**

DAY 7 – Tuesday, August 25

- Listen to:
 - [Lecture 4.1](#) - Racism in the Individual and Society: Introductory Lecture
 - Companion Introductory Video - [Charles Mills Speaking on Race as Constructed](#)
 - [Lecture 4.2](#) - Lawrence Blum on What Racism Is and Isn't
 - Zoom Class Meeting 7 Recording (if you do not attend synchronously)
- Read:

- Blum, Lawrence (2002) - "Racism: What It Is and What It Isn't"

DAY 8 – August 27

- [Lecture 4.3](#) - Tommie Shelby on Racism as Ideology
- Zoom Class Meeting 8 Recording (if you do not attend synchronously)
- Read:
 - Shelby, Tommie (2014) - "Racialism, Moralism, and Social Criticism"

Unit 5: Online Public Shaming

Assignments Due:

- Canvas Poll 5 - **Due Monday, August 31, 11:59pm PST**
- Unit Quiz 5 - **Due Friday September 4, 11:59pm PST**
- Discussion Board Task - **Due Friday September 4, 11:59pm PST**
- **PAPER 2 - Due Friday September 4, 11:59pm PST**

DAY 9 – Tuesday, September 1

- Listen to:
 - [Lecture 5.1](#) - Online Shaming: Introductory Lecture
 - [Lecture 5.2](#) - Billingham and Parr
 - Zoom Class Meeting 9 Recording (if you do not attend synchronously)
- Read:
 - Billingham, Paul & Tom Parr (2019) - "Online Public Shaming: Virtues and Vices"

DAY 10 – Thursday, September 3

- [Lecture 5.3](#) - Kathryn Norlock
- Zoom Class Meeting 10 Recording (if you do not attend synchronously)
- Read:
 - Norlock, Kathryn (2017) - "Online Shaming"

Note: There is no final exam.

ASSIGNMENT DESCRIPTIONS

Canvas Polls. These comprise 10% of your overall grade and are marked for participation only. That is, if you complete the polls, you get full credit for that poll. The purpose of these polls is to gather information about the class. What are your views coming into the course on the issues we'll be discussing? What positions do you initially find most plausible? Occasionally, I will anonymize the information gathered in Canvas polls and present it to you all in our live Zoom sessions. This way, you too will have a sense of the views of the other people in the course.

Canvas polls cannot be turned in late, so if you do not complete a poll on time, you simply lose those points.

Unit Quizzes. These comprise 15% of your overall grade and test your understanding of the readings and core course concepts. Quizzes contain multiple choice and multiple-multiple choice questions only (by “multiple-multiple choice” questions, I mean questions that have more than one correct answer, where you have to select all and only the correct answers to get credit). You should not collaborate with others while you take these quizzes, but you can use all other course materials (lectures, readings, Zoom class recordings, lecture slides, etc.). Additionally, Canvas is set up so that you can start a quiz early in the week, save your progress, and complete it before the Friday night due date. As such, you can take as long as you like to complete these quizzes, as long as you turn them in before the Friday night deadline (pacific time). Late submissions are not accepted, but your worst quiz will automatically be dropped.

Discussion Board Tasks. These comprise 15% of your overall grade and replace the TA-led discussion sessions that would take place in a non-remote course. You will be divided into small groups for your discussion board tasks, and you will remain with the same group throughout the summer session. Usually, your discussion board tasks will be to practice coming up with objections and replies to arguments. This skill is highly relevant to the paper assignments, so the idea of the discussion boards is to provide you with an opportunity to practice some of the skills that are relevant to paper writing. Discussion board posts must be finished by Friday evenings, and there will often be preliminary deadlines to facilitate the group task element of the discussion boards. This means you cannot begin your discussion board posts on Friday. Late submissions are not accepted, but your lowest discussion board score will automatically be dropped.

Paper 1. This assignment comprises 25% of your overall grade. You will write a paper no longer than 1200 words and your task will be to defend a particular thesis. Detailed instructions on how to do this assignment can be found [here](#). This assignment will be due at the beginning of Week 3 (Monday, August 17th by 11:00am PST). Late papers will be assessed a 1/3 letter grade penalty per day late.

Paper 2. This assignment comprises 35% of your overall grade. Again, you will write a roughly 1200 word argumentative paper aimed at defending a particular thesis. And again, further details on this assignment can be found [here](#). This assignment will be due at the end of Week 5 (Friday September 4, 11:59pm PST). Late papers will be assessed a 1/3 letter grade penalty per day late.