

Introduction to Ethics Honors

Description: This course provides an introduction to those problems of philosophy that are problems of *moral* philosophy, or ethics. We will begin by examining certain problems that arise when we try to make moral judgments: problems such as the role of religion in morality (e.g., “What’s right is just what God says is right”), cultural relativism (“What’s right for us is not necessarily right for them”), and psychological egoism (“People are always out to do what’s best for themselves anyway”). Second, we will consider several important theoretical approaches to ethics that attempt to provide general principles to guide our thinking about specific questions of right and wrong. In the third and final part of the course we will consider more concretely several important moral issues: economic justice, euthanasia, and abortion. Throughout, the course will be guided by the goals of (1) enhancing understanding of the central concepts and principles of ethics and (2) improving ethical reasoning, decision-making, and behavior.

Learning outcome: This course is intended to enable you to achieve Goal 5, Learning Outcome 1: “Upon reaching this goal, students will be able to develop and apply a combination of knowledge and skills to demonstrate an understanding of social responsibility and ethical behavior.” (from <http://kucore.ku.edu/goal5>)

Class schedule: Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays, 10:00–10:50, in 4011 Wescoe Hall (enrollment code 66220)

Meeting with me and contacting me:

The location of my office is 3071 Wescoe Hall. I will have office hours on Mondays and Fridays at 3:00–3:50, but you should feel free to come by my office at any time. I anticipate being in and around my office most Mondays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Fridays; and although in rare cases I may have to ask you to come back at another time, in general I will be happy to speak to you at your convenience. You are also quite welcome to make an appointment with me, by e-mailing me. My e-mail address is my last name (no capitalization necessary), followed by ‘@ku.edu’. Please note that I tend to use e-mail only for scheduling appointments and handling logistical matters, not for substantive discussions of course material.

Requirements/grading:

At the end of the course, I’ll give you a grade between A and F. The grades A, B, C, and D are given specific interpretations in KU’s University Senate Rules and Regulations, which I adhere to. Article 2 of those rules and regulations – “Academic Work and Its Evaluation” – contains a section called “The Grading System” (at <http://policy.ku.edu/governance/USRR#art2sect2>), which says that an A should be given for achievement of outstanding quality, a B for achievement of high quality, a C for achievement of acceptable quality, and a D for achievement that is minimally passing, but of less than acceptable quality.

What letter grade I give you will depend on the final average of the scores you get on the various assignments in the course (which I’ll outline below). I’ll use the following scale to convert your final average to a letter grade. (For an explanation of how I arrived at these numbers, see the “Plus/Minus Grading” document on my web site.)

| <u>final average</u> | <u>letter grade</u> |
|----------------------|---------------------|
| 93.50 and above | A |
| 90.00 through 93.49 | A– |
| 86.50 through 89.99 | B+ |

| | |
|---------------------|----|
| 83.50 through 86.49 | B |
| 80.00 through 83.49 | B– |
| 76.50 through 79.99 | C+ |
| 73.50 through 76.49 | C |
| 70.00 through 73.49 | C– |
| 66.50 through 69.99 | D+ |
| 63.50 through 66.49 | D |
| 60.00 through 63.49 | D– |
| 59.99 and below | F |

Many (if not all) assignments will be graded numerically, rather than with letter grades, and you can also use this scale to interpret the numerical scores you get in this course during the semester.

Your final average will be determined by your scores on the following eleven course components.

| <u>assignment</u> | <u>weight (percent)</u> |
|---------------------|-------------------------|
| test 1 | 14 |
| homework 1 | 2 |
| homework 2 | 2 |
| paper 1 | 14 |
| test 2 | 14 |
| homework 3 | 2 |
| homework 4 | 2 |
| paper 2 | 14 |
| test 3 | 14 |
| quizzes | 14 |
| class participation | 8 |
| total | 100 |

If you want to figure out what your final average will be, based on the scores you earn on the individual assignments, you can use the following procedure:

| In the boxes in column b, write your grades for the assignments and tests listed in column a: | | Multiply each number in column b by the number immediately to the right of it, in column c, and write their product immediately to the right, in column d. | |
|---|----------|--|----------|
| column a | column b | column c | column d |
| test 1 (February 21) | 1b | 0.14 | 1d |
| homework 1 (February 28) | 2b | 0.02 | 2d |
| homework 2 (March 7) | 3b | 0.02 | 3d |
| paper 1 (March 14) | 4b | 0.14 | 4d |
| test 2 (April 4) | 5b | 0.14 | 5d |
| homework 3 (April 11) | 6b | 0.02 | 6d |
| homework 4 (April 18) | 7b | 0.02 | 7d |
| paper 2 (April 25) | 8b | 0.14 | 8d |
| test 3 (May 2) | 9b | 0.14 | 9d |
| quizzes | 10b | 0.14 | 10d |
| class participation | 11b | 0.08 | 11d |
| Add up the numbers in column d (boxes 1d through 11d), and write their sum in box 12. This is your final average. | | | 12 |

As the semester progresses, you can consult the online gradebook at the Blackboard site for this course to keep track of your scores on individual assignments as you complete them.

When you look at your grades on Blackboard at the end of the semester, you might see something like the information shown here, which are grades for an imaginary student. The next-to-last number in this table (81.52%) is the average of all of this student's individual-assignment grades, *weighted* by their respective percentages (which, in this example course, are 16 percent for the tests and papers, 3 percent for the homeworks, and 8 percent for class participation, with no quizzes). That number is important: it is the number that would determine this student's letter grade.

| Grade |
|--------------|
| 76.00/100 |
| 100.00/100 |
| 100.00/100 |
| 77.00/100 |
| 79.00/100 |
| 100.00/100 |
| 100.00/100 |
| 80.00/100 |
| 82.00/100 |
| 81.00/100 |
| 81.52% |
| 875.00/1,000 |

In contrast, the very last number in this table (875.00/1,000) is the sum of all of this student's individual-assignment grades, divided by the sum of all of the possible points. However, this number is meaningless, because it is not weighted according to the percentages that go with the various assignments. To see this problem with this, imagine two students who finish the course with 700 out of the 1,000 possible points. Student A finishes the course with 100 on everything, except that he skipped the three tests. Student B got 100 on everything, except that she didn't turn in three of the four homeworks. Because Student A got 100 on 52 percent of the course (and 0 on the rest of it), his final weighted average is 52. And because Student B got 100 on 91 percent of the course (and 0 on the rest of it), her final weighted average is 91. So, the fact that each student finished the course with exactly 700 of the 1,000 possible points doesn't mean much: it turns out that a 700/1,000 is consistent with getting an A-, and also consistent with getting an F. Because this total-points information is meaningless and potentially misleading, I have tried to set up my gradebook in Blackboard so that this number is not shown. However, so far in my usage of Blackboard, I have often been unsuccessful in doing that. (Blackboard can be hard to configure just right.) So, please keep this in mind when looking at your grades on Blackboard.

Illness and attendance:

Although there is a class-participation component as a determinant of your grade in this class, I don't want to encourage you to come to class when you are ill and might infect others. If you have a contagious illness, please protect your classmates from the risk of catching it from you. Absences in such circumstances will be excused and there will be no adverse effect on your class-participation grade.

Required textbook:

The book for this course is *The Fundamentals of Ethics*, 2nd edition, by Russ Shafer-Landau (Oxford University Press, 2012), ISBN 978-0-19-977355-8. I have asked the KU bookstore to stock this book, or you can buy it elsewhere.

There will also be some other required readings; these will be provided on Blackboard. Because of their length, you should be prepared to print them out rather than reading them on a computer screen.

Course materials on the web:

Some course documents, including this syllabus, will be available on the web site I have set up this course, the URL of which is

<http://www.benegg.net/courses/ethics13>

(If you don't want to type in this whole thing, you can stop after 'net' – at which point you'll be at my personal web site – and then follow the links to the web site for this particular course.)

One thing that will not be posted on the web site is a record of your grades for this course. To allow you to have online access to your grades, your grades will be entered into the online gradebook at the Blackboard site for this course. Note that although Blackboard provides a shell for all sorts of course-related documents, I plan to use it only to provide you with access to your grades, PDF files containing some of the required readings, and PDF files containing the slides that I will use in my lectures. This syllabus, and perhaps other course-related documents, will be at the non-Blackboard site mentioned above.

E-mail distribution list:

I've had the KU computer folks set up an e-mail distribution list for the course, and its address is the following:

phil161{66220}sp14@ku.edu

I've had it set up so that not only I, but also you, can use it, so that you can communicate with everyone in the class (including me) whenever you have a reason to do so.

In general, I'll try to mention everything important (whether substantive or procedural) in class. But at times, I may use the e-mail distribution list to send you information that you will be responsible for having or acting on, so it is your responsibility to make sure that you read mail that I send to this list. You can do this by making sure that you (1) have an e-mail address, (2) are registered for the course (because this list is updated every night to reflect current enrollment, taking account of drops and adds), and (3) read your e-mail. There is one complication that you should be aware of: if you have both an Exchange e-mail address (e.g., so-and-so@ku.edu) and a non-Exchange e-mail address (e.g., so-and-so@gmail.com), and you prefer to receive e-mail at the latter address, then mail sent to the e-mail distribution list for the course will not necessarily go to it, even if you have registered it with KU as your primary e-mail address. (This is a known problem with the KU distribution-list system.) To deal with this problem, either check your Exchange account as often as you check your non-Exchange account, or arrange for mail sent to your Exchange account to be forwarded to your non-Exchange account.

Also in regard to this list, note that you cannot send e-mail to this list just by sending a message to its address. You also have to send your message *from an authorized e-mail account*. Normally, that is whatever account you use to receive e-mail sent to this list. So, even if you receive mail sent to this list by having your KU e-mail forwarded to (e.g.) your Gmail account, you should not count on being able to use the e-mail list (as a sender) from your Gmail account. You may have to send your message from your Exchange account.

Time commitment, academic misconduct, and disability accommodation:

To do well in this course, you should be prepared to commit a considerable amount of time outside of class to reading the textbook and practicing the skills this course is intended to teach. According to section 5.1.1 of the Faculty Senate Rules and Regulations (<http://policy.ku.edu/governance/FSRR#art5sect1>), "One semester hour means course work normally represented by an hour of class instruction and two hours of study a week for one semester, or an equivalent amount of work." Thus, for a three-credit course such as this one, you should be prepared to spend six hours per week outside of class on reading and other out-of-class work.

In addition, I should note here that I take academic misconduct, especially cheating on tests and plagiarizing papers, extremely seriously, and am generally disposed to impose the harshest available penalties when it occurs. To assist instructors in combating plagiarism, KU subscribes to the plagiarism detection program SafeAssign. To enable you to meet my expectations in this regard and to do so without fear of inadvertently falling short of them, I will provide guidance as to what does and does not constitute academic misconduct when I tell you about the tests and the paper assignments. If you would like to see KU's policy on academic misconduct, it is in article 2, section 6 of the University Senate Rules and Regulations (<http://policy.ku.edu/governance/USRR#art2sect6>).

Finally, if you have a disability for which you may be requesting special services or accommodations for this course, be sure to contact Disability Resources (<http://www.disability.ku.edu>), at 22 Strong Hall or at 864-2620 (V/TTY), if you have not already done so, and give me a letter from that office documenting the accommodations to which you are entitled. Please also see me privately, at your earliest convenience, so that I can be aware of your situation and can begin to prepare the appropriate accommodations in advance of receiving the letter from Disability Resources.

Make-up test policy:

If you miss a test without a good excuse, you can take a make-up test, but only if you contact me within five days of the test, and only for partial credit. That is, I will deduct some number of percentage points from whatever percentage score you get on the make-up test. The number of percentage points deducted will be 25 if you take the make-up test later on the test date, 30 points if you take it the next day, 35 points if you take it two days later, and so on.

If you have a good excuse that I can verify, then you can take a make-up test for full credit if you contact me by e-mail as soon as it is feasible for you to do so. A good excuse means that some circumstances arose that prevented you from taking the test, and there weren't precautions that you could reasonably have been expected to take that would have prevented those circumstances from occurring or from preventing you from taking the test.

When you contact me about taking a make-up test, please suggest some times when you would be available to take a make-up test. Scheduling your make-up test will not depend on whether you are taking it for full credit or partial credit, so we do not have to settle that question in order for us to schedule your make-up test. Thus, scheduling your make-up test will be our first priority, and later we'll sort out the question of full credit or partial credit. Regardless of whether you want to take a make-up test for full credit or for partial credit, you must contact me about taking a make-up test without any unnecessary delay, and take your make-up test as soon as you are able to do so.

I know this policy is strict. But the vast majority of students take the tests on the scheduled dates, and I think they're entitled to some vigilance, on my part, against unwarranted requests for make-up tests for full credit.

Policy on late and e-mailed papers:

Papers turned in late, but not more than five days late, will have a penalty of 10 percentage points per day (or fraction thereof) of lateness. Papers turned in more than five days late will receive no credit. Thus, the following schedule of penalties will apply:

| <u>lateness</u> | <u>penalty (percentage points)</u> |
|---------------------|------------------------------------|
| 0–24 hours | 10 |
| 24–48 hours | 20 |
| 48–72 hours | 30 |
| 72–96 hours | 40 |
| 96–120 hours | 50 |
| more than 120 hours | no credit (score = 0) |

Also, papers turned in by e-mail will have a penalty of 10 percentage points. Again, I acknowledge that this is strict, but I have found that such a policy is necessary in order to avoid having a burdensome quantity of e-mail messages and attachments to deal with. If you believe you will have a good reason for needing to turn in your paper by e-mail, you may contact me in advance and ask for prior approval to turn in your paper by e-mail without penalty.

Exceptions will be made if your paper is late or e-mailed due to conditions that would excuse you from taking a test, if there were a test being given when the paper is due. (See the make-up test policy, above, for details of that.)

Policy on late and e-mailed homework:

Homework turned in late or turned in by e-mail is subject to the same penalty as a paper turned in late or turned in by e-mail. See the policy on late and e-mailed papers, above.

Schedule:

Below, a filled square (■) usually indicates information and an empty square (□) indicates a task to be completed.

Metaethics

weeks of January 22 and January 27: ethical reasoning

- On Wednesday, January 22, we will have an introduction to the course.
- Please mark the following five dates on your calendar:

| <u>date</u> | <u>event</u> |
|---------------------|--------------|
| Friday, February 21 | test 1 |
| Friday, March 14 | paper 1 due |
| Friday, April 4 | test 2 |
| Friday, April 25 | paper 2 due |
| Friday, May 2 | test 3 |

- Get the book for the course, if you have not already done so. See “Required textbook,” above.
- Before class on Friday, January 24, read *The Fundamentals of Ethics*, introduction.
- There is no additional reading before class on Monday, January 27.
- Before class on Wednesday, January 29, read *The Fundamentals of Ethics*, chapter 5, especially the section called “Second Assumption: God Is the Creator of Morality.”
- There is no additional reading for Friday, January 31.

week of February 3: cultural relativism

- Before class on Monday, re-read the section in the introduction to *The Fundamentals of Ethics* called “Skepticism about Ethics” (pp. 3–5) and read *The Fundamentals of Ethics*, chapter 19, to the section break on p. 292.
- Before class on Wednesday, read *The Fundamentals of Ethics*, chapter 19, from the section break on p. 292 to the section break on p. 296. (The rest of the chapter is optional.)
- There is no additional reading for Friday.

Friday, February 7:

- I hope this doesn’t apply to you, but if you may need to drop this class, you should be aware that the last day to do so, without this class being listed on your transcript, is this Monday, February 10. For more information, see the following web site: <http://www.registrar.ku.edu/spring-2014-academic-calendar-date>.

week of February 10: psychological egoism

- Before class on Monday, read *The Fundamentals of Ethics*, chapter 7.
- There is no additional reading for Wednesday or Friday.

Thursday, February 13:

- If you have a disability that entitles you to special accommodations for taking tests, contact the Disability Resources office (see p. 4, above, for the Disability Resources office’s contact information), by the end of tomorrow, February 14, about making arrangements to take the test we have scheduled for February 21. If you are entitled to extra time, you will need to ask Disability Resources to administer the test to you. Be sure that the time slot you arrange with Disability Resources will finish by 10:50 a.m. on February 21.

week of February 17: review and test 1

- We'll review for the test on Monday and Wednesday.
- The test will be on Friday.
- Here are the ground rules for the test: You'll have 50 minutes to take the test. To enforce that rule even-handedly, I'll deduct points from the score of any student who doesn't turn in his or her test when time is up. Also, if you arrive late, you can take the test, but you still have to finish at the same time as everyone else.
 - You might also want to be aware of my make-up test policy, which is above, on p. 5.

Normative Ethics***week of February 24: ethical egoism***

- Before class on Monday, read *The Fundamentals of Ethics*, chapter 8, to the main section break on p. 112.
- Before class on Wednesday, read *The Fundamentals of Ethics*, chapter 8, from the main section break on p. 112 to the end.
- There is no additional reading for Friday.
- Before class on Friday, complete homework 1 in accordance with the instructions below, and print three copies of it to bring to class.
- In class on Friday:
 - You'll turn in one copy of your paper as homework 1. The policy on late and e-mailed homework (see p. 5) applies to this assignment.
 - You'll work on your paper with your classmates using the other copies of your paper.

instructions for homework 1, due Friday, February 28:

- Write a paper arguing for some ethical claim.
- Your paper should be 300–600 words long, and should (1) clearly state the claim for which you are arguing and (2) clearly give one or more reasons in support of your claim. If you give more than one reason, they should be clearly distinguished and should appear in separate paragraphs. On the following pages are examples of a couple of successful ways of doing this assignment.
 - Both of these sample papers happen to be about education. However, you can choose virtually any topic that interests you. Possible topics include capital punishment, gun control, affirmative action, animal experimentation, the eating of animals, the legality of marijuana, same-sex marriage, airport body scanners, laws prohibiting texting while driving, and countless others.
 - Although you can choose virtually any topic, the claim that you choose to argue for must be one about which reasonable people disagree. Also, your topic must not be the same as the topic of either of the sample papers, and must not be the same as the topic that someone else that you know of is writing on.
 - The first sample paper happens to give three arguments in support of its main claim, and the second one happens to give two. There is no prescribed number of arguments. Even a single argument can be sufficient, if it is logical and well developed.
 - The second sample paper has a conclusion, but the first one does not. A conclusion is neither mandatory nor prohibited.
- You may talk with other people or do research about what you are writing, but you must do the writing yourself. If you quote or paraphrase from any source – including books, magazines, newspapers, a web page, or another person – you must document that explicitly, in a footnote.
- Your paper must be typed, double-spaced, and prepared for turning in. That means that what you turn in should bear appropriate information at the top of the first page (see the examples on the following pages for details of this). Your paper should also have a title.
- What you turn in will be homework 1 and will be graded only on whether what you turn in reflects a good-faith effort to write this paper – points will not be deducted for flaws in your argument at this stage. Please note that the policy on late and e-mailed homework (see p. 5) applies to this assignment. (This assignment is a precursor to the first paper assignment, which has a deadline of March 14.)
- Print three copies of your paper to bring to class.

[your name]
Introduction to Ethics Honors
February 28, 2014*
533 words**

** Put the date when you are turning
this paper in.*

*** Put the number of words in your document,
including all text, notes, etc.*

School Uniforms are Beneficial to All

Living in rural Kansas my entire life, I longed to wear school uniforms of plaid and button downs. Initially, they were appealing to me because they were a novelty of “city kids.” Later, however, I came to see that they serve many good purposes. I believe that school uniforms should be required in all public high schools because of their positive effects: they help students avoid unnecessary distractions, alleviate difficult financial situations, and prevent many of the social tensions that can arise from discrepancies among students’ clothes.

First, school uniforms helps students avoid unnecessary distractions by making their clothing choices virtually automatic: students just put on the clothes that make up the uniform. They do not have to think about what clothes will impress their friends, or an actual or potential boyfriend or girlfriend. Many students put a lot of thought into what to wear, but many students do this because they feel compelled to keep up with everyone else, not because they really want to. School uniforms remove this burden from all students by making the choice of clothes a “non-issue.”

Second, school uniforms alleviate difficult financial situations by removing much of the incentive that students currently have to buy expensive clothes. Currently, in schools that do not have uniforms, many students strive to dress fashionably. This tends to involve buying expensive clothes for the start of the school year, then more expensive clothes for the winter, and then more expensive clothes when the weather changes again in the spring. Throughout the year, there is always someone who has something new, and everyone else feels that if they just keep wearing the same old thing, they will look uncool. But in schools that required uniforms, this hardly happens at all. If the uniform requires a dark blue shirt with a collar, then it does not matter very much if someone gets a new dark blue shirt with a collar. Everyone else does not feel that have to keep up as much. Although the clothes that make up a uniform are themselves sometimes expensive, the total cost tends to be a lot less than the cost of all the additional shopping that students do when they do not have uniforms.

Third, school uniforms prevent many of the social tensions that can arise from discrepancies among students' clothes. In schools without uniforms, clothes lead to comparisons among students in several ways. First, students who wear inexpensive clothes often get perceived as cheap or just poor. Being either cheap about clothes, or poor, is not something to be ashamed of, but it often results in students being negatively perceived by their peers anyway. Second, even when money is not involved, some students get judged by others for being uncool in their choice of clothes. Third, students who are not as conventionally attractive as other students often feel self-conscious when students with certain body types wear tight-fitting or revealing clothes. In all of these

ways, the lack of uniforms leads to many kinds of social tensions that are mostly prevented in schools that have uniforms.

[your name]
Introduction to Ethics Honors
February 28, 2014*
341 words**

** Put the date when you are turning
this paper in.*

*** Put the number of words in your document,
including all text, notes, etc.*

Making College More Affordable

For many Americans, obtaining post-secondary education is becoming increasingly challenging due to rising tuitions for colleges and universities across the country. The federal government should increase the funding it provides to subsidize post-secondary education. This change is warranted for two main reasons.

The first reason has to do with the well-being of students as they progress into adulthood and aim to be self-supporting and prosperous. In our current society having a college degree is practically essential for getting a job that pays significantly more than minimum wage. This is a major and worthwhile reason why many high-school seniors choose to go to college. But it is unrealistic to expect 18-to-25-year olds to be able to afford tuition at today's rates. Moreover, because tuitions across the country have been rising much faster in recent decades than most families' incomes, many students cannot count on their families to offset most of the cost of college. In sum, college is as essential as ever, but also less affordable than ever. This makes it imperative that the federal government provide more assistance, whether in the form of outright grants or just low-interest loans.

The second reason has to do with the United States's productivity and global competitiveness. In recent years, worries have arisen about whether the United States can compete with other countries in subjects such as math and science. Relatedly, worries have also arisen about whether the United States is or can continue to be a leader in innovation and high-tech industries. If college were more affordable, more students could attend college, and the American workforce would consequently be more educated and better able to help the United States be a global leader in innovation and high-tech industries. In this way, increased federal funding for post-secondary education would be an investment in the nation's economy that will ultimately benefit the country as a whole – not simply a handout that benefits only its direct recipient.

week of March 3: utilitarianism

- Before class on Monday, read *The Fundamentals of Ethics*, chapter 9.
- Before class on Wednesday, read *The Fundamentals of Ethics*, chapter 10, except for the section on pp. 133–137, the subsection on pp. 146–147, and the section on pp. 149–152.
- There is no additional reading for Friday.
- Before class on Friday, complete homework 2 in accordance with the instructions below, and print three copies of it to bring to class.
- In class on Friday:
 - You'll turn in one copy of your paper as homework 2. The policy on late and e-mailed homework (see p. 5) applies to this assignment.
 - You'll work on your paper with your classmates using the other copies of your paper.

instructions for homework 2, due Friday, March 7:

- Add to the paper you started last week by describing and replying to one or more objections to the claim for which you are arguing. On the following pages are ways that the sample papers shown earlier could be extended in this way.
- Whether you choose to discuss one objection or more than one objection might depend on how substantial you have been able to make the “affirmative” part of your paper – the part you did last week. If you were not able to make that as substantial as you would have liked, you might consider anticipating and rebutting more than one objection. However, be advised that discussing multiple objections in a cursory fashion is not as good as discussing one objection more thoroughly.
- This version of your paper should be 500–800 words long. Be sure your paper is not longer than 800 words, since when you turn in the final version of this paper as paper 1, there will be a penalty for papers that are longer than 800 words.
- Like what you turned in last week, what turn in this week will contribute to your homework grade (it will be homework 2) and will be graded only on whether what you turn in reflects a good-faith effort to write this paper – points will not be deducted for flaws in your argument at this stage. Please note that the policy on late and e-mailed homework (see p. 5) applies to this assignment. (Like last week’s assignment, this assignment is a precursor to the first paper assignment, which has a deadline of March 14.)
- The same rules apply as before. And, as before, you should print three copies of your paper to bring to class.

[your name]
Introduction to Ethics Honors
March 7, 2014*
735 words**

** Put the date when you are turning
this paper in.*

** Put the number of words in your document,
including all text, notes, etc.*

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Second, school uniforms alleviate difficult financial situations by removing much of the incentive that students currently have to buy expensive clothes. Currently, in schools that do not have uniforms, many students strive to dress fashionably. This tends to involve buying expensive clothes for the start of the school year, then more expensive clothes for the winter, and then more expensive clothes when the weather changes again in the spring. Throughout the year, there is always someone who has something new, and everyone else feels that if they just keep wearing the same old thing, they will look uncool. But in schools that required uniforms, this hardly happens at all. If the uniform requires a dark blue shirt with a collar, then it does not matter very much if someone gets a new dark blue shirt with a collar. Everyone else does not feel that have to keep up as much. Although the clothes that make up a uniform are themselves sometimes expensive, the total cost tends to be a lot less than the cost of all the additional shopping that students do when they do not have uniforms.

Third, school uniforms prevent many of the social tensions that can arise from discrepancies among students' clothes. In schools without uniforms, clothes lead to comparisons among students in several ways. First, students who wear inexpensive clothes often get perceived as cheap or just poor. Being either cheap about clothes, or poor, is not something to be ashamed of, but it often results in students being negatively perceived by their peers anyway. Second, even when money is not involved, some students get judged by others for being uncool in their choice of clothes. Third, students who are not as conventionally attractive as other students often feel self-conscious when students with certain body types wear tight-fitting or revealing clothes. In all of these

ways, the lack of uniforms leads to many kinds of social tensions that are mostly prevented in schools that have uniforms.

An important objection against a school uniform policy is that by denying students the choice of what kinds of clothes to wear, such a policy would seriously infringe on students' liberty and right of self-determination. Specifically, it might be claimed that such a policy prevents students from expressing their individuality, their personal interests, and their personal sense of creativity. This objection would claim that these serious moral problems with school uniforms outweigh the benefits discussed above.

In response to this objection, I would argue that even in schools that require uniforms, students have plenty of opportunities for individuality and creativity. First, they can choose what optional activities to participate in, such as student government or the math club. Second, if clothing itself is the issue, students can even start or join a fashion club to design and make whatever kinds of clothes they want to. Third, they can express themselves through all sorts of choices they make every day about how to treat their classmates, how to treat their teachers, and what sort of choices to make about their own goals and futures. With all these other options, clothing should not be regarded as such an important outlet for individuality and creativity.

[your name]
Introduction to Ethics
March 7, 2014*
620 words**

** Put the date when you are turning
this paper in.*

*** Put the number of words in your document,
including all text, notes, etc.*

Making College More Affordable

For many Americans, obtaining post-secondary education is becoming increasingly challenging due to rising tuitions for colleges and universities across the country. The federal government should increase the funding it provides to subsidize post-secondary education. This change is warranted for two main reasons.

The first reason has to do with the well-being of students as they progress into adulthood and aim to be self-supporting and prosperous. In our current society having a college degree is practically essential for getting a job that pays significantly more than minimum wage. This is a major and worthwhile reason why many high-school seniors choose to go to college. But it is unrealistic to expect 18-to-25-year olds to be able to afford tuition at today's rates. Moreover, because tuitions across the country have been rising much faster in recent decades than most families' incomes, many students cannot count on their families to offset most of the cost of college. In sum, college is as essential as ever, but also less affordable than ever. This makes it imperative that the federal government provide more assistance, whether in the form of outright grants or just low-interest loans.

The second reason has to do with the United States's productivity and global competitiveness. In recent years, worries have arisen about whether the United States can compete with other countries in subjects such as math and science. Relatedly, worries have also arisen about whether the United States is or can continue to be a leader in innovation and high-tech industries. If college were more affordable, more students could attend college, and the American workforce would consequently be more educated and better able to help the United States be a global leader in innovation and high-tech industries. In this way, increased federal funding for post-secondary education would be an investment in the nation's economy that will ultimately benefit the country as a whole – not simply a handout that benefits only its direct recipient.

Some might object to what I have proposed on the grounds that increasing federal-government subsidies for college tuition would require higher taxes. People who take this position might point out that there is no such thing as a “free lunch” and that whenever the federal government increases funding for some purpose, there has to be some way of paying for it. If the federal government is reducing costs for students and their families, it is increasing costs for itself.

I would reply that this objection can be answered by revisiting the two arguments that I mentioned above. First, when attending college makes people more self-sufficient and prosperous, they pay more income tax every year than if they were not as well off, and they are less likely to need to rely in government programs such as unemployment insurance and Medicare. So, much of the federal government's up-front cost of providing more funds for higher education is likely to be recovered later in the

form of reduced burdens on other programs. Second, the federal government will also be better off, financially, if the United States strengthens its position in the global economy, and improves its leadership with respect to innovation and high-tech industries. This is the sense in which increased federal funding for higher education would be an investment – an expenditure that should produce more income later – rather than just a hand-out to people.

In conclusion, the price tag that comes with college is becoming more than many people can afford. By increasing funding for higher education, the government would be making a wise decision, for the benefit of millions of individual citizens and for the country as a whole.

week of March 10: Kant's moral theory

- Before class on Monday, read *The Fundamentals of Ethics*, selections from chapters 11 and 12: pp. 154–164, pp. 168–173, and pp. 184–185.
- Before class on Wednesday, read *The Fundamentals of Ethics*, selections from chapters 11 and 12: pp. 164–167, p. 176, and pp. 182–184.
- There is no additional reading for Friday.
- Before class on Friday, re-read the paper you have been working on and make any final revisions you think are warranted. Print two copies – one to turn in, and one to save in case anything happens to the one you turn in. Your paper will be graded on content (not just completeness, as with the earlier drafts you turned in for homework). The grade you get will be your first paper grade; it will not influence your homework grade. So the policy on late and e-mailed homework does not apply to this assignment; rather, the policy on late and e-mailed papers (see p. 5) applies to this assignment.
- Your paper should be 500–800 words long. Any paper of more than 800 words will have a penalty of 1 percentage point for every 10 extra words, or fraction thereof. For example, a paper of 832 words will have a penalty of 4 percentage points. Also, there will be a penalty of 10 points for not including your paper's word count at the beginning of your paper, as shown in the example papers.
- In class on Friday, you will turn in your paper.

week of March 17: no class (spring break)***week of March 24: feminist ethics***

- Before class on Monday, read *The Fundamentals of Ethics*, chapter 18, pp. 272–283.
- Before class on Wednesday, read *The Fundamentals of Ethics*, chapter 18, pp. 283–286.
- There is no additional reading for Friday.

Thursday, March 27:

- If you have a disability that entitles you to special accommodations for taking tests, contact the Disability Resources office (see p. 4, above, for the Disability Resources office's contact information), by the end of tomorrow, March 28, about making arrangements to take the test we have scheduled for April 4. If you are entitled to extra time, you will need to ask Disability Resources to administer the test to you. Be sure that the time slot you arrange with Disability Resources will finish by 10:50 a.m. on April 4.

week of March 31: review and test 2

- We'll review for the test on Monday and Wednesday.
- The test will be on Friday.
- The ground rules for the test will be the same as for the first test (see that information earlier in this syllabus). You might also want to be aware of my make-up test policy, which is above, on p. 5.

Applied Ethics***week of April 7: economic justice***

- Before class on Monday, read the material from Peter Singer provided on the course Blackboard site.
- Before class on Wednesday, read the material from John Arthur provided on the course Blackboard site.
- There is no additional reading for Friday.
- Before class on Friday, complete homework 3 in accordance with the instructions below, and print three copies of it to bring to class.
- In class on Friday:
 - You'll turn in one copy of your paper as homework 3. The policy on late and e-mailed homework (see p. 5) applies to this assignment.
 - You'll work on your paper with your classmates using the other copies of your paper.

instructions for homework 3, due Friday, April 11:

- Follow the instructions for homework 1, above, modified as follows:
 - Write your paper on a topic that is different from the topic on which you wrote your first paper.
 - What you turn in will be homework 3.
 - This assignment is a precursor to the second paper assignment, which has a deadline of April 25.

week of April 14: euthanasia

- Before class on Monday, read the material from James Rachels provided on the course Blackboard site.
- Before class on Wednesday, read the material from Daniel Callahan provided on the course Blackboard site.
- There is no additional reading for Friday.
- Before class on Friday, complete homework 4 in accordance with the instructions below, and print three copies of it to bring to class.
- In class on Friday:
 - You'll turn in one copy of your paper as homework 4. The policy on late and e-mailed homework (see p. 5) applies to this assignment.
 - You'll work on your paper with your classmates using the other copies of your paper.

instructions for homework 4, due Friday, April 18:

- Follow the instructions for homework 2, above, modified as follows:
 - What you turn in will be homework 4.
 - This assignment is a precursor to the second paper assignment, which has a deadline of April 25.

Friday, April 18:

- I hope this doesn't apply to you, but if you feel that should withdraw from this class rather than staying in it for a grade that will influence your G.P.A., you should be aware that the last day to withdraw from this class is this Monday, April 21 (as indicated at <http://www.registrar.ku.edu/spring-2014-academic-calendar-date>). For instructions, see <http://www.registrar.ku.edu/adddrop-class>.

week of April 21: abortion

- Before class on Monday, read the material from Judith Jarvis Thomson provided on the course Blackboard site.
- Before class on Wednesday, read the material from Don Marquis provided on the course Blackboard site.
- There is no additional reading for Friday. Don Marquis will visit our class and discuss the ethics of abortion with you.
- Before class on Friday, re-read the paper you have been working on and make any final revisions you think are warranted. Print two copies – one to turn in and one to save in case anything happens to the one you turn in. Your paper will be graded on content (not just completeness, as with the earlier drafts you turned in for homework). The grade you get will be your second paper grade; it will not influence your homework grade. So the policy on late and e-mailed homework does not apply to this assignment; rather, the policy on late and e-mailed papers (see p. 5) applies to this assignment.
- Your paper should be 500–800 words long. Any paper of more than 800 words will have a penalty of 1 percentage point for every 10 extra words, or fraction thereof. For example, a paper of 832 words will have a penalty of 4 percentage points. Also, there will be a penalty of 10 points for not including your paper's word count at the beginning of your paper, as shown in the example papers.
- In class on Friday, you will turn in your paper.

Thursday, April 24:

- If you have a disability that entitles you to special accommodations for taking tests, contact the Disability Resources office (see p. 4, above, for the Disability Resources office's contact information), by the end of tomorrow, April 25, about making arrangements to take the test we have scheduled for May 2. If you are entitled to extra time, you will need to ask Disability Resources to administer the test to you. Be sure that the time slot you arrange with Disability Resources will finish by 10:50 a.m. on May 2.

week of April 28: review and test 3

- We'll review for the test on Monday and Wednesday.
- The test will be on Friday.
- The ground rules for the test will be the same as for the first two tests (see that information earlier in this syllabus). You might also want to be aware of my make-up test policy, which is above, on p. 5.

week of May 5: review

- On Monday, we'll review the third test (taken in class on Friday, May 2).
- We'll reserve Wednesday, May 6, in case we need it.

end-of-semester information:

The third test is the last assignment of the course. There is no final exam.

I hope to have final grade averages viewable in the online gradebook, on Blackboard, by May 12. If you want to check your final average, you can use the procedure for computing your grade provided near the beginning of this syllabus, on p. 2.

If you would like to retrieve any work that you have turned in, but have not yet had returned to you, please retrieve it by May 31, 2015. After that date, I may discard unclaimed work from this semester.