

Philosophy 61: Moral Issues Spring 2018

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Office and Office Hours:	FO 208, TBA
Class Days/Time:	Tuesday Thursday 12-1:15PM
Location:	TBA

Course Overview:

This course is a general introduction to ethical theories and topics. We will go over questions such as whether there are objective moral distinctions, what makes right acts right and wrong acts wrong, and how we know (if we do) that actions are right or wrong. We will cover the strengths and weaknesses of theories such as relativism, egoism, Existentialism, Utilitarianism, and Kantianism. We will also test these theories against real life ethical dilemmas, such as the darkest hour in Western History, and see many of these theories at play in selected works (such as in Alan Moore's *The Watchmen*).

Course Objectives:

This class will expose students to significant works of the human intellect and imagination, drawing from a broad range of different philosophies. Students will examine the historical and cultural circumstances which helped shape the various thinkers' philosophies. Students will also be able to relate these concepts back to their own lives and recognize their relevance in the contemporary world. These skills will enable students to fully participate in social and cultural communities, further enriching their personal and professional lives.

GE/SJSU Studies Learning Outcomes:

Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

1. Recognize how significant works illuminate enduring human concerns;
2. Respond to such works by writing both research-based critical analyses and personal responses; and
3. Write clearly and effectively.

Classroom Protocol:

A good philosophy class is centered not on a lecture and student regurgitation of information, but rather on dialog and debate in conjunction with a guided discussion designed to break down the readings into something more manageable. With this in mind, the class will have a strong emphasis on in-class discussion, and therefore attendance, preparation (having actually read the assigned reading), and participation will all be essential to your experience in this course and will make up a considerable portion of your final grade. We will frequently work in small groups, and it will be

imperative that we all work together to foster a trusting and comfortable environment for everyone.

With that in mind, respect for one another is absolutely *essential* for this class. Feel free to disagree and debate with each other, but do so in a respectful manner. For example, try to refrain from interrupting others while they are talking, and remember to critique the *idea*—and not the *person*—you are debating. Coming to class and maintaining an open mind is also vital for good dialog to flourish.

We will be covering some contentious and sensitive issues that many of you will have different opinions on, and that is awesome because we can have many intriguing perspectives in the dialog. But any disrespectful conduct will not be tolerated. Please feel free to email or speak to me if at any time you feel uncomfortable with the classroom environment. Similarly, I will speak to you if I perceive any problematic assumptions, biases, or prejudices that are making others uncomfortable.

Required Readings:

The Fundamentals of Ethics – Shafer-Landau

The Sunflower – Simon Wiesenthal

Becoming Evil – Jim Waller (emailed)

Ethics of Ambiguity – Simone de Beauvoir (emailed)

Assignments and Grading Policy:

Lifeboat Ethics Essay: Hardin writes a very intriguing piece on his view of ethics. You will be required to take a position on his article and support your position by utilizing the theories we have learned so far.

The Watchmen Essay: Your second Essay will be on the film *The Watchmen* (based on Alan Moore's graphic novel).

Watchmen poses many ethical dilemmas, and certain characters beautifully embody the ethical theories we have covered so far. You will be required to analyze in detail one of these ethical dilemmas and discuss how specific characters reactions are akin to philosophical stances we have studied.

The Sunflower Paper: We will confront one of the darkest hours of human history and explore the possibilities and limits of forgiveness.

Group Presentation: You and a team of your peers will be responsible for analyzing a contemporary ethical issue

Final Essay: Ethics Applied Today. You will be required to explore a contemporary ethical quandary and utilize at least one of the thinkers we have studied to come to a conclusion about how to solve/approach it.

Participation: is a key component in your overall experience in the classroom, which is why it is being weighed so heavily. Participation is not merely showing up and sitting quietly (though a low

attendance tends to correlate with a low participation grade); it is making your presence known by participating in class and small group discussions and in class writing assignments. The frequency of participation and quality of comments will be taken into consideration when assigning a grade (this does not mean you will be marked down for asking questions, on the contrary I encourage you to ask questions about anything you don't understand); what this deals with namely goes back to being respectful of others and staying on a *relevant* topic during class discussions.

Grading Criteria:

- A: Superior achievement; far exceeds demands of assignment.
- B: Goes beyond adequate achievement; exceeds demands of assignment.
- C: Achieves assignment purpose adequately; fulfills assignment.
- D: Problems outweigh strengths, does not quite fulfill assignment.
- F: Problems overpower strengths, clearly does not fulfill assignment.

Grade Breakdown:

- Participation – 20
- Hardin Essay – 10
- Watchmen Essay – 20
- Sunflower Paper – 15
- Group Presentation - 20
- Final – 15

Dropping and Adding

Students are responsible for understanding the policies and procedures about add/drop, grade forgiveness, etc. Refer to the current semester's Catalog Policies section at <http://info.sjsu.edu/static/catalog/policies.html>. Add/drop deadlines can be found on the current academic calendar web page located at http://www.sjsu.edu/academic_programs/calendars/academic_calendar/. The Late Drop Policy is available at <http://www.sjsu.edu/aars/policies/latedrops/policy/>. Students should be aware of the current deadlines and penalties for dropping classes.

University Policies

General Expectations, Rights and Responsibilities of the Student

As members of the academic community, students accept both the rights and responsibilities incumbent upon all members of the institution. Students are encouraged to familiarize themselves with SJSU's policies and practices pertaining to the procedures to follow if and when questions or concerns about a class arises. See University Policy S90-5 at <http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S90-5.pdf>. More detailed information on a variety of related topics is available in the SJSU catalog, at <http://info.sjsu.edu/web-dbgen/narr/catalog/rec-12234.12506.html>. In general, it is recommended that students begin by seeking clarification or discussing concerns with their instructor. If such conversation is not possible, or if it does not serve to address the issue, it is recommended that the student contact the Department Chair as a next step.

Academic integrity

Your commitment as a student to learning is evidenced by your enrollment at San Jose State University. The University's Academic Integrity policy, located at <http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/S07-2.htm>, requires you to be honest in all your academic course work. Faculty members are required to report all infractions to the office of Student

Conduct and Ethical Development. The [Student Conduct and Ethical Development website](http://www.sa.sjsu.edu/judicial_affairs/index.html) is available at http://www.sa.sjsu.edu/judicial_affairs/index.html.

Instances of academic dishonesty will not be tolerated. Cheating on exams or plagiarism (presenting the work of another as your own, or the use of another person's ideas without giving proper credit) will result in a failing grade and sanctions by the University. For this class, all assignments are to be completed by the individual student unless otherwise specified. If you would like to include your assignment or any material you have submitted, or plan to submit for another class, please note that SJSU's Academic Policy S07-2 requires approval of instructors.

Campus Policy in Compliance with the American Disabilities Act

If you need course adaptations or accommodations because of a disability, or if you need to make special arrangements in case the building must be evacuated, please make an appointment with me as soon as possible, or see me during office hours. Presidential Directive 97-03 requires that students with disabilities requesting accommodations must register with the [Disability Resource Center](http://www.drc.sjsu.edu/) (DRC) at <http://www.drc.sjsu.edu/> to establish a record of their disability.

Student Technology Resources

Computer labs for student use are available in the Academic Success Center located on the 1st floor of Clark Hall and on the 2nd floor of the Student Union. Additional computer labs may be available in your department/college. Computers are also available in the Martin Luther King Library.

A wide variety of audio-visual equipment is available for student checkout from Media Services located in IRC 112. These items include digital and VHS camcorders, VHS and Beta video players, 16 mm, slide, overhead, DVD, CD, and audiotape players, sound systems, wireless microphones, projection screens and monitors.

Learning Assistance Resource Center

The Learning Assistance Resource Center (LARC) is located in Room 600 in the Student Services Center. It is designed to assist students in the development of their full academic potential and to inspire them to become independent learners. The Center's tutors are trained and nationally certified by the College Reading and Learning Association (CRLA). They provide content-based tutoring in many lower division courses (some upper division) as well as writing and study skills assistance. Small group, individual, and drop-in tutoring are available. Please visit the [LARC website](http://www.sjsu.edu/larc/) for more information at <http://www.sjsu.edu/larc/>.

SJSU Writing Center

The SJSU Writing Center is located in Room 126 in Clark Hall. It is staffed by professional instructors and upper-division or graduate-level writing specialists from each of the seven SJSU colleges. Our writing specialists have met a rigorous GPA requirement, and they are well trained to assist all students at all levels within all disciplines to become better writers. The [Writing Center website](http://www.sjsu.edu/writingcenter/about/staff/) is located at <http://www.sjsu.edu/writingcenter/about/staff/>.

Peer Mentor Center

The Peer Mentor Center is located on the 1st floor of Clark Hall in the Academic Success Center. The Peer Mentor Center is staffed with Peer Mentors who excel in helping students manage university life, tackling problems that range from academic challenges to interpersonal struggles. On the road to graduation, Peer Mentors are navigators, offering "roadside assistance" to peers who feel a bit lost or simply need help mapping out the locations of campus resources. Peer Mentor services are free and available on a drop-in basis, no reservation required. The [Peer Mentor Center website](http://www.sjsu.edu/muse/peermentor/) is located at <http://www.sjsu.edu/muse/peermentor/>

Course Schedule: Phil 61 – Moral Issues

The schedule is subject to change (with fair notice). If any changes are made I will notify you in class and post a revised Schedule on the Class Website

Table 1 Course Schedule

Week	Date	Topics, Readings, Assignments, Deadlines
1	1/25	Introduction and Syllabus

Week	Date	Topics, Readings, Assignments, Deadlines
2	1/30	Relativism (FoE Ch 19)
2	2/1	Egoism Lecture (FoE Ch7)
3	2/6	Egoism Lecture (FoE Ch8)
3	2/8	Hardin's Lifeboat Ethics Lifeboat Ethics Paper Assigned
4	2/13	Utilitarianism (FoE Ch9-10)
4	2/15	Deontology (FoE Ch 11-12) Lifeboat Ethics Paper Due
5	2/20	Virtue Ethics (FoE Ch17)
5	2/22	Feminist Ethics –Ethics of Care (FoE Ch18)
6	2/27	De Beauvoir – <i>Ethics of Ambiguity</i>
6	3/1	De Beauvoir – <i>Ethics of Ambiguity</i>
7	3/6	Movie (<i>The Watchmen</i>) Watchmen Paper Assigned
7	3/8	<i>The Watchmen</i> (continued)
8	3/13	Personhood, Rights, Justice
8	3/15	Personhood, Rights, Justice
9	3/20	Watchmen Discussion Watchmen Paper Due
9	3/22	Group Presentation – Meet Up (Do Not Miss, as groups will be assigned and topics chosen!)
10	3/27	<i>Spring Break ----no class!</i>
10	3/29	<i>Spring Break ----no class!</i>
11	4/3	Hannah Arendt –The Banality of Evil lecture
11	4/5	Hannah Arendt –The Banality of Evil lecture (continued) <i>The Sunflower – Discussion</i> (the first ½ of the book should be read) Sunflower paper Assigned

Week	Date	Topics, Readings, Assignments, Deadlines
12	4/10	<i>The Sunflower Forgiveness</i> (Hans Habe, Mathieu Ricard, Robert McAfee Brown, José Hobday, Matthew Fox,)
12	4/12	<i>The Sunflower – Limits of Forgiveness</i> (Primo Levi, Erich H Loewy, Herbert Marcuse, Joshua Rubenstein, Sidney Shachnow, Mary Gordon)
13	4/17	<i>The Sunflower – Other Responses</i> (Andre Stein, Harold Kushner, Roger Kamenetz, Dith Pran, Albert Speer)
13	4/19	<i>Sunflower Symposium</i> Sunflower Paper Due
14	4/24	Presentation 1
14	4/26	Presentation 2
15	5/1	Presentation 3
15	5/3	Presentation 4
16	5/8	Presentation 5
16	5/10	Class Symposium Final Paper Due
17	Finals Week	Office Hours May 17 th 9:45-12