

Phil 1700-CTRA: Global Ethics
Tues/Thurs 10:45 AM – 12 PM | Room: B-Vert 4-220
Eliana Peck (she/her/hers) | epeck@gradcenter.cuny.edu

Office Hours

- Primarily for TTC prep: Tuesdays 12:10 – 1:10 PM in person, Rm. 5-272 (first, enter 5-270) or by appointment
- Primarily for general support: Thursdays 4-5 PM on Zoom
<https://baruch.zoom.us/j/97490151657> | Passcode: philosophy

Course Overview

What ought we to do? In what does “the good life” consist? What does it mean to live well, particularly given the ways in which our lives are impacted by different social environments and relationships with others? What are evils, oppression, and injustice, and how do we respond? What resources do we have for building an ethical life in common?

Philosophy is a discipline of questions; through the foregoing questions, we will learn to look at our world, our practices, and ourselves with fresh eyes. Our task in this ethics class is not primarily to ask whether particular actions are right or wrong. Rather, we will inquire about the ethical lives that we lead in common, looking with curiosity at the moral practices in which we are already engaged and thinking critically about our ethical possibilities. Although the complexity of our subject means that we may not always find clear answers to our questions, we will learn to treat uncertainty and ambiguity as opportunities for further reflection and choice.

Beginning with three major frameworks for morality – Kantian deontology, utilitarianism, and Aristotelian virtue ethics – we will inquire about how we make moral choices, and ask which features of our actions make them right or wrong. Then, we will broaden our conception of ethics, inquiring not just about moral choice but about the human condition and what it means to live well. We will then ask how harm, oppression, and injustice shape our very possibilities for moral choice and action. In our final weeks, we will reflect on how conflict, difference, and disagreement impact ethical life, and consider how we might nonetheless build and share moral communities.

Learning Goals

This course satisfies the Pathways requirement for Category 4, The Individual and Society. By the end of this class you will have:

- 1) acquired an understanding of some central questions and positions in ethics and moral philosophy, including those that bear on the self, others, and our shared social world
- 2) learned how to identify a thinker’s project; honed the skills of reading comprehension, interpretation, and critically examining texts
- 3) read texts sympathetically and been charitable, active listeners to your peers; practiced empathy, sensitivity, and perspective-taking, including when discussing social issues
- 4) identified various thinkers’ claims, support, and lines of reasoning; reconstructed and evaluated thinkers’ answers to the questions of the course, including in discussion board posts and in two papers
- 5) improved the clarity and persuasiveness of written and spoken arguments; practiced offering reasons and support to back up a viewpoint or claim, including by raising worries to thinkers’ views, and entertaining objections to one’s own views
- 6) analyzed and defended judgments about philosophical claims in the face of competing judgments, including in respectful dialogue and collaboration with each other

- 7) collaborated with others for the “teach the class” project and exhibited agency within our classroom community; practiced oral communication skills and guided others through new questions, worries, examples, or lines of reasoning
- 8) developed a philosophical curiosity that will serve you outside of the classroom

Accessibility and Support

Your success in this class is important to me. Your health – both physical and mental – and your safety are important to me. I hope that you will reach out whenever you are confused, need help, or have questions. If there are circumstances (including those brought on by Covid-19) that may affect your performance in this class, or accommodations that would make the course more accessible, please let me know. I know that you may not always feel comfortable sharing aspects of your home life with me, but I hope that you will communicate with me openly this semester. If you are experiencing hardships that may impact your performance in class, I am ready and willing to strategize with you and offer support (including through regular meetings with me, adapting assignments or deadlines, connecting you to campus services, etc.). In addition to working with me, you may also seek out various campus services like the [Writing Center](#), [Disability Services](#), [Student Academic Consulting Center](#), [Baruch Technology Loan Program](#), etc.). You may always seek out free and confidential support at the [Baruch College Counseling Center](#), or, if it’s outside of business and you need immediate assistance, by calling 1-888-NYC-WELL (888-692-9355).

I am available during my office hours and via email, but please do not expect me to reply to emails outside of regular business hours (9 AM – 5 PM on weekdays). If you have concerns or suggestions regarding any aspect of the course, or if you need help or guidance, please come and see me. I am committed to making this class a meaningful experience for all of you!

Course Materials

You do not need to purchase any books for this course; all materials are available on Blackboard (BB). You *must* have the assigned text with you during class each day, *no exceptions*. Doing good philosophy almost always requires returning to the text. Cell phones and headphones are not permitted in this class. Laptop use is permitted, *as long as* it does not interfere with our discussions. If I find that laptops are becoming distracting – to you, or to your peers – I will revoke this privilege.

Grade Breakdown

- Weekly Discussion Board Posts – 20%
- Teach the Class – 20%
- First Paper – 20%
- Final Paper – 20%
- Participation and Attendance – 10%
- Peripatetic Philosophy Day – 10%

Weekly Discussion Board

By Monday at 6 PM each week, post to the relevant Blackboard forum. Your post may be an independent response to the readings for the week, or it may be a substantive response to someone else’s post(s). The goal of this assignment is to get you **puzzling** about the source material prior to our class session, but you can use the space in a variety of ways. You might:

- a) identify the question being asked by the thinker (noting page numbers and/or relevant quotes), and offer your initial ideas or reflections about the question(s) they are asking.

- b) detail an area of the source material that you found particularly confusing, offer an attempt at an interpretation, and ask what others think.
- c) describe an element of the source material that you found particularly strange or controversial, explain what you think is going on, and ask what others think.
- d) reconstruct some element of the thinker's argument (their main claim and their reasons, noting pages) and raise a question, objection, or worry about their view.
- e) draw connections between the day's readings and other topics/sources from the course; raise a question for discussion.
- f) reflect on how a real-world example or a contemporary social issue could be relevant to the ideas from the sources; tell us how and why.
- g) respond to a peer's post, explaining what is interesting about their comment, what areas of the sources you find relevant to their comments or questions (with page numbers), what their post led you to think about or see differently, etc. Add something new!
- h) reflect on how your ideas are developing as we pursue the questions of the course, consider how your views have changed, and note some questions you still have.

You need not do all of these, but **you must do more than simply summarize**. I encourage you to ask questions, to note something confusing or controversial, to offer an interpretation or extension, to raise an objection or criticism, etc. Importantly, there's no need to be an expert. When we meet in class, these posts will help me and your peers know what to focus on. So, when in doubt, ask a question – reconstruct which areas of the text(s) led you to think of the question, explain why you think the question matters, and invite your peers to weigh in. We'll aim to discuss it in class!

Important: whatever you choose to write about, be sure to offer enough detail to explain your comment and indicate what aspects of the material you are focusing on. You do not need to formally cite, but do note pages and incorporate quotes where appropriate; help others find and understand the relevant source and section.

Posts are due every Monday at 6 PM, so that your peers and I have a chance to review them before class. There is no strict word count, but a good guideline is 170-200 words. I will grade your submissions out of eight points; for full credit, your comment must reflect critical engagement with the material, sufficient and interesting details, and philosophical curiosity. I will usually accept late work for partial credit, but please be considerate of the purpose of the assignment – to get us puzzling about the source material *prior* to class – and submit on time. At the end of the semester, I will drop your lowest grade (meaning that you may miss one post without penalty).

Participation and Attendance

I expect you to arrive each day ready to discuss the assigned reading, ask questions about its meaning and merit, and help others find the answers. Reading, and contributing to our active discussion of the readings, is the most central feature of this class; **if you have not done the reading, you will not be able to successfully participate in our sessions**. Be prepared to start your reading early, and review it more than once if you can; these texts are challenging, and some passages may not make sense until you've read them several times. You're not on your own, though; read at home, use the discussion board, and bring a copy of the reading *and* your questions to class – we'll work through the ideas together. Bear in mind that respectful dialogue is integral to doing good, collaborative philosophy; we should all aim to contribute to a dynamic, supportive, and equitable classroom community.

Good participation presupposes attendance. I will assess you each day out of 3 points. You start the day with full credit, because I assume that you will attend and participate. Failure to attend class will result in a 0/3, but, at the end of the semester, I will drop your three lowest grades. This policy gives you the chance at three excused absences.

To assess your in-class participation, consider: Did you participate in meaningful ways in our discussions, including by drawing on the readings? Did you enhance others' understanding of the text and its implications? Did you display practices of active listening? Did you encourage the participation of others, e.g. by refraining from monopolizing conversation and by respectfully responding to other students' remarks? (Note: If you're someone who struggles with speaking in class, challenge yourself to "step up" sometimes – arrive with a comment or question prepared. If you're someone who speaks a lot, challenge yourself to "step back" and listen to others' comments.)

I **do not permit** any form or degree of discrimination against marginalized groups (i.e., on the basis of race, gender, sexual orientation, dis/ability, religion, citizenship, weight, etc.) in my class. Anyone who exhibits behavior of this sort will be reminded of this policy. If the behavior continues, they will be asked to leave.

I know that the coronavirus has impacted so many features of our lives, and that there may be good reasons why you may sometimes have to miss more sessions than you would under normal circumstances. I am **willing to work with you** to improve your grade; please communicate with me as much as you can, and we will strategize together.

Teach the Class

Each Thursday, 2-3 students will do a partnered assignment called "teach the class." The aim of this assignment is for you to develop some expertise on the week's topics, and offer some thoughts, questions, extensions, and/or confusions to your peers. It *isn't* a formal presentation; your job is to "get the juices flowing" and invite your peers into conversation. Thus, the heart and soul of the TTC should consist of *questions* to your peers. In office hours (see below), I will help you plan and organize the TTC.

The TTC should last approximately 15-20 minutes, and there are a number of things that you might choose to do. **You might...** a) invite your peers into conversation about the questions for the day, providing a backdrop or warm-up for the class session, b) zero in on one section of a text, raising questions geared towards enhancing your peers' understanding, c) draw our attention to some feature of the sources and raise a worry, objection, or criticism, inviting your peers into conversation, d) raise a contemporary case or example that bears on the week's discussion, asking questions and helping to expand the scope of our attention, e) share, discuss, and/or raise questions about something that attracted you from the reading or appeared on the weekly Blackboard forum, f) raise connections between a preceding class and the new topic, and so on.

In the week prior to your TTC, you and your partners should get in touch, meet, and come up with a plan. I *highly* recommend that you and your partners **attend my office hours together on the Tuesday prior** to your presentation; if you cannot (and I do insist that you try), then you must email me with your plan in time for me to provide written feedback (we may also be able to schedule an alternative time to meet). It is helpful if you have done the readings and prepped some initial ideas (and questions for me!) by the time we meet.

During the TTC, be sure to remind your peers of whatever might be relevant as background, explain the issue, topic, objection, or example you wish to raise, and include questions for discussion – get your peers talking! You may bring materials to share, but remember that this is a) informal and b) short – don't try to do too much. I will grade you out of 30 points, evaluating the success, clarity, and originality with which you introduce a topic or issue relevant to the week's study and engage your peers in conversation (with you and with each other).

Note: unless you plan ahead so as to apply your one "dropped" discussion board post for your TTC day, you *are* responsible for a post the week that you do a TTC. I recommend you do it early, and use it to start exploring your (and your peers') ideas and questions!

Papers

There are **two** papers in this course, both of which will allow you to practice philosophical thinking, reading, writing, argumentation, and analysis. The first paper will ask you to reconstruct an argument given by one or more thinkers we have read – drawing out their project, claims, and support – and evaluate that argument by presenting your own claims backed by examples, textual analysis, and sound reasoning. The second paper will ask you to make your own argument by articulating a philosophical puzzle from the course, taking a position, and defending your claims through clear and rigorous argumentation and references to the relevant texts. We will have two **writing workshops**, during which we will discuss requirements for writing and citing in this class as well as general advice for writing in philosophy; you may be required to bring some materials to those workshops for peer review. We will discuss the papers in more detail as they approach.

Late papers cannot receive full credit and will be penalized in relationship to the lateness of the submission (standardly, by one partial-letter grade each day it is late). If you need an extension, email me **before the original due date** so that we can discuss and set an amended date. If you wish to discuss a late submission, feel free to email me. Although late papers cannot receive full credit, my goal is to make the course assignments meaningful and achievable for you. Feel free to see me at any point to discuss your writing!

Academic Integrity

Plagiarism – presenting others’ ideas or work as your own – **will not be tolerated** in this class. Please familiarize yourself with Baruch’s policies regarding academic honesty, available here: https://www.baruch.cuny.edu/academic/academic_honesty.html. Plagiarism on an assignment will result in a failing grade. Methods for avoiding plagiarism through proper citation will be discussed in class; additional resources are available here: <https://guides.newman.baruch.cuny.edu/plagiarism>. Remember, questions are always welcome in philosophy, so if in doubt about these policies, ask! I would rather grant an extension than receive plagiarized work.

Reading and Assignment Schedule

This syllabus, including the reading list, is subject to change. It is your responsibility to check your email for updates and refer to the newest version of the syllabus, available on Blackboard.

Themes and Skills	Date	Reading	Assignment
Introduction	Tu Feb 1	No reading	Day 1 Survey (link) Due Fri Feb 4 at 6 PM
What is/are ethics?			
What is moral judgment, and why does it matter?	Th Feb 3	Hannah Arendt, selections from “Personal Responsibility Under Dictatorship” (1964; pgs. 18-24 & 43-5)	Day 1 Survey (link) Due Fri Feb 4 at 6 PM
Where do we succeed or fail in practicing ethical thinking?		We’ll watch a few mins. of this video in class, so feel free to give it a first watch	

	Tu Feb 8	No session – follow a Friday schedule Office hours at the Zoom office hours link, 12-1 PM (or by appointment)	No DB post
<p>What ought we to do?</p> <p>What determines whether an act is morally right?</p> <p><i>Skills: Identifying a Project and Reading Sympathetically</i></p>	Th Feb 10	Immanuel Kant, selections from <i>Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals</i> (1785) – read from “The Good Will” (pg. 81) to “The Supreme Principle of Morality (pg. 83) (the rest is for Feb 15) For help: Barbara Herman, from “On the Value of Acting from the Motive of Duty” (5 pages; 1981)	
	Tu Feb 15	Immanuel Kant, selections from <i>Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals</i> (1785) – read from “The Supreme Principle of Morality (pg. 83) to end	Discussion Board Due 2/14 at 6 PM
	Th Feb 17	Virginia Held, selections from “Feminist Transformations of Moral Theory” (1990), and Audre Lorde, “Poetry is Not a Luxury” (2 pages; 1977) Optional: Audre Lorde, “Uses of the Erotic” (7 pages; 1978)	
	Tu Feb 22	John Stuart Mill, selections from <i>Utilitarianism</i> (1863)	DB Due 2/21 at 6 PM
	Th Feb 24	Ursula Le Guin, “The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas” (1973, 4 pgs.), and John Stuart Mill, from “A Few Words on Non-Intervention” (1859) with preface by Chomsky and/or video	
	Tu Mar 1	Aristotle, selections from the <i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> (340 BCE) (Day 1)	DB Due 2/28 at 6 PM
What constitutes ‘the good life?’	Th Mar 3	Remind yourself of Aristotle on happiness and “external goods” (last class); then read,	

<p>What does it mean to live well as the people that we are, in the world that we have?</p> <p><i>Skills: Identifying Claims and Support</i></p>		<p>Aristotle, selections from <i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> (340 BCE) (Day 2; 2 pages), and</p> <p>Marcella Bombardieri, “Colleges are No Match for American Poverty” (2018)</p>	
	Tu Mar 8	W.E.B. Du Bois, “Of Our Spiritual Strivings” (1903)	DB Due 3/7 at 6 PM
	Th Mar 10	Bridget Newell, “Being a White Problem and Feeling It” (2015)	
	Tu Mar 15	<p>Eli Clare, “The Mountain” from <i>Exile and Pride: Disability, Queerness, and Liberation</i> (1999) (cw: rape, violence related to race, gender, disability)</p> <p>Recommended: S. Kay Toombs, “The Lived Experience of Disability” (1995) – get a sense of the idea of the “lived body” on the first few pages</p>	DB Due 3/14 at 6 PM
	Th Mar 17	Writing Workshop	
	Tu Mar 22	Gloria Anzaldúa, from <i>Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza</i> (1987)	DB Due 3/21 at 6 PM
	Th Mar 24	Sara Ahmed, “Orientations: Toward a Queer Phenomenology” (2006)	Paper #1 Due 11:59 PM on Sun March 27
<p>What are evils, oppression, and injustice?</p> <p>How do we respond?</p> <p><i>Skills: Evaluating Support and Considering Alternatives</i></p>	Tu Mar 29	Marilyn Frye, “Oppression” (1983)	DB Due 3/28 at 6 PM
	Th Mar 31	Lila Abu-Lughod, “Do Muslim Women Really Need Saving?” (2002), and video (3 mins.)	
	Tu Apr 5	Claudia Card, selections from <i>Confronting Evils</i> (2010) (esp. pages 3-5 and 10-27)	DB Due 4/4 at 6 PM
	Th Apr 7	Iris Marion Young, “Responsibility and Global Justice: A Social Connection Model” (last section, “Parameters of Reasoning,” is optional) (2006)	

	Tu Apr 12	Kristie Dotson, “Tracing Epistemic Violence, Tracking Practices of Silencing” (2011)	DB Due 4/11 at 6 PM
	Th Apr 14	bell hooks, “Choosing the Margin as a Space of Radical Openness” (1990) Optional (may be interesting as another take on knowledge, and a follow-up to the Newell reading): Alexis Shotwell, “Unforgetting as a Collective Tactic” (2015)	
	Tu Apr 19 & Th Apr 21	Spring Recess – No class	Peripatetic Philosophy Day Due Fr April 29 th
	Tu Apr 26	Videos: “ What It’s Like to be Intersex ,” “ What Intersex Means ,” and (optional) “ The Fight to Stop... ” (cw: medical and sexual trauma) Konrad Blair, “When Doctors Get It Wrong” (2015; pages 89-92 of the <i>Narrative Symposium</i> ; feel free to read other narratives as well) (cw: medical and sexual trauma) Ellen Feder, “Beyond Good Intentions” (2015); you can watch the interview with Dr. Hensle 5-8 minutes into this news segment (and, optionally, see criticisms of the segment here)	DB Due 4/25 at 6 PM
	Th Apr 28	Myisha Cherry, “Anger is not a Bad Word” TED Talk (2015)	Peripatetic Philosophy Day Due Fr 4/29 (eve.)
What do we do now? What resources do we have for building	Tu May 3	Lisa Tessman, selections from <i>Moral Failure</i> (2014; 3 pages), and; Kathryn Norlock, “Perpetual Struggle” (2019; 8 pages)	DB Due 5/2 at 6 PM

<p>an ethical life in common?</p> <p><i>Skills: Listening to Uncertainty</i></p>	Th May 5	William James, “The Moral Philosopher and the Moral Life” (1891)	
	Tu May 10	Margaret Urban Walker, from Ch. 10 of <i>Moral Understandings</i> (2007; pages 235-239 and bottom of 241-248)	DB Due 5/9 at 6 PM
	Th May 12	Writing Workshop	
	Tu May 17	Olúfẹmi O. Táíwò, “The Arc of the Moral Universe” (2022)	DB Due 5/16 at 6 PM
	Final Session Th May 19 at 10:45 AM	Listen: Alexis Shotwell, “Against Purity” on the podcast <i>This is Not a Pipe</i> (2017) – link here or where you find podcasts	Paper #2 Due by email on Fr 5/20 at 12 PM (noon)