

Instructor: Kevin Patton
Course: PHIL 1020
Time: 0900 - 0950
Location: ASH 392
Office: TBD

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<https://kevinjpatton.github.io/>
UNO Philosophy
My Office Hours: TBD

Contemporary Moral Problems

“My desire and wish is that the things I start with should be so obvious that you wonder why I spend my time stating them. This is what I aim at because the point of philosophy is to start with something so simple as not to seem worth stating, and to end with something so paradoxical that no one will believe it.”

Bertrand Russell from *The Philosophy of Logical Atomism* 1918.

Course Overview

Introduction to the application of basic moral concepts and theories to contemporary moral issues. Discussion topics will vary and may include: distribution of wealth and resources, environmental ethics and sustainability, animal rights, capital punishment, torture, euthanasia, abortion, cloning, genetic engineering, privacy rights, drug laws, marriage and sexuality, gun control, and affirmative action.

Required Materials

All required reading is available at the website: kevinjpatton.github.io

Course Information

Preparation: This course may be very challenging for you if you are not accustomed to reasoning in a rigorous fashion. If this is true of you, then you will only do well in this class if you dedicate much of your outside-of-class-time to practicing and mastering the relevant topics covered. Also, the only dumb questions are the ones you don't ask. If you are confused about something, then there is a high likelihood that someone else is too!

Attendance: Attendance is required. There are no make-ups for exams unless your absence is due to a **documented** illness or an emergency.

Website: All course material, apart from the textbook, will be available exclusively on my website. I do **not** use other services. The site URL is: <https://kevinjpatton.github.io/>

Distribution: This course helps to satisfy the Humanities and Fine Arts General Education course requirement used by UNO. The Humanities & Fine Arts courses seek to help students understand, analyze, and explore the human condition. Studying Humanities & Fine Arts contributes to personal growth and well-being, as well as to living in, and contributing to various communities. Passing this class means that you will be able to demonstrate an understanding of the theories, methods, and concepts used to comprehend and respond to the human condition; to recognize, articulate, and explore how various humanists/artists have responded to the human condition; to comprehend and evaluate how humanistic/artistic expression contributes to individual and/or socio-cultural understanding, growth, and well-being; and use relevant critical, analytic, creative, speculative and/or reflective methods.

Evaluation

Grading Scale

A+	96.7 - 100%	C+	76.7 - 79.9%
A	93.3 - 96.6%	C	73.3 - 76.6%
A-	90 - 93.2%	C-	70 - 73.2%
B+	86.7 - 89.9	D+	66.7 - 69.9
B	83.3 - 86.6%	D	63.3 - 66.6%
B-	80 - 83.2%	D-	60 - 63.2%

F
Below 60%

Homework: 15%

Final Paper: 35%

Exam 1: 25%

Exam 2: 25%

Daily homework and spot checks: After each class, you will be assigned some homework, consisting of reading and/or written exercises, to consolidate your understanding of the material. Five times over the course of the semester, the homework exercises will be collected at the beginning of the next class, without advance notice. If you are absent on such a day, then you will receive a zero for that spot check unless you have documentation, in which case your spot check will be postponed until another day, also unannounced. Homework will not be accepted late. Collaboration on daily homework assignments *is not forbidden*, but you are strongly urged *not* to merely copy others' work, as this will leave you ill-prepared for the problem sets and exams. Your lowest homework grade will be dropped, and your highest homework grade will be counted twice.

Exams: The use of books and notes *will not* be permitted. However, certain kinds of information will be provided on an exam should you need it, and you will be told ahead of time what you are and what you are not required to memorize. Exams may not be rescheduled unless you have documentation of a serious illness or an emergency. A make-up exam is not guaranteed to be exactly the same level of difficulty as the original exam.

Policies

- **Academic Integrity:** The penalty for academic dishonesty (e.g., collaborating on problem sets, cheating on exams) will be failure of the course and the case's being forwarded to Student Judicial Affairs for possible disciplinary action. Make yourself familiar with UNO's Student Code of Conduct, available [online](#). **In this course, the normal penalty for any violation of the code is an "F" for the semester.** Violations may have additional consequences including expulsion from the university. Don't plagiarize – it just isn't worth it.

- **University Policies:** I respect and uphold university policies and regulations pertaining to the observation of religious holidays; assistance available to physically handicapped, visually and/or hearing impaired students; plagiarism; sexual harassment; and racial or ethnic discrimination. All students are advised to become familiar with the respective university regulations and are encouraged to bring any questions or concerns to the attention of the instructor.

- **ADA:** In compliance with University policy and equal access laws, I am available to discuss appropriate academic accommodations that may be required for students with disabilities. Students are encouraged to register with Student Disability Services to verify their eligibility for appropriate accommodations.

- **Misc.:** Please turn off cell phones, beeping watches, and other gadgets that make noise before entering our classroom. Absolutely no texting is permitted during class. I will subtract up

to five points from your participation grade each and every time your phone rings or I see you texting during class.

Further Resources

- Jargon: It's important to be on top of the technical terms used by philosophers. Please ask for clarification of terms in class. You can also consult Jim Pryor's online "[Philosophical Terms and Methods](#)." This is less important in this class than in more 'normal' philosophy classes, but it may help.
- Reference: The [Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy](#) is an excellent online resource, though entries can be lengthy. The [Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy](#) has shorter entries, but it is not as scholarly.
- I may post some additional readings on my website if the assigned reading does not explain something with sufficient clarity.

Assignment Calendar

Part 1:	Thinking Logically	Oct 1	Singer - Strong and Weak Principle
Aug 20	Introduction	Oct 3	Sick Day - No Class
Aug 22	What is an Argument?	Oct 5	Singer - Objection
Aug 24	What is a Fallacy?	Oct 8	Hardin - Lifeboat Ethics
Part 2	Ethical Theories	Oct 10	Hardin - Continued
Aug 27	Mill - Utilitarianism	Oct 12	Exam 2
Aug 29	Mill - Objections	Oct 15	Lardy - Voting
Aug 31	Kant - Duty	Oct 17	Brennan - Voting
Sept 3	Kant - Objections	Oct 19	Davis - Prison Reform
Sept 5	Mill - Objections	Oct 22	Thomson - Abortion
Sept 7	No Class	Oct 24	Marquis - Abortion
Sept 10	Ross - Intuitionism	Oct 26	Singer - Abortion
Sept 12	Ross - Continued	Oct 29	Warren - Abortion
Sept 14	Virtue Theory	Oct 31	Just War Theory
		Nov 2	Just War Theory
Sept 17	Mackie - Error Theory	Nov 5	Medical Ethics
Sept 19	Mackie - Error Theory More	Nov 7	Medical Ethics
Sept 21	Mackie - Objections	Nov 9	Cooper - Sex Work
Sept 24	Exam 1 Review pt 1	Nov 12	SEP - Euthanasia
Sept 26	Exam 1 Review pt 2	Nov 14	Exam 3
Sept 28	Exam 1 😊	Nov 16	Animal Rights

Nov 19 Animal Rights
Nov 21 Animal Rights
Nov 23 **Thanksgiving Break - No Class**
Nov 26 AJ Ayer - Emotivism
Nov 28 Williams - Moral Luck
Nov 30 Nagel - Moral Luck
Dec 3 Driver - Handling Moral Luck
Dec 5 Value Monism
Dec 7 Value Pluralism
Dec 10 Final Paper Workshop
Dec 12 Paper Presentations
Dec 14 Paper Presentations / **Final Paper Due**