

# Communicating Moral Issues

Philosophy 213 Section 23 – University of South Carolina – Fall 2022

Meetings:

Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays.

4:40-5:30

Room 310, McMaster College.

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Office Hours: Close Hipp 503, Tuesdays and Thursdays 3:00pm-4:00pm or by appointment

## I. *General Course Information*

### Course Description

Philosophy is in the business of asking questions. Many philosophers ask questions like: Does God exist? Are we free? How can we know anything? While these fall within the domain of philosophy, they are not the focus of this course.

Instead, our class focuses on *moral* philosophy. Moral philosophy asks questions like: How should I act? What do I owe to others? How should I treat non-human things? Moral philosophy is, in other words, *practical* philosophy. Therefore, we will analyze practical topics like abortion, free speech, eating animals, justice, and sex, to name a few. You will also independently explore some moral topics which you will present to the class both orally and in writing.

In this course, your perspective will be challenged, and you will be asked to defend your views against those who disagree with you. This course will push you outside of your intellectual comfort zone and give you the space to explore the question: *what ought I do?*

PHIL 213 is an overlay course that fulfills the Values, Ethics, and Social Responsibility *and* the Effective, Engaged, and Persuasive Communication Carolina Core Requirements.

### Learning Outcomes

- Identify several difficult moral problems

- Respectfully disagree with others by analyzing their arguments and generating relevant objections
- Familiarize oneself with challenging philosophical arguments and texts
- Compose and articulate well-formed arguments
- Speak confidently and extemporaneously to an audience
- Communicate one's view in a concise, coherent, and convincing manner
- Acknowledge the nuance and difficulty of moral controversies today

### **Readings**

All readings will be made available to you via Blackboard. This includes the required textbook for the course, *Public Speaking: The Virtual Text*. You are expected to take notes on the readings and engage with the texts in a substantive way.

### **General Requirements**

- Attend all class meetings
- Read and prepare for each class meeting
- Participate during class meetings
- Deliver 5 oral presentations (three live, one virtual, and one in a private meeting)
- Complete 4 written assignments (2 papers, one proposal, and one questionnaire)
- Comply with all classroom and university policies

## *II. University and Classroom Policies*

### **Technology**

I have a no technology policy in my classroom for two reasons. First, the best empirical evidence suggests that computers and phones in the classroom not only negatively contribute to learning outcomes but are major distractors to both the user of the device and those around them. Second, a philosophy class requires each student to engage with others in dialogue. Computers and phones do not contribute to substantive dialogue or student engagement.

There are, however, exceptions to this rule. In some instances, technology will be required in class. I will notify you beforehand when that is the case. Additionally, if you *must* use a computer in class, you must come and speak to me in person about it. Unless you speak with me, I ask that you to put all devices away in class. Finally, if you have a DRS accommodation you may use technology and will not be required to come and speak to me about it. Violations of this policy may result in you being marked absent from class.

### **Respect & Toleration**

In this class you will be confronted with views that differ from yours. Sometimes these views can differ dramatically. Despite the diversity of views you will encounter, you are responsible to treat each other with respect at all times. Insults, interruptions, bullying, and laughing at others will not be

tolerated. If you are disrespecting a student, you will be immediately dismissed from class and referred to the Office of Student Conduct.

With that in mind, there is no room for hatred, bigotry, homophobia, racism, classism, sexism, ableism, etc. in this classroom. I will not tolerate abusive language or hateful speech whatsoever.

Finally, a note on word choices in class. There are certain topics that can be triggering to many students. Many of these topics colloquially employ words and phrases that many find harmful. I will note when to substitute different words during these discussions and I ask that you try your best to respect my wishes and those of your fellow students.

You do not know what others have gone through. Therefore, approach each other with understanding and respect. Choose gentleness.

### **Communication**

I am a resource for you. I am here to help you learn and grow as a student, person, and philosophical thinker. If you need help, have a question, or simply want to chat, I encourage you to reach out to me. Allow me to emphasize this point: **if you have a question or concern it is always better to contact me.**

Do not lose yourself to frustration over an assignment. Do not wait until the last minute to tell me you're struggling with something outside of the classroom. Do not think "oh, I'm probably bothering them" – you are not. I want to talk and get to know each of you. So please, reach out to me if something is on your mind.

### **Disability**

Reasonable accommodations are available for students with a documented disability. If you have a disability and may need accommodations to fully participate in this class, contact the Office of Student Disability Services. All accommodations must be approved through the Office of Student Disability Services.

### **Honor Code**

This course operates under the rules of The University of South Carolina and its participants are expected to abide by the University's Honor Code, which states in part:

*It is the responsibility of every student at the University of South Carolina Columbia to adhere steadfastly to truthfulness and to avoid dishonesty, fraud, or deceit of any type in connection with any academic program. Any student who violates this Honor Code or who knowingly assists another to violate this Honor Code shall be subject to discipline.* [see <http://www.sc.edu/policies/ppm/staf625.pdf>]

The honor code is, among other things, inconsistent with cheating and plagiarism. Additionally, all students will be required to submit electronic copies of each of their papers (via the Blackboard system) to "Safe Assignment," an Internet service that checks papers for plagiarism, and adds all submitted papers to its database.

## I. *Course Requirements and Expectations*

### How You Will Be Assessed

Your grade is determined by your success in the following three categories. Each category contains assignments worth a percentage of your grade. Each assignment has a brief description here. Details will be made available when each assignment is announced in class.

#### I. **Attendance/Participation/Quizzes** 15%

##### A. Attendance – 5%

- The first step to succeeding in class is to show up. I will take attendance most days. If you know you will miss a class, it is your responsibility to notify me beforehand. I am very understanding that things happen. I ask only that you tell me when you do not expect to be in class. I am much less understanding about explanations given after you have already missed a class.
- If you miss more than 4 classes without explanation, I reserve the right to deduct 5 percentage points from your final grade for each additional class missed.

##### B. Participation – 5%

- Participation comes in many forms. Among them, it includes doing the readings, engaging in class discussions, and being an active listener. Participation does not mean simply showing up to class. To earn full participation credit, you must be an engaged member of the class.

##### C. Quizzes (if necessary) – 5%

- I take participation seriously. To be a good and active participant you need to come to class with questions, thoughts, arguments, etc. If at any time during the semester I sense that students are not doing the readings, I reserve the right to institute random quizzes about the day's reading at the beginning of each class.

#### II. **Speeches** 50%

##### A. Introductory Speech – 5%

- ~2-3 minutes (in class)
- This speech will be completed with a partner. Your job is to talk with and learn about a classmate. You should note their values, important characteristics, traits, experiences, etc. and then introduce them to the class in a 2-3 minute speech. You may use basic notes for this speech.

##### B. Informative Speech – 10%

- ~7 minutes (in class)
- In this speech you will introduce an ethical topic of your choosing. You will present an argument for both sides of the issue in an unbiased and charitable way. In other words, you will not pick a side on your issue in this

presentation; your goal is to inform the audience of the topic's terrain. This speech should be written out in an outline and delivered extemporaneously.

C. Meeting (Informative) – 5%

- ~10 minutes (one-on-one)
- While graded as a speech, this assignment is not conducted in front of the class. Instead, you will meet with me one-on-one during class time for around 10 minutes and present an outline of the argument you wish to present on your chosen ethical topic.

D. Persuasive Speech – 20%

- ~10 minutes (in class)
- The persuasive speech is the culmination of your prior speeches and is the most important. Treat this and your persuasive essay as the “final” for this course. The persuasive speech is delivered as an argument. You will take a side on your chosen ethical topic and present arguments about why your view is correct and others are incorrect to the class.

E. Commemorative – 10%

- ~5 minutes (virtual)
- The commemorative speech is the last speech you will deliver for the course. This speech will be recorded and uploaded to Blackboard. The goal here is to commemorate an experience you had that taught you or exemplifies some ethical principles or values you think are important.

**III. Writing 35%**

A. Proposal Paper – 5%

- Your proposal paper will outline the argument you wish to deliver in your persuasive speech and essay. You will upload this assignment to blackboard and present and elaborate on it in our one-on-one meeting.

B. Peer Questionnaire and Response – 5% in total

- You will be paired with a student in class whose speech you will watch and draft 3 questions for. You will then post those questions on the relevant Blackboard discussion board. You will also be responsible to answer the questions posed to you. Full credit for this assignment requires that you both ask and answer questions.

C. Persuasive Essay – 15%

- This assignment is effectively the written version of your persuasive speech. Your task is to translate your argument into a clear, coherent, and systematic written work.

D. Reflection Paper – 10%

- At the end of the semester, you will reflect on an ethical issue you expect to face in your future career. You will analyze why this is an ethical issue, your views on it, and how you might approach the problem. The purpose of this assignment is for you to explore how ethics and philosophical questioning permeates life outside the classroom.

**Late Assignments**

Late assignments will not be accepted. I do, however, understand that things happen. If you do not think you will have an assignment submitted on time, tell me ahead of time. I am more than happy to work around your schedule in most all cases. I value up-front communication. I do not value *post hoc* excuses.

**Grading Scale**

- A 100-90% = excellent, extraordinary, exceptional
- B+ 89-85% = very good, commendable, admirable
- B 84-80% = good, solid, shows promise
- C+ 79-75% = adequate, acceptable, ok
- C 74-70% = passable, but weak
- D+ 69-65% = very poor, unsatisfactory
- D 64-60% = seriously flawed
- Below D = failure

*IV. Schedule*

<b>Date</b>	<b>Topic/Reading</b>	<b>Assignments Due</b>
	<b>INTRODUCTION TO PHILOSOPHY AND ETHICS</b>	
<b>Friday – August 19</b>	What is Philosophy? Reading: - Metcalf “What is Philosophy?”	
<b>Monday – August 22</b>	Syllabus Day Reading: None	Introductory Speeches Assigned
<b>Wednesday – August 24</b>	How to deliver a speech Reading: - Public Speaking, Introduction and Chapter 3	
<b>Friday – August 26</b>	N/A Reading:	Student Interviews
<b>Monday – August 29</b>	What is Ethics? Reading: - Haramia “Applied Ethics”	
<b>Wednesday – August 31</b>	Speech Day Reading: None	Introductory Speeches
	<b>EATING ANIMALS</b>	
<b>Friday – September 2</b>	Eating Animals Reading:	

	- Norcross “Puppies, Pigs, and People”	
<b>Monday – September 5</b>	NO CLASS	
<b>Wednesday – September 7</b>	Eating Meat Reading: - Singer “All Animals are Equal”	
<b>Friday – September 9</b>	Eating Meat Reading: - Kagan “What is Wrong with Speciesism?”	Topic Selection Assigned
	ABORTION	
<b>Monday – September 12</b>	Abortion Reading: - Leslie, <i>When Abortion Was a Crime</i> Introduction, pgs. 1-14	
<b>Wednesday – September 14</b>	Abortion Reading: - JJ Thompson, “Defense of Abortion”	
<b>Friday – September 16</b>	NO CLASS	
<b>Monday – September 19</b>	Abortion Reading: - Don Marquis, “Why Abortion is Immoral”	
<b>Wednesday – September 21</b>	Abortion Reading: - Harman, “Creation Ethics”	
<b>Friday – September 23</b>	Discussion Reading: None	Topic Selection Due/Informative Speeches Assigned
	WHAT WE OWE EACH OTHER	
<b>Monday – September 26</b>	Justice Reading: - Rawls – <i>A Theory of Justice</i> Section 24	
<b>Wednesday – September 28</b>	Owning our History Reading: - Coates – “A Case for Reparations”	
<b>Friday – September 30</b>	Discussion Reading: None	Meetings /Proposal Paper/ Peer Questionnaire Assigned
<b>Monday – October 3</b>	Helping & Donating	

	Reading: - Singer “Famine, Affluence, and Morality”	
<b>Wednesday – October 5</b>	Closing Gaps Reading: - Parjiis “Basic income for all”	Persuasive Speeches Assigned
<b>Friday – October 7</b>	Speeches Reading: None	Informative Speeches
<b>Monday – October 10</b>	Speeches Reading: None	Informative Speeches
<b>Wednesday – October 12</b>	Speeches Reading: None	Informative Speeches
<b>Friday – October 14</b>	NO CLASS	
<b>Monday – October 17</b>	Meetings Reading: None	Meetings/Proposal Papers Due
<b>Wednesday – October 19</b>	Meetings Reading: None	Meetings
<b>Friday – October 21</b>	Meetings Reading: None	Meetings
<b>Monday – October 24</b>	Meetings Reading: None	Meetings
	RELATIONSHIPS & SEX	
<b>Wednesday – October 26</b>	Non-monogamous relationships Reading: - Jenkins, et al. “On Being the Only Ones” - Hardy, Easton <i>The Ethical Slut</i> Chapter 2 “Myths and Realities”	
<b>Friday – October 28</b>	Sex Reading: - Srinvasin “Does Anyone have a Right to Sex?”	
	FREEDOM & FREE SPEECH	
<b>Monday – October 31</b>	Freedom at Work Reading: - Anderson “How Bosses are like Dictators”	
<b>Wednesday – November 2</b>	Statues of Wrongdoers Reading:	

	- Frowe “Duty to Remove”	
<b>Friday – November 4</b>	Speeches Reading: None	Persuasive Speeches
<b>Monday – November 7</b>	Speeches Reading: None	Persuasive Speeches
<b>Wednesday – November 9</b>	Speeches Reading: None	Persuasive Speeches
<b>Friday – November 11</b>	Speeches Reading: None	Persuasive Speeches
<b>Monday – November 14</b>	Social Media & Speech Reading: - Bloom “Harmless Torturers” - Norlock “Online Shaming”	Peer Questionnaire Due/Commemorative Speeches Assigned
<b>Wednesday – November 16</b>	Social Media & Speech Reading: - O’Connor “The Social Media Problem is Worse than you Think”	
<b>Friday – November 18</b>	Discussion Reading: None	
<b>Monday – November 21</b>	Wrap Up Reading: - TBD	Persuasive Essays Due
<b>Wednesday – November 23</b>	NO CLASS	Peer Questionnaire Responses Due
<b>Friday – November 25</b>	NO CLASS	
<b>Monday – November 28</b>	Wrap Up Reading: - TBD	Commemorative Speeches Due
<b>Wednesday – November 30</b>	Wrap Up Reading: - TBD	
<b>Friday – December 2</b>	LAST DAY OF CLASS	
<b>Monday – December 5</b>	Final Exam Days, no classes	
<b>Wednesday – December 7</b>	Final Exam Days, no classes	Final Exam Date/Reflection Paper Due
<b>Friday – December 9</b>	Final Exam Days, no classes	
<b>Monday – December 12</b>	Final Exam Days, no classes	

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“We are spinning our own fates, good or evil, and never to be undone. Every smallest stroke of virtue or of vice leaves its never so little scar”

-William James (*The Principles of Psychology*)