



PHIL3314 Ethical Theory (Fall, 2018)

Contact Information (and Policy):

Professor: Daniel Wodak (dwodak@vt.edu)

Office Hours: Tuesdays 11.00 – 1.00 pm in 217 Major Williams Hall. If you would like to meet but cannot attend office hours, email me to request an appointment listing three possible meeting times.

Email Policy: I intend to respond to all emails sent at reasonable times promptly, provided that your email clearly explains what you are asking, and is not requesting information that you could readily find yourself.

Course Description:

This class will consider and contrast two rival ethical theories—*libertarian* theories that emphasize the right to individual liberty and *egalitarian* theories that emphasize the right to social equality. We will consider each theory in application to politically salient real-world issues: drug regulation and racial segregation. The aim of this course is to how ethical theories can shed light on complex and contentious real-world issues, and vice versa. The course will be structured around two recent books by prominent moral philosophers: Jessica Flanagan's *Pharmaceutical Freedom* (2017) and Elizabeth Anderson's *The Imperative of Integration* (2010).

Meetings and Course Materials:

Meeting times

Lecture: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 9:30 – 10:45 am, PAM 3028.

Required texts: Jessica Flanagan's *Pharmaceutical Freedom* (2017); Elizabeth Anderson's *The Imperative of Integration* (2010).

Assessments:

This table provides a snapshot of the assessment schedule, including when you can expect assessments to be returned with feedback:

Due Date	Assessment	% of Grade	Date Graded/Returned
TBD	Presentation	10	December 7
October 9	Peer Review Task	10	October 28
October 14	Essay I	30	October 28
Oct. 16 & Nov 27	Questions	10	Oct. 23 & Dec 4
December 4	Peer Review Task	10	December 16
December 11	Essay II	30	December 16

Presentations

You will present on one week's readings. Your presentation should be for five to ten (ten to fifteen for joint presentations), followed by up to five minutes of Q&A. You are expected to summarize the reading briefly, then raise at least two substantive issues and questions about its content. Your presentation should *not* be mostly focused on summarizing the reading.

Peer Review Tasks

You are expected to provide a written outline of your essay that states your thesis and explains your main argument (5 points), & provide helpful and critical comments to a group of your fellow students (5 points).

Essays

You are expected to write a 1,500-word essay defending a position on one of the philosophical issues that we consider in the first half of the course (Essay I) or the second half of the course (Essay II). You will be expected to compose a valid argument for your position, defend its premises, and consider and respond to an objection. Your essay must engage in depth with the course readings, though you can go beyond these materials.

Questions

Before each class visit, you are expected to submit one page of questions for the relevant author. Each question should be clear and concise (ideally ~30 words), and reflect substantive engagement with the author's work. You will be awarded 5 points for your questions for Flanagan (Oct. 16) and 5 points for your questions for Anderson (Nov. 27 or 29: date TBC).

Five Simple Tips for How to Improve

1. Improve your research habits.

If you mostly rely on Wikipedia and blogs, you'll do badly. These sources *might* contain some good philosophical analysis. But they're just as likely to contain simple philosophical mistakes. *Rely on peer-reviewed sources.* Use google scholar instead of google. Try the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (www.plato.stanford.edu) or the journal *Philosophy Compass*.

2. Read about reading and writing about philosophy.

I strongly recommend that you read Jim Pryor's '[Guidelines on Reading Philosophy](#)' and '[Guidelines on Writing a Philosophy Paper](#)'. They're short, and will save you much time and stress in the long run.

3. Practice.

Learning philosophy for the first time involves learning some new skills. Like learning to ride a bike, that takes time and involves trial and error. It also becomes easier and easier the more you do it. Practice analyzing and developing arguments throughout the course, and it'll become easy.

4. Take notes.

Perhaps the simplest thing you can do to improve in philosophy is to take notes *for every reading and lecture and discussion section*. You will absorb more of the material if you actively read and listen. And you will *not* be given lecture notes in this course—so your notes will be a crucial resource.

5. Make philosophy a social activity.

An easy and fun way to improve is to talk about the key arguments and ideas from course with your friends, and/or with other students from the course. Consider creating a study group. They will help you understand material that you are struggling with. And you will reach a deeper understanding yourself when you explain ideas and arguments to others.

Honor Code Procedures:

This is an ethics course. Plagiarism and other forms of cheating will be treated very seriously. The normal sanction I will recommend for a violation of the Honor Code is an **F*** sanction as your final course grade.

The Undergraduate Honor Code pledge that each member of the university community agrees to abide by states: “As a Hokie, I will conduct myself with honor and integrity at all times. I will not lie, cheat, or steal, nor will I accept the actions of those who do.”

Students enrolled in this course are responsible for abiding by the Honor Code. A student who has doubts about how the Honor Code applies to any assignment is responsible for obtaining specific guidance from the course instructor before submitting the assignment for evaluation. Ignorance of the rules does not exclude any member of the University community from the requirements and expectations of the Honor Code. For additional information about the Honor Code, please visit <https://www.honorsystem.vt.edu/> or contact honorsys@vt.edu.

The Virginia Tech honor pledge for assignments is as follows: “I have neither given nor received unauthorized assistance on this assignment.” It must be written out and signed on every assignment in this course.

Your written assignments may be reviewed through the University’s plagiarism prevention and detection software called *Turnitin-Feedback Studio*, which is a resource designed to detect and prevent plagiarism. I have every intention of using this software, which is a tool that works by cross-referencing submitted materials with journals, essays, newspaper

articles, papers, books, the internet, and other literary works. Turintin-Feedback Studio does not identify all forms of plagiarism. The software also does not replace my judgement regarding what constitutes plagiarism.

Any of the following constitutes academic misconduct: cheating, plagiarism, falsification, fabrication, multiple submissions, complicity, or violation of university, college, department, program, course, or faculty rules.

Other Administrative Issues:

Electronics Policy

No electronics can be used in class (including phones and laptops). Exceptions will be made for students with disabilities, or volunteer notetakers with SSD, or for similar causes. This is a strict rule.

Lateness Policy

Late assessments will be penalized at the rate of 5% per day, unless (a) you have a documented illness or other extenuating circumstance, and (b) you have explicit prior authorization to hand in the assignment late, from me, to be granted at my discretion. If you foresee a conflict between an assessment due date and another commitment, please email me well in advance so that I can provide a fair alternative.

Absences

“Students who miss class due to circumstances beyond their control can request to have the absence verified. Each faculty member will make the final determination in allowing the request to make-up missed academic work. Verification of absence does not override the authority of a faculty member. For family or personal emergencies, contact the Dean of Students Office (109 East Eggleston Hall, 231-3787). For absence related to mental health, contact Cook Counseling Center (McComas Hall, 231-6557). For absence related to physical health, contact Schiffert Health Center (McComas Hall, 231-6444). Please note, Schiffert Health Center

will only verify absences resulting from prolonged illness (at least 5 days). In addition, Schiffert does not notify faculty of one-time student appointments in the Health Center. Relevant documentation is required for any verification of absence. The Dean of Students office does not verify absences related to religious and ethnic holidays.”

Disabilities

I wholeheartedly endorse Tech’s policy and practice of creating inclusive learning environments for all students, including students with disabilities. If aspects of this course – such as time limited exams or inaccessible web content – result in barriers to your inclusion or your ability to meet course requirements please notify me as soon as possible. We will adapt methods, materials or testing in order to offer fair terms of participation. You are also encouraged to contact the Services for Students with Disabilities office to discuss and arrange reasonable accommodations. Please visit www.ssd.vt.edu/students.htm for more information.

Class Schedule:

Date	Topic	Readings
August 21 & 23	Introduction	
August 28 & 30	Self-Medication	Jessica Flanigan, <i>Pharmaceutical Freedom</i> , ch. 1
September 4 & 6	Public Health	Jessica Flanigan, <i>Pharmaceutical Freedom</i> , ch. 2
September 11 & 13	Prescriptions	Jessica Flanigan, <i>Pharmaceutical Freedom</i> , ch. 3
September 18 & 20	Regulation	Jessica Flanigan, <i>Pharmaceutical Freedom</i> , ch. 4
September 25	Democracy	Jessica Flanigan, <i>Pharmaceutical Freedom</i> , ch. 5
October 2 & 4	Patents and Prices; Modern Healthcare	Jessica Flanigan, <i>Pharmaceutical Freedom</i> , ch. 6 and 7
October 9	Peer Review Task	
October 16 & 18	Social Inequality	Elizabeth Anderson, <i>The Imperative of Integration</i> , ch. 1 *October 18: Flanigan visits the class
October 23 & 25	Material Inequality Racial Stigmas	Elizabeth Anderson, <i>The Imperative of Integration</i> , ch. 2
October 30 & Nov. 1	Material Inequality	Elizabeth Anderson, <i>The Imperative of Integration</i> , ch. 3
November 6 & 8	Segregation, Justice, & Democracy	Elizabeth Anderson, <i>The Imperative of Integration</i> , ch. 4 & 5
November 13 & 15	Integration & Affirmative Action	Elizabeth Anderson, <i>The Imperative of Integration</i> , ch. 6 & 7
November 27 & 29	Color Blindness & Psychological Costs	Elizabeth Anderson, <i>The Imperative of Integration</i> , ch. 8 & 9 *Nov 27 or 29: Anderson visits via Skype
December 4	Peer Review Task	

NB: There will be no classes on September 27 and October 11.