

Communicating Moral Issues

Philosophy 213 Section 22– University of South Carolina – Fall 2022

Meetings:

Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays.

10:50am-11:40am.

Room 029, Wardlaw College.

Anderson Harris

Email: jah30@email.sc.edu

Office: Close-Hipp Suite 503

Office Hours: Close Hipp 503, Mondays and Wednesdays 12:00pm-2:00pm 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 possible answers to contemporary ethical dilemmas.

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 substantively.

General Requirements

- Attend all class meetings
- Read and prepare for each class meeting
- Participate in 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 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. Certain topics 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 documented disabilities. 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. More 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.
- My attendance policy is as follows. Each student is permitted 5 absences. These are unexcused – you do not need to provide a reason for missing class. There are no excused absences unless cleared by the Ombuds. If you miss more than 5 classes, you will receive a 0% for attendance. If you miss class for a day you are scheduled to present an assignment, the late policy noted below will apply.

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 – 5%

- There will be 5 reading quizzes spread throughout the semester. Each quiz will be at the beginning of class and will refer to the reading of the day. The quizzes are pass/fail and I drop your lowest score.

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%

- ~8 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. Response Paper – 10%

- At any point in the semester, you will write a paper responding to a reading. This paper should be approximately 3.5-4 pages long. You are responsible for summarizing an argument from the reading (1 page), levying an objection (.5-1 page), consider a rebuttal to your objection (.5-1 page), and diffuse the rebuttal. This paper must include an introduction, conclusion, and bibliography.
- Students who submit the Response Paper before the Persuasive Essay due date will receive 5 bonus points on the assignment. Additionally, those students who submit the paper before the Persuasive Essay due date will have the opportunity to make corrections and resubmit the paper. If the

grade after corrections is higher than the previous grade, I will replace the lower grade.

Late Assignments

Written assignments can be submitted up to two days late. Each day late will result in a 20% deduction from your grade. On the third day after an assignment is due, you will receive a 0%.

Oral assignments are subject to a separate policy. If you do not present your speech on your scheduled day, you will have one more opportunity to present, typically during the next class period. You will automatically lose 40% of your grade for presenting late. If you fail to present on your speech on the make-up day, you will receive a 0%.

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

Date	Topic/Reading	Assignments Due
	INTRODUCTION TO PHILOSOPHY AND ETHICS	
Monday – January 9	Class Overview/Discussion/Relationship to Reading & Writing	
Wednesday – January 11	Class Overview/Syllabus Discussion Reading: Syllabus	Introductory Speeches Assigned
Friday – January 13	Interviews Reading: None	Student Interviews
Monday – January 16	NO CLASS	
Wednesday – January 18	Speech Day Reading: None.	Introductory Speeches
	EATING ANIMALS	
Friday – January 20	Eating Animals Reading: - Norcross “Puppies, Pigs, and People”	

Monday – January 23	Eating Animals Reading: - Singer “All Animals are Equal”	
Wednesday – January 25	Eating Animals Reading: - Kagan “What is Wrong with Speciesism?”	
Friday – January 27	Eating Animals Reading: - Gruen, “Navigating Difference (again): Animal Ethics and Entangled Empathy”	
Monday – January 30	Eating Animals Reading: - Gillespie, “Witnessing Animal Others”	
Wednesday – February 1	Discussion Suggested Reading: Public Speaking Textbook, Chapter 8	Topic Selection Assigned
	ABORTION	
Friday – February 3	Abortion Reading: - JJ Thompson, “Defense of Abortion”	
Monday – February 6	Abortion Reading: - Don Marquis, “Why Abortion is Immoral”	
Wednesday – February 8	Discussion Suggested Reading: Public Speaking Textbook, Chapter 7	Speech Overview Day: -Informative Speech Assigned -Persuasive Speech Assigned
Friday – February 10	Abortion Reading: - Harman, “Creation Ethics”	Topic Selection Due
	MEDICAL ETHICS	
Monday – February 13	Healthcare Reading: - Ram-Tiktin, “The Right to Healthcare”	
Wednesday – February 15	Discussion Reading: None	Meetings /Proposal Paper/ Peer Questionnaire Assigned
Friday – February 17	Gene Editing Reading:	

	- Garland-Thompson, "How We Got to CRISPR"	
Monday – February 20	Nursing Reading: - Fry, "The Role of Caring in a Theory of Nursing"	
Wednesday – February 22	Amputation Reading: - Bayne and Levy, "Amputees By Choice"	
Friday – February 24	Speeches Reading: None	Informative Speeches
Monday – February 27	Speeches Reading: None	Informative Speeches
Wednesday – March 1	Speeches Reading: None	Informative Speeches
Friday – March 3	NO CLASS	
Monday – March 6	NO CLASS – SPRING BREAK	
Wednesday – March 8	NO CLASS – SPRING BREAK	
Friday – March 10	NO CLASS – SPRING BREAK	
Monday – March 13	NO CLASS	
Wednesday – March 15	Meetings Reading: None	Meetings/Proposal Papers Due
Friday – March 17	Meetings Reading: None	Meetings
Monday – March 20	Meetings Reading: None	Meetings
	MISCELLANEOUS ETHICS	
Wednesday – March 22	Freedom at Work Reading: - Anderson, "How Bosses are like Dictators"	
Friday – March 24	Statues of Wrongdoers Reading: Frowe, "Duty to Remove"	
Monday – March 27	Speeches Reading: None	Persuasive Speeches
Wednesday – March 29	Speeches Reading: None	Persuasive Speeches
Friday – March 31	Speeches Reading: None	Persuasive Speeches
Monday – April 3	Speeches Reading: None	Persuasive Speeches
Wednesday – April 5	Writing Workshop Readings:	Peer Questionnaire Due,

	- How to Write a Philosophy Paper	Commemorative Speeches Assigned, Review Persuasive Essay Rubric
Friday – April 7	University Culture Readings: - Halberstam, “Trigger Warnings”	
Monday – April 10	Labor Readings: - Anderson, “Hermeneutic Labor”	Peer Questionnaire Responses Due
Wednesday – April 12	Labor Readings: - Anderson, “Hermeneutic Labor”	
Friday – April 14	Helping Others Reading: - Singer, “Famine, Affluence, and Morality”	
Monday – April 17	Polyamory Reading: - Brake, “The Values of Polyamory”	Persuasive Essays Due
Wednesday – April 19	Catch Up Day - Readings: TBD	
Friday – April 21	Wrap Up Reading: - LeGuin “Omelas” - Jemisin “Those Who Stay and Fight”	Response Paper Due
Monday – April 24	LAST DAY OF CLASS	Commemorative Speeches Due
Wednesday – April 26	Final Exam Days, no classes	Final Exam Date – NO EXAM
Friday – April 28	Final Exam Days, no classes	
Monday – May 1	Final Exam Days, no classes	
Wednesday – May 3	Final Exam Days, no classes	

...

“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*)