

[Abbreviated syllabus for *Introduction to Ethics*]

Introduction to Ethics



What sorts of things do we have a “human right” to?
What are the ethical complexities involved with genetically modifying our own children?
What are the risks of artificial intelligence?

These are some of the questions that we will explore in this course. For, our ultimate aim is to explore the ethical dimensions of various topics, including our relation to non-human animals and to robots, the ethics of “designer babies,” and a tension between certain human rights and the putative value of human welfare. We will use both philosophical writing in the field of Ethics to help us explore these topics. I will ask you to write numerous short papers that target specific philosophical skills, participate in week-long group projects, and write a final paper. The result is that, by the end of the semester, you will come away as a better philosopher, and one who can analyze ethical complexities in your own life and in the world around you.

Grade Breakdown:

Short Responses: 30%

Worksheets and quizzes: 10%

Participation: 15%

Group projects: 20%

Final Paper: 25%

Reading Schedule

UNIT 1: HUMAN RIGHTS

Week 1: *Introduction to course— ways to evaluation an argument*
James Rachels' "The Challenge of Moral Relativism"

Week 2: Liao, Sandberg, and Roache's "Human Engineering and Climate Change"
NPR "Should We Be Having Kids in the Age of Climate Change?" and Foreign Policy "As Environmental Catastrophe Looms, ..."

Week 3: Human rights
Proclamation of Teheran, Final Act of the Int'l Conf on Human Rights, U.N. Doc.
Amartya Sen's "Elements of a Theory of Human Rights"

Week 4: Human rights (continued)
James Griffin's *On Human Rights* Part I.

Week 5: Kantian ethics
Kant's Ch. 1 and 2 from *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*.
Allen Wood's Chapter 1 and 2 of *Kantian Ethics*

Week 6: Racism, Reparations, and Human Rights
U.N.'s "Basic Principles and Guidelines on the Right to a Remedy and Repatriation for Victims of Gross Violations of International Human Rights Law"
Washington Post's "U.S. owes black people reparations for a history of 'racial terrorism' says U.N. panel"

UNIT 2: THE HUMAN GOOD AND REPRODUCTIVE TECHNOLOGIES

Week 7: *Introducing Utilitarianism*
Excerpts from Bentham's *Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation*
Excerpt of Mill's Chapter 2 and 4 of *Utilitarianism*.

Week 8: *Utilitarianism and Its Critics*
Peter Singer's "Famine, Affluence, and Morality"
Thesis response on Singer
Bernard Williams' "A Critique of Utilitarianism"

Week 9: Aristotle and human function
Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* Book I

Week 10: Care ethics
Held's "Care as Practice and Value"
Dillon's "Respect and Care: Toward Moral Integration"

Week 11: Designer babies

Watch: TED Talk, “Riccardo Sabatini: How to read the genome and build a human being” https://www.ted.com/talks/riccardo_sabatini_how_to_read_the_genome
Listen: Bioethics Bites, “Julian Savulescu: Designer Babies”
<http://media.philosophy.ox.ac.uk/bioethicsbites/Savulescu.mp3>

Week 12: Building better humans?

Tamara Garcia and Ronald Sandler’s “Enhancing Justice?”

S. Matthew Liao’s “Selecting Children: The Ethics of Reproductive Genetic Engineering”

Week 13: Presentation of group projects.

Unit 3: THE ETHICS OF OUR CREATIONS

Week 14: How to treat domesticated animals?

Clare Palmer “What (If Anything) Do We Owe Wild Animals?”

Kant excerpts from *Metaphysics of Morals*

Week 15: Robots and morality

Peter McOwan’s “When Fridges Attack: the new ethics of the Internet of Things”

Deborah Johnson’s “Computer systems: Moral entities but not moral agents”

Week 16: Animal and Robot Rights?

Tom Regan’s “The Case for Animal Rights”

Heller’s “If Animals Have Rights, Should Robots?”

Week 17: Final papers due