

# **PHIL 160H.001 Virtue, Value, and Happiness: An Introduction to Moral Theory**

## **Spring Semester 2023 - UNC Chapel Hill**

**Professor:** Rosalind Chaplin ([rchaplin@unc.edu](mailto:rchaplin@unc.edu)), pronouns: she/her/hers

**Class Meets:** Tuesdays and Thursdays 11:00am-12:15pm, Caldwell Hall, Room 103

**Office Hours:** Tuesdays 10:00-11:00am, Wednesdays 2:00-4:00pm, Caldwell Hall, Office 207E

**Course Description.** Suppose you make it your aim to live a happy, fulfilling, and meaningful life. Will pursuing a life that is good in this sense also lead you to be a morally good person? In this introduction to moral theory, we will explore these and other classic questions about what it is to be moral, what it is to live a happy life, and how being moral and living a happy life relate to one another. In our studies of being moral, we will explore consequentialist, deontological, and virtue ethical approaches to right action. In our explorations of happiness and the good life, we will cover subjectivist and objectivist approaches, questions about the role of meaning in living a good life, questions about how a theory of the good life should accommodate an account of disability, and questions about well-being in the digital world. Additional topics may be covered.

### ***Further Details***

IDEAs in Action Gen Ed: FC-KNOWING or FC-VALUES.

Making Connections Gen Ed: PH.

Grading Status: Letter grade.

Credits: 3

Target Audience: majors and non-majors, honors students only

Course Materials: all readings are available on Canvas

Typical weekly time required to complete course work (including class sessions): 9-12 hours

Course Goals and Learning Objectives: see pages 6-8 below

**General Course Structure.** In terms of content, this course consists of two main parts. In the first part of the semester, we will study three influential approaches to normative ethics: consequentialism, Kantian ethics (a kind of deontology), and virtue ethics. In the second main part of the course, we will explore a cluster of questions about what it is for your life to be going well for you: What is it for your life to be happy? What is it for your life to be meaningful? How should an account of well-being approach questions about disability? What is digital well-being?

As for readings, assignments, and class structure, here's what you can expect. The readings in the course will be difficult, so be prepared to read each article more than once. Short Assignments (SAs) are designed to support you in doing the readings, as are the weekly-ish group presentations (further details below). Our class meetings will feature brief chunks of lecture, but mostly you will be actively reconstructing arguments, critically assessing the

readings, and exploring your own views about the topics we cover. Your main written work will be to produce three argumentative papers over the course of the semester. In this class we will not have a traditional final exam. Instead, you will turn in your final paper at the final exam and participate in a discussion and written reflection about the skills you feel you have developed over the course of the semester, the contributions you have especially admired from your classmates, and so on.

### ***ASSIGNMENTS & GRADING***

- 5% Attendance & Participation
- 15% Short Assignments (SAs) - drop lowest 2
- 10% Collaborative Group Presentation
- 15% Paper 1 (approx 2-3 pages)
- 25% Paper 2 (approx 4 pages)
- 30% Final Paper (Paper 3) (approx 6 pages)

### ***GRADING SCALE***

*Converting your final average to a letter grade:*

- 93% or higher: A
- 90-93%: A-
- 87-90%: B+
- 83-87%: B
- 80-83%: B-
- 77-80%: C+
- 73-77%: C
- 70-73%: C-
- 67-70%: D+
- 63-67%: D
- Below 63: F

Note: these boundaries should be interpreted so that 93.0% is an A, but 92.99% is an A-, and similarly for each other boundary. I will not round grades up at the end of the semester.

---

### ***ASSIGNMENT DESCRIPTIONS***

**Attendance & Participation.** Active participation is a required part of the course. % of your participation mark will be determined by the following factors: (i) your attendance record, including arriving on time; (ii) how regularly you contribute to class discussion; (iii) being engaged when you are not actively speaking and not letting yourself get distracted by unrelated things on your phone or computer; (iv) engaging with everyone in the classroom respectfully and charitably; (v) showing in your contributions that you have prepared for class (e.g., by having questions about the readings, by being willing to share your thoughts on the views

presented in the readings, etc.). The final ⅓ of your participation mark will be earned by turning in the metacognition final reflection, which we will do during our final exam slot.

*Note: If you are showing symptoms consistent with Covid-19 or flu, please do not attend class. Instead, email me before the start of class, and we will figure out a reasonable plan.*

Try to remember that it is okay (and even ideal!) to ask questions and contribute to discussions while you are still feeling confused and unsure about things. Very often in philosophy, we make the most progress when we ask questions about concepts or questions that seem to be very basic. So asking clarificatory questions can be an excellent way to participate and a huge help to everyone in the class. All this said, if you are finding it difficult to participate, please email me and we can set up a meeting to talk about strategies.

**Short Assignments (SAs).** Your readings will be accompanied by Short Assignments (SAs), which comprise 15% of your overall grade and are to be completed on Canvas and *submitted by 8:00am on the day class meets*. The purpose of these assignments is to help you learn to read more effectively, and they will typically consist of three or four questions. One or two of the questions will be quiz-like and will focus on important points from the day's readings. The other one (or two) of the questions will be open-ended and will feed into our in-class activities. On the open-ended questions, you will receive full credit just for completing them.

- SA Late Policy: late submissions are not accepted. However, your lowest two SA scores will be dropped.

**Collaborative Group Presentation.** This comprises 10% of your overall grade, and you will each be responsible for contributing to one collaborative group presentation over the course of the semester. Here is how these will work. Nearly every day, you will be asked to do some kind of group work based on the short assignments, and on some of these days, one of the groups will be asked to present the main upshots of their discussion to the entire class. The presentations are short and informal and will not require coordinating outside of class. This is graded for effort and teamwork rather than accuracy, which means it is most important simply to earnestly contribute to the discussion and presentation. In week 1, I will send out a sign-up sheet to determine in which week you will be the official presenter. When you are not in the officially presenting group, you will receive your group assignments just before class. The make-up of the groups will change by the week so that you get to know more of your classmates.

**Paper 1.** This assignment comprises 15% of your overall grade. You will write a paper of approximately 2-3 pages in which you articulate an objection to one of the arguments presented in our readings. The specific topic and further instructions will be distributed two weeks before assignment is due.

- Paper 1 Late Policy: Late submissions receive a 3 point grade deduction per day late (i.e., a paper that is one day late moves from an 87 to an 84, a paper that is two days late moves from an 87 to

an 81.). All this said, if you have a medical, family, or other true emergency, email me as soon as you can, and we will figure out a reasonable solution.

**Paper 2.** This assignment comprises 25% of your overall grade. You will write a roughly 4-page paper in which you articulate an objection to an argument *and* spell out a response to that objection. Again, further instructions will be distributed at least two weeks before the assignment is due.

- Paper 2 Late Policy: same as Paper 1 (see above).

**Final Paper (Paper 3).** This assignment comprises 30% of your overall grade and is due at our metacognition reflection session, which will take place when we otherwise would have our final exam. In this assignment, you will have a choice of topics, and you will write a paper of roughly 6 pages in which you defend a particular claim on the topic of your choice. You should present an argument for your main claim, articulate one or two objections to that argument, and respond to those objections as a way of furthering your own argument. Additional instructions will be distributed at least two weeks before the assignment is due, and some class time will be devoted to workshoping these papers.

- Paper 3 Late Policy: same as Paper 1 (see above).

**Note:** There is no final exam in this course, but you are expected to be in our classroom during our final exam time to turn in your final paper and participate in our closing metacognition reflection session.

<b>SCHEDULE - Spring 2023</b> There may be some changes to the syllabus. These will be announced as early as possible.			
Week & Topic	Day & Date	Readings / Class Topic	Things Due
<b>WEEK 1</b>  <b>Onboarding</b>	1   01.10.23	- no readings - class topic: introduction to our questions	
	2   01.12.23	- no readings - class topic: introduction to our systems	SA #1, by 8am
<b>WEEK 2</b>  <b>Consequentialist Ethics</b>	3   01.17.23	- Consequentialism Primer - Peter Singer - "Famine, Affluence, Morality" (1972)	SA #2, by 8am
	4   01.19.23	- Travis Timmerman - "Sometimes There is Nothing Wrong with Letting a Child Drown" (2015)	SA #3, by 8am
<b>WEEK 3</b>  <b>Consequentialist Ethics</b>	5   01.24.23	- Peter Railton - "Alienation, Consequentialism, and the Demands of Morality" (1984)	SA #4, by 8am

	6   01.26.23	- no new readings, in class activities only	
	<i>Sunday, January 29th: Paper 1 due by 11:55pm</i>		
<b>WEEK 4</b> <b>Deontological Ethics</b>	7   01.31.23	- Kantian Ethics Primer - Onora O'Neill - "A Simplified Account of Kantian Ethics" (2009)	SA #5, by 8am
	8   02.02.23	- Christine Korsgaard - "The Right to Lie: Kant on Dealing with Evil" (1986)	SA #6, by 8am
<b>WEEK 5</b> <b>Deontological Ethics</b>	9   02.07.23	- Barbara Herman - "On the Value of Acting from the Motive of Duty" (1981)	SA #7, by 8am
	10   02.09.23	- no new readings, in class activities only	
<b>WEEK 6</b>	na   02.14.23	<i>Well Being Day - No Class</i>	
<b>Virtue Ethics and Character</b>	11   02.16.23	- <a href="#">Virtue Ethics Primer</a> - Eric Schwitzgebel - " <a href="#">A Theory of Jerks</a> " (2014)	SA #8, by 8am
<b>WEEK 7</b> <b>Virtue Ethics and Character</b>	12   02.21.23	- Nick Riggle - " <a href="#">How Being Awesome Became the Great Imperative of Our Time</a> " (2016)	SA #9, by 8am
	13   02.23.23	- no new readings, in class activities only	
<b>WEEK 8</b> <b>The Limits of Morality</b>	14   02.28.23	- Susan Wolf - "Moral Saints" (1982)	SA #10, by 8am
	15   03.02.23	- Philipa Foot - "Are Moral Considerations Overriding?" (1977, republished 2002)	SA #11, by 8am
<b>WEEK 9</b> <b>Well-Being</b>	16   03.07.23	- Derek Parfit - "What Makes Someone's Life Go Best?" (1984)	SA #12, by 8am
	17   03.09.23	- no new readings, in class activities only	
	<i>Sunday, March 12th: Paper 2 due by 11:55pm</i>		
<b>SPRING BREAK</b>	na   03.14.23	<i>Spring Break - No Class</i>	
	na   03.16.23	<i>Spring Break - No Class</i>	
<b>WEEK 10</b> <b>Happiness and Meaning</b>	18   03.21.23	- Susan Wolf - "Happiness and Meaning: Two Aspects of the Good Life" (1997)	SA #13, by 8am
	19   03.23.23	- no new readings, in class activities only	
<b>WEEK 11</b> <b>Meaningfulness Continued</b>	20   03.28.23	- Joshua Glasgow - "The Ordinary Meaningful Life" (2022)	SA #14, by 8am
	21   03.30.23	- no new readings, in class activities only	

<b>WEEK 12</b>  <b>The Significance of Death</b>	22   04.04.23	- Kieren Setiya - "The Midlife Crisis" (2014)	SA #15, by 8am
	na   04.06.23	<i>Well Being Day - No Class</i>	
<b>WEEK 13</b>  <b>Disability and Well-Being</b>	23   04.11.23	- Ian Stoner - "Ways to Be Worse Off" (2016)	SA #16, by 8am
	24   04.13.23	- Matthew Shea - "The Quality of Life is not Strained: Disability, Human Nature, Well-Being, and Relationships" (2019)	SA #17, by 8am
<b>WEEK 14</b>  <b>Digital Well-Being</b>	25   04.18.23	- (Podcast) Ro Khanna on digital dignity: <a href="https://philosophybites.libsyn.com/ro-khanna-on-digital-dignity">https://philosophybites.libsyn.com/ro-khanna-on-digital-dignity</a>	SA #18, by 8am
	26   04.20.23	- no new readings, in class activities only	
<b>WEEK 15</b>  <b>Wrap Up</b>	27   04.25.23	- no new readings, in class activities only	
	28   04.27.23	- no new readings, in class activities only	
Exam Slot	<b><i>Friday, May 5th, 12:00pm - Final Paper Due and Metacognition Reflection Session</i></b> , CW 103. Note: you receive the final % of your attendance and participation mark by doing the metacognition reflection.		

**Additional Recommended Readings** (for if you would like to pursue more readings on any of our course topics, stay tuned for additions):

- Jonathan Bennett - "The Conscience of Huckleberry Finn" (1974).
- Cheshire Calhoun (1995). "Standing for Something," *Journal of Philosophy* 92 (5): 235-260.
- Fred Feldman (2002). "The Good Life: A Defense of Attitudinal Hedonism," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* LXV (3): 604-628.
- Robert Nozick (1974) "The Experience Machine," in *Anarchy, State, and Utopia*, pp 42-45.
- Rae Langton - "Duty and Desolation" (1992).
- John Taurek - "Should the Numbers Count?" (1977)
- David Velleman - "A Brief Introduction to Kantian Ethics" (2006)
- <https://www.plough.com/en/topics/culture/music/dolly-parton-is-magnificent>
- Bernard Williams (1972). "The Makropulos Case: Reflections on the Tedium of Immortality," in *Problems of the Self: Philosophical Papers 1956-1972*, pp 82-100.
- Rivka Weinberg - "Why Life is Absurd" (2015)

**Course Goals and Learning Objectives.** All our philosophy courses aim at the acquisition and nurturing of basic philosophic skills. One of the main goals of our philosophy curriculum is to instill and enable the development of skills that are distinct to philosophy, but which are foundational to all forms of knowledge. These basic philosophical skills involve being able to:

- Think critically;

- Deploy philosophical concepts and terminology correctly, in either a historical or contemporary setting;
- Represent clearly and accurately the views or argument of particular philosophers, in either a historical or contemporary setting;
- Identify the premises and conclusion(s) of a philosophical argument and assess both its validity and soundness;
- Apply a philosophical theory or argument to a new topic, and being able to draw and defend reasonable conclusions about that topic;
- Develop an argument for a particular solution to a philosophical problem in either a historical or contemporary setting;
- Write clearly, precisely, and persuasively in defense of a philosophical thesis;
- Participate in respectful, critical, and reflexive dialogues about difficult philosophical positions;
- Read, interpret, and evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of different philosophical texts and the philosophical positions presented in them.

In addition, PHIL 160H satisfies our value theory requirement for the philosophy major and minor and thereby aims at developing the following learning outcomes:

- being familiar with some of the leading normative theories in philosophy, such as utilitarianism, deontology, and virtue ethics;
- being able to identify and explain the various contexts in which philosophical questions of justification arise;
- being able to assess ethical values in terms of the philosophical and non-philosophical reasons offered;
- being able to recognize different ethical perspectives and the distinctive approaches these perspectives bring to questions of value;
- being able to evaluate ethical justifications for different ways of organizing civic and political communities;
- being able to analyze and evaluate the differences between personal ethical decisions and those bearing on the public and civic domains.

This course is part of the IDEAs in Action General Education curriculum and satisfies FC-KNOWING (Ways of Knowing) or FC-VALUES (Ethical and Civic Values).

FC-KNOWING. Courses in the Ways of Knowing Focus Capacity help you to flex your “seeking to understand” muscle by exposing you to a variety of perspectives and giving you the skills to interrogate assumptions of yourself and others. Explore a concept from a variety of perspectives which will reveal patterns of thought that you may not be aware exist. Tackle new experiences that teach you how to become more aware of yourself and your beliefs. The course you choose will challenge you to consider what you take for granted and learn to seek out critical information when tackling questions and problems.

- These are the *Learning Outcomes* that are expected of students after completing a course:

- Recognize and use one or more approach/es to developing and validating knowledge of the unfamiliar world
- Evaluate ways that temporal, spatial, scientific, and philosophical categories structure knowledge.
- Interrogate assumptions that underlie our own perceptions of the world.
- Employ strategies to mitigate or adjust for preconceptions and biases.
- Apply critical insights to understand patterns of experience and belief.
- *Questions for Students.* These are the types of questions you should be able to answer (or approach with greater skill and confidence) after completing a course:
  - What norms and expectations do I take for granted?
  - What categories and concepts frame my assumptions, experiences, and beliefs?
  - What practices of investigation or inquiry best challenge those assumptions and expectations?
  - How can I consider whether my beliefs might be wrong?
- *Recurring Capacities.* Every focus capacity course includes the following activities:
  - *Writing*, totaling at least 10 pages in length or the intellectual equivalent
  - *Presenting* material to the class, smaller groups, or the public through oral presentations, webpages, or other means
  - *Collaborating* in pairs or groups to learn, design, solve, create, build, or research
 These elements – referred to as “recurring capacities” – will help you repeatedly practice crucial skills for future study, life, and career success.

FC-VALUES. What does it mean to be a part of a community? How do our decisions, and those decisions of our leaders, affect those around us and society at large, not only now but in the future? Learn how different perspectives can influence our idea of what is ethical and how to think critically about how we make and justify private and public decisions and evaluate the actions of public leaders.

- These are the *Learning Outcomes* that are expected of students after completing a course:
  - Explain the contexts in which questions of justification arise.
  - Assess ethical values in terms of reasons offered.
  - Recognize different ethical perspectives and the distinctive approaches these perspectives bring to questions of value, evaluating ethical justifications for different ways of organizing civic and political communities.
  - Analyze the differences between personal ethical decisions and those bearing on the public and civic spheres.
- *Questions for Students.* These are the types of questions you should be able to answer (or approach with greater skill and confidence) after completing a course:
  - How can people think fruitfully, individually and together, about how they should live their lives?
  - What is required to judge a standard or value as worthy of support?
  - How should we distinguish between prejudices and reasonable grounds for value judgments?



- What considerations – stories, reasons, testimony, documents, data, et cetera – can justify our values and commitments, whether personal or social?
- *Recurring Capacities*. Same as above.

### ***Academic and Course Policies***

<b>Attendance Policy</b>	<p><b>University Policy:</b></p> <p>No right or privilege exists that permits a student to be absent from any class meetings, except for these University Approved Absences:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Authorized University activities</li> <li>2. Disability/religious observance/pregnancy, as required by law and approved by <u>Accessibility Resources and Service</u> and/or the <u>Equal Opportunity and Compliance Office</u> (EOC)</li> <li>3. Significant health condition and/or personal/family emergency as approved by the <u>Office of the Dean of Students</u>, <u>Gender Violence Service Coordinators</u>, and/or the <u>Equal Opportunity and Compliance Office</u> (EOC).</li> </ol> <p>Please communicate with me early about potential absences. Please be aware that you are bound by the Honor Code when making a request for a University approved absence.</p>
<b>Honor Code Statement</b>	<p>Students are bound by the Honor Code in taking exams and in written work. The <u>Honor Code of the University</u> is in effect at all times, and the submission of work signifies understanding and acceptance of those requirements. Plagiarism will not be tolerated. Please consult with me if you have any questions about the Honor Code.</p>
<b>Acceptable Use Policy</b>	<p>By enrolling as a student in this course, you agree to abide by the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill policies related to the acceptable use of IT systems and services. You may be asked to participate in online discussions or other online activities that may include personal information about you or other students in the course. The rights and protection of other participants are protected under the UNC-Chapel Hill <u>Information Technology Acceptable Use Policy</u>, which covers topics related to using digital resources, such as privacy, confidentiality, and intellectual property.</p>

	Consult the University website “ <a href="#">Safe Computing at UNC</a> ” for information about the data security policies, updates, and tips on keeping your identity, information, and devices safe.
<b>Syllabus Changes</b>	The instructor reserves the right to make changes to the syllabus, including due dates. These changes will be announced as early as possible.
<b>Technology Use</b>	I generally allow computers to be used in class, especially if an assigned reading was available electronically. I reserve the ability to disallow the use of computers when I feel doing so will enhance discussion. If you choose to use your laptop, I expect you to be 100% “with us,” which means no e-mail, no Facebook, no Twitter, no ESPN, and so on.

### *Services and Student Support*

<b>Accessibility Resources and Services</b>	<p>The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill facilitates the implementation of reasonable accommodations, including resources and services, for students with disabilities, chronic medical conditions, a temporary disability or pregnancy complications resulting in barriers to fully accessing University courses, programs and activities.</p> <p>Accommodations are determined through the Office of Accessibility Resources and Service (ARS) for individuals with documented qualifying disabilities in accordance with applicable state and federal laws. See the ARS Website for contact information: <a href="https://ars.unc.edu">https://ars.unc.edu</a> or email <a href="mailto:ars@unc.edu">ars@unc.edu</a>.</p>
<b>Counseling and Psychological Services</b>	<p>CAPS is strongly committed to addressing the mental health needs of a diverse student body through timely access to consultation and connection to clinically appropriate services, whether for short or long-term needs. Go to their website: <a href="https://caps.unc.edu/">https://caps.unc.edu/</a> or visit their facilities on the third floor of the Campus Health Services building for a walk-in evaluation to learn more.</p>

<b>Title IX Resources</b>	<p>Any student who is impacted by discrimination, harassment, interpersonal (relationship) violence, sexual violence, sexual exploitation, or stalking is encouraged to seek resources on campus or in the community. Reports can be made online to the EOC at <a href="https://eoc.unc.edu/report-an-incident/">https://eoc.unc.edu/report-an-incident/</a>. Please contact the University's Title IX Coordinator (Elizabeth Hall, interim – <a href="mailto:titleixcoordinator@unc.edu">titleixcoordinator@unc.edu</a>), Report and Response Coordinators in the Equal Opportunity and Compliance Office (<a href="mailto:reportandresponse@unc.edu">reportandresponse@unc.edu</a>), Counseling and Psychological Services (confidential), or the Gender Violence Services Coordinators (<a href="mailto:gvsc@unc.edu">gvsc@unc.edu</a>; confidential) to discuss your specific needs. Additional resources are available at <a href="http://safe.unc.edu">safe.unc.edu</a>.</p>
<b>Policy on Non-Discrimination</b>	<p>The University is committed to providing an inclusive and welcoming environment for all members of our community and to ensuring that educational and employment decisions are based on individuals' abilities and qualifications. Consistent with this principle and applicable laws, the University's <u><a href="#">Policy Statement on Non-Discrimination</a></u> offers access to its educational programs and activities as well as employment terms and conditions without respect to race, color, gender, national origin, age, religion, creed, genetic information, disability, veteran's status, sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression. Such a policy ensures that only relevant factors are considered and that equitable and consistent standards of conduct and performance are applied.</p> <p>If you are experiencing harassment or discrimination, you can seek assistance and file a report through the Report and Response Coordinators (see contact info at <a href="http://safe.unc.edu">safe.unc.edu</a>) or the <u><a href="#">Equal Opportunity and Compliance Office</a></u>, or online to the EOC at <a href="https://eoc.unc.edu/report-an-incident/">https://eoc.unc.edu/report-an-incident/</a>.</p>
<b>Diversity Statement</b>	<p>I value the perspectives of individuals from all backgrounds reflecting the diversity of our students. I broadly define diversity to include race, gender identity, national origin, ethnicity, religion, social class, age, sexual orientation, political background, and physical and learning ability. I strive to make this classroom an inclusive space for all students. Please let me know if there is anything I can do to improve. I appreciate suggestions.</p>

<b>Learning Center</b>	<p>The UNC Learning Center is a great resource both for students who are struggling in their courses and for those who want to be proactive and develop sound study practices to prevent falling behind. They offer individual consultations, peer tutoring, academic coaching, test prep programming, study skills workshops, and peer study groups. If you think you might benefit from their services, please visit them in SASB North or visit their website to set up an appointment: <a href="http://learningcenter.unc.edu">http://learningcenter.unc.edu</a>.</p>
<b>Writing Center</b>	<p>The Writing Center is located in the Student and Academic Services Building and offers personalized writing consultations as well as a variety of other resources. This could be a wonderful resource to help with your writing assignments in this course (and any assignments in your other courses). You do not need a complete draft of your assignment to visit; they can help you at any stage! You can chat with someone in the writing center or set up an appointment on their website: <a href="http://writingcenter.unc.edu">http://writingcenter.unc.edu</a>.</p>