

ITB 219 E ETHICS

Course Level: Undergraduate
Instructor: Prof. Dr. Gürcan Koçan
Semester: Fall 2026]
Meeting Times: Monday 13.30-16.30
Location: FEB D 104
Office: FEB B4-320

Course Description

This course introduces students to central problems in contemporary moral philosophy, the ethical theories developed to address them, and the historical and intellectual contexts from which these theories emerged. Students will explore diverse approaches to determining what constitutes morally right or wrong behavior. The course is divided into two main parts:

1. **Theoretical Foundations:** A study of major ethical theories such as consequentialism, deontology, virtue ethics, and contractarianism.
2. **Applied Ethics:** Critical engagement with contemporary moral issues including equality, economic justice, punishment, animal rights, environmental ethics, global inequality, violence, war, abortion, and sexual ethics.

Each week includes theoretical readings and classic moral texts that illustrate and challenge the ideas discussed.

Course Objectives

By the end of the course, students will be able to:

- Analyze and critique key texts in moral philosophy.
 - Demonstrate understanding of major ethical theories and arguments.
 - Apply ethical concepts and principles to contemporary moral problems.
 - Develop and articulate well-reasoned ethical arguments in both written and oral formats.
 - Use key ethical terms such as *virtue*, *duty*, *rights*, *autonomy*, and *respect* appropriately.
 - Engage with diverse cultural perspectives and respond thoughtfully to global ethical challenges.
 - Demonstrate ethical responsibility through informed moral reasoning.
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Course Structure and Methodology

This course combines lectures, student presentations, and seminar-style discussions. Each session begins with a brief lecture contextualizing the week's readings, followed by student-led presentations and class discussion.

Expectations:

- Students must complete all assigned readings before class.
 - Active participation in discussions is required.
 - Respectful, constructive dialogue is essential.
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Assessment Overview

Component	Weight
Attendance & Participation	10%
Oral Presentations	10%
In-Class Tests (4 total)	40%
Final Exam	40%

Grading Scale

Letter Grade	Grade Points	Score Range	Description
AA	4.00	95–100	Exceptional
BA+	3.75	90–94	Excellent
BA	3.50	85–89	Slightly less than excellent
BB+	3.25	80–84	Very good
BB	3.00	75–79	Good
CB+	2.75	70–74	Slightly less than good
CB	2.50	65–69	Satisfactory
CC+	2.25	60–64	Adequate
CC	2.00	55–59	Average
DC+	1.75	50–54	Conditional Passable
DC	1.50	46–49	Conditional Passable
DD+	1.25	43–45	Conditional Passable
DD	1.00	40–42	Conditional Passable
FF	0.00	0–39	Failure
VF	0.00	0	Failure (due to attendance)

Course Requirements

Attendance Policy

- Attendance is mandatory. More than 4 unexcused absences will negatively affect your grade.
- 5 or more unexcused absences will result in automatic failure (VF).
- Excused absences require official documentation.
- Chronic illness or emergencies may require course withdrawal.

Oral Presentations

- Each student will deliver two 20–30 minute presentations on assigned readings.
- Presentations must include a summary, critical analysis, and discussion facilitation.
- Unexcused absence on presentation day results in a 10-point deduction.

In-Class Tests

- Four tests (10% each) will assess comprehension and application of ethical theories.
- Formats include multiple choice, true/false, and short/long answer questions.

Final Exam

- Essay-based exam requiring application of ethical theories to real-world problems.

- A list of potential questions will be provided in advance.
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Classroom Conduct

- Arrive on time and stay for the full class.
 - No use of phones or distracting devices during class.
 - Laptops/tablets for note-taking only (with prior approval).
 - Respect all participants and contribute constructively to discussions.
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Accessibility

Students with documented disabilities should contact the Office of Disabled Students (ODS) at ITU to arrange accommodations. Early contact is encouraged as accommodations are not retroactive.

Required Texts

- **Russ Shafer-Landau**, *Living Ethics: An Introduction with Readings*, Oxford University Press, 2022.
Oxford University Press Link
 - **Course Reader Packet**: Available at the photocopy shop in the Faculty of Science and Letters Building.
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Additional readings

Barbara Mackinnon and Andrew Fiala, *Ethics: Theory and Contemporary Issues*, 8th ed., (Stanford, CT: Cengage Learning, 2015).

Julian Baggini, Peter Fosl, *The Ethics Toolkit: A Compendium of Ethical Concepts and Methods* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2007)

Lawrence Hinman, *Contemporary Moral Issues: Diversity and Consensus*, (New York: Prentice Hall, 2005)

Mark Timmons, *Moral Theory: An Introduction* (New York: Rowman Littlefield, 2002)

Russ Shafer-Landau, *The Ethical Life: Fundamental Readings in Ethics and Moral Problems*, 4th Edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012)

Russ Shafer-Landau, *The Fundamentals of Ethics*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012)

Steven M. Cahn & Peter Mackie, *Ethics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006)

Lecture Schedule: Ethics

PART I: FOUNDATIONS OF MORAL THEORY

Week 1: Introduction to Moral Philosophy

Objective: To introduce students to the foundational questions of moral philosophy, including the nature of morality, its relationship to other normative systems, and the distinction between conventional and critical morality.

Topics:

- What is morality?
- Normative systems and moral frameworks
- Conventional vs. critical morality

Readings:

- Mark Timmons, *Moral Theory: An Introduction*
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Week 2: Moral Reasoning and Skepticism

Objective: To cultivate students' analytical skills in ethical reasoning and to critically examine skeptical challenges to moral objectivity.

Topics:

- Validity, soundness, and argument forms
- Moral relativism, egoism, and error theory
- Fallacies and logical structure in moral arguments

Readings:

- Russ Shafer-Landau, *Living Ethics*, Chapters 1–3
 - Mary Midgley, "Trying Out One's New Sword"
 - J. L. Mackie, "The Subjectivity of Values"
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Week 3: Theories of the Good Life and Consequentialism

Objective: To explore philosophical conceptions of well-being and critically assess the foundations and implications of consequentialist moral theories.

Topics:

- Hedonism and desire satisfaction
- Utilitarianism: principles, strengths, and critiques

Readings:

- Russ Shafer-Landau, Chapters 4–5
 - John Stuart Mill, "Hedonism" and *Utilitarianism*
 - Robert Nozick, "The Experience Machine"
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Week 4: Deontological Ethics

In-Class Exam I

Objective:

To examine Kantian deontological ethics, focusing on the principles of universalizability, duty, and respect for persons.

Topics:

- Categorical and hypothetical imperatives
- Moral duties and the principle of humanity

Readings:

- Russ Shafer-Landau, Chapter 6
 - Immanuel Kant, “The Good Will and the Categorical Imperative”
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Week 5: Social Contract Theory and Natural Law

Objective: To analyze theories of moral and political obligation grounded in rational agreement and natural purposes.

Topics:

- Contractarianism and the state of nature
- Natural law and the doctrine of double effect

Readings:

- Russ Shafer-Landau, Chapters 7–8
 - Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*
 - Thomas Aquinas, “Natural Law”
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Week 6: Virtue Ethics and Feminist Ethics

Objective: To investigate character-based and relational approaches to ethics, emphasizing moral development, care, and emotional engagement.

Topics:

- Virtue, moral complexity, and role models
- Feminist ethics and the ethics of care

Readings:

- Russ Shafer-Landau, Chapters 10–11
 - Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*
 - Hilde Lindemann, “What Is Feminist Ethics?”
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Week 7: Ethical Pluralism and Prima Facie Duties

In-Class Exam II

Objective: To introduce ethical pluralism and Ross’s theory of prima facie duties, enabling students to navigate moral conflicts and competing obligations.

Topics:

- Ethical pluralism and moral complexity
- Prima facie duties and moral decision-making

Readings:

- Russ Shafer-Landau, Chapter 9
 - W. D. Ross, “What Makes Right Actions Right?”
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PART II: CONTEMPORARY MORAL PROBLEMS

Week 8: Animal Rights and Environmental Ethics

Objective: To critically evaluate moral arguments concerning the treatment of non-human animals and environmental responsibility.

Topics:

- Speciesism and moral standing
- Environmental ethics and sustainability

Readings:

- Russ Shafer-Landau, Chapters 13–14
- Singer, Regan, Warren, Norcross, Frey

- Taylor, Hill Jr., Posner & Sunstein, Sinnott-Armstrong
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Week 9: Abortion and Euthanasia

Objective: To engage with philosophical debates on abortion and euthanasia, focusing on personhood, autonomy, and moral permissibility.

Topics:

- Moral status of the fetus
- Voluntary and non-voluntary euthanasia

Readings:

- Russ Shafer-Landau, Chapters 12 & 15
 - Noonan, Thomson, Warren, Marquis
 - Rachels, Kass, Singer
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Week 10: Economic Justice and Inequality

In-Class Exam III

Objective: To examine competing theories of distributive justice and economic fairness, emphasizing liberty, equality, and moral obligations.

Topics:

- Justice as fairness
- Entitlement theory and taxation ethics

Readings:

- Russ Shafer-Landau, Chapter 16
 - Rawls, Nozick, Frankfurt, Anderson
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Week 11: Globalization, Immigration, and Racial Justice

Objective: To explore ethical issues related to global inequality, migration, and racial injustice, including reparations and affirmative action.

Topics:

- Global justice and poverty
- Immigration rights and racial integration

Readings:

- Russ Shafer-Landau, Chapters 17–18
 - Singer, O'Neill, Pogge, Huemer, Miller
 - Corlett, Hausman, Anderson, Shelby, Lebron
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Week 12: Privacy and Sexual Morality

Objective: To analyze moral questions surrounding privacy, sexual behavior, and bodily autonomy, with attention to virtue, consent, and social norms.

Topics:

- Sexual ethics and moral permissibility
- Privacy rights and bodily integrity

Readings:

- Russ Shafer-Landau, Chapters 19 & 23
 - Corvino, Gallagher, Halwani, Dixon, Nussbaum
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Week 13: Drugs and Genetic Engineering

Objective: To evaluate ethical debates on drug policy and genetic enhancement, focusing on paternalism, autonomy, and the moral limits of biotechnology.

Topics:

- Drug legalization and paternalism
- Genetic engineering and human enhancement

Readings:

- Russ Shafer-Landau, Chapters 21–22
 - Se Marneffe, Huemer, Goodin
 - Sandel, Savulescu, Millstein, Comstock
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Week 14: Capital Punishment

In-Class Exam IV

Objective: To critically assess moral arguments for and against the death penalty, considering deterrence, retribution, and the value of human life.

Topics:

- Justifications and critiques of capital punishment
- Moral and legal dimensions of retributive justice

Readings:

- Russ Shafer-Landau, Chapter 20
- Van den Haag, Reiman, Primoratz, Nathanson