

Ethics (50:730:226: Sec 01)

Rutgers-Camden University: Fall 2022

Class Location and Time: Armitage Hall, 206

Mondays and Wednesdays 3:45 - 5:05

Credit Hours: 3

Satisfies the “**Ethics and Values**” (EAV) General Education Code

Professor Information:

Mr. Austin Rooney

Email: austin.rooney@camden.rutgers.edu (email is the preferred method of communication)

Office: 427-429 Cooper Street, Room 327

Office #: 856-225-2918

Online Office Hours: Wednesdays, 5:15 - 6:15PM, and by appointment

Course Description:

There’s a sense in which ethics courses are easier to teach than the average class. For one thing, most of us already have opinions concerning many of the salient “problem” cases drawn from the everyday world, so discussions almost spontaneously generate. For another, the classical normative ethical theories of the Eurocentric tradition are generally easy to outline, contrast to one another, and apply to both contrived thought experiments and real-world problems. As a result, an unusually small amount of time must be spent familiarizing students with the basic terms of discourse; we can more or less occupy ourselves with some detailed analysis straightaway. However, gifts can also be curses. For withal the initial facility that students commonly demonstrate in engaging with our materials, that same facility can also make it more difficult to educate--that is, to help students to develop better patterns of thinking and acting. This is loosely the product of two related problems. One is that because the responses to the ethical problems that our course explores are already possessed by students--sometimes consciously, sometimes only behaviorally, and, in some instances, in a deeply intransigent manner--it is often difficult to engender meaningful change in students’ positions; after a tour of the options, one simply opts for the view or response with which one started. The other problem is that there has never been anything like univocal agreement on (meta\)\ethical principles among either historical or contemporary philosophers. This often invites skepticism or apathy from students: “if the so-called experts can’t agree, then why bother changing my own views?”

Our course attempts to overcome these educational challenges in the following ways. First of all, it does not grant primary place to the standard learning goals of acquisition and temporary retention of the leading answers within the scholarly community. We will, to be sure, examine at some length the most prominent schools of thought in the Western ethical tradition--viz., Virtue Ethics, Utilitarianism, and Deontology--and students will be required to demonstrate some mastery over the guiding principles of these views in customary ways. However, rather than requiring students to alter their responses to accord with some “state-of-the-art” position, the course instead asks students to entertain a range of approaches, “pump the brakes” on their own intuitions, and ultimately reevaluate the answers with which they’ve antecedently arrived. In short, this course is far more about the *process* of thinking ethically--and examining the various ways in which that has been traditionally carried out--than it is about the specific results reached. *You* must think about the various problems discussed in our course

for yourself, and develop *your* own views to succeed in this class. After all, even if the experts can't agree, you still have to figure out how to live your life.

Aside from the cognitive achievement of becoming more knowledgeable about the above, the class also aims to develop your “philosophical” skills: that is, the course aims to improve your reading, writing, and discussion capacities in specific ways. (If philosophers do anything, it's read, write and talk.) We will examine and construct arguments throughout the semester and read through small excerpts of “classical” texts together as a class to model and develop critical analysis skills.

To be clear, this course has **three specific learning objectives**:

- (1) Improve your grasp of the Western tradition of philosophical ethics.
- (2) Improve your ability to think productively about ethical problems. We do this with group work regarding: a) with some “classical” views on the nature of humanity and the world, the thought experiments and empirical studies which are said to validate them; and, b) problems facing contemporary society and its members.
- (3) Improve your general “philosophizing” skills. All assignments and activities are developed to help you think less dogmatically and more philosophically.

Prerequisites:

There are no university prerequisites for this course.

Instruction and Workload:

Class meets each Monday and Wednesday. During these “contact” hours we will talk through the week's content in seminar style by utilizing: a mixture of small group discussion, short interactive assignments, a question and answer period open to the whole class. Each Thursday students must complete two short assignments. The first is a short quiz, and the second is a set of responses to the discussion board posts from earlier in the week. Both the quiz and the discussion board posts must be completed by 11:59pm Thursday to receive credit. All lectures and assignments will be accessible through our Canvas page.

As for the readings for our course, I try to keep these short. They should take somewhere from a half hour to a few hours to complete and digest, depending on the text. The various writing assignments should take around the same time, though, of course, there may be exceptions for you. The online quizzes should not take more than 5-10 minutes, and the discussion board posts should take a half-hour or so.

Texts:

- *An Introduction to Moral Philosophy*, 2nd ed., Jonathan Wolff (W.W. Norton and Company, 2020). ISBN: 978-0393428179.
- *The Most Good You Can Do: How Effective Altruism is Changing Ideas about Living Ethically*, Peter Singer (Yale University Press, 2016). ISBN: 978-0300219869.

Requirements:

Students are to complete the following:

- 1) assigned readings and lectures;
- 2) ten online quizzes;
- 3) one multi-draft semester essay;
- 4) ten sets of discussion board posts, responses and replies;
- 5) attendance of all class sessions.

Dates and details for assignments are provided below.

Assignment Schedule:

Readings are to be completed during the weeks beginning on the dates listed below (please note that dates and assignments are subject to change at the instructor's discretion). Our reading schedule is as follows:

MODULE 1: Introducing the Background of Ethical Ideas and Themes

Week 1 (9/7): Meet and greet. Go over class expectations/requirements.

Week 2 (9/12, 9/14): Lecture and discussion on distinctions. Quiz 1 and discussion board work due by 9/19. Read Chs. 1 and 2 of *Introduction*.

****Last day of drop period: Thursday, Sept. 15****

Week 3 (9/19, 9/21): Continue discussion of major distinctions. Read Chs. 3 and 4.

Week 4 (9/26, 9/28): Introduce and discuss Egoism and Hedonism. Read Chs. 5 and 6.

Week 5 (10/3, 10/5): Introduce and discuss Intuitionism. Read Ch. 7.

MODULE 2: Considering the “Classical” Models

Week 6 (10/10, 10/12): Introduce and discuss Utilitarianism. Read Ch. 8.

Week 7 (10/17, 10/19): Continue discussion. Read Ch. 9

Week 8 (10/24, 10/26): Introduce Deontology. Read Ch. 10.

Week 9 (10/31, 11/2): Continue discussion. Read Ch. 11..

Week 10 (11/7, 11/9): Introduce Virtue Ethics. Read Ch. 12.

Week 11 (11/14, 11/16): Continue discussion. Read Ch. 13

Week 12 (11/21): Introduce Singer. Read Ch. 1 of *The Most Good*.

MODULE 3: Addressing Contemporary Problems

Week 13 (11/28, 11/30): Continue discussion of Singer. Read Chs. 2 and 3.

Week 14 (12/5, 12/7): Continue discussion. Read Ch. 4.

Week 15 (12/12, 12/14): Work in class on semester essay.

Finals Week: Wednesday, December 21: Final draft of semester essay due via Canvas.

Assignment Details and Assessment: The final grade for the course will be arrived at according to the following rubric with no curve:

50% Quizzes (50 points; 5 points each)

20% Semester Essay (20 points)

30% Discussion Board activity and participation (30 points)

**Note that there is no midterm or final exam for this course.

- Semester Essay: Ethical Thinking and Acting

You must write a semester essay for this course. The essay will be developed throughout the semester in a few stages. By week 5, students will select a theme, provisional conclusion, and activity for the essay. By week 12, students will put together a first draft of the essay in which they apply one of the classical theories introduced in class to the problem. Students must then, in the final draft, report on how their own views align with the classical theory. Students will edit and expand upon the first draft to include a section that demonstrates dialectical reasoning and considers objections to their own provisional conclusion. Only the final draft receives a grade. Here's the schedule:

Week 5: Submit a proposal to me on a topic of your choosing for the final paper.

Week 12: Develop a first draft of 1000-1500 words.

Finals Week: Submit your final draft, 2500-3000 words, via Canvas.

Here's the **objective** for this assignment: To develop your ability to think philosophically about an important ethical problem and to develop your philosophic/academic writing skills. The semester essay is all about demonstrating that you've grown to appreciate how ethical thinking affects us and particular problems, and that your own behavior can become robust and meaningful.

Rubric for Semester Essay

	Strong (8-7)	Satisfactory (7-5)	Needs Improvement (4-0)
Quality of Essay	Essay develops a clear thesis statement and provides salient examples to support it. Essay ties together all the various ideas and claims to make a compelling argument.	Essay uses a vague thesis statement and provides examples to loosely support it. Essay ties together some of the various ideas and claims to make a coherent argument.	Essay does not create a thesis statement and does not use examples to support main ideas. Essay does not tie together the various ideas and is difficult to follow.
Writing	Ideas are presented cogently, in organized fashion, in clear and grammatically correct prose, with proper use of citation. Essay can be easily read in one sitting.	Organization is competent and ideas are generally presented clearly and in grammatically correct prose, with decent use of citation. Essay can be read in a few sittings.	Ideas are presented in disorganized fashion and/or with lapses in clarity and grammatical correctness, with no or little use of citation. Essay requires great work to follow and understand.
Historical Accuracy	Presentation of historical claims are well grounded in the text and thoroughly consistent with traditional interpretations (unless otherwise noted).	Presentation of historical claims are grounded in the text and loosely consistent with traditional interpretations.	Presentation of historical claims are not grounded in the text and inconsistent with traditional interpretations.
Dialectic	Essay considers well-developed counter-position and presents a robust defense.	Essay considers a counter-position and defense.	Essay considers no counter-position.
Citation	Essay uses citations consistently, thoroughly and correctly.	Essay uses citations mostly correctly and sporadically.	Essay uses citations incorrectly or not at all.
Length	Essay provides detailed analysis of subject matter.	Essay provides adequate analysis of subject matter.	Essay provides limited analysis of subject matter.

* There is no set requirement on how many secondary sources your paper must use. Just remember that in a philosophical paper you are attempting to convince someone of the validity of an argument. Normally, the more sources you provide, the more compelling your argument becomes.

All of these assignments are designed to help you grow as a thinker by developing your reasoning and reading skills. As a general rule, for any assignment, the better you explain your reasoning, the better your grade.

- Discussion Board Activity:

Each week you must provide one post and two responses to your classmates' posts on our discussion board on Canvas. Student posts must respond to the week's prompt must be no fewer than 350 words. This must be completed before the Monday meeting. Additionally, students must then

respond to at least two posts by their classmates and reply to one comment on their own post each week. Comments and replies must be at least 50 words each. Comments and replies must be posted by the following Thursday. So, in total, that's twelve discussion posts, (at least) twelve replies, and (at least) twenty four comments for the term. Please note that these figures are only the minimum required; I strongly encourage to participate as much as you like, especially on topics and in discussions that you are interested in. This section of the course does not have a strict grading rubric; as long as you are attempting to engage your fellow classmates in meaningful conversation and in a timely manner, your posts will not be graded on such standard items as accuracy and grammar.

- ***Online Quizzes:*** Each week you must respond to a quiz based on the lecture and class discussion. The quiz is posted on Canvas on Wednesday afternoons and is active through the next day, Thursday. Failure to respond to the quiz during this interval results in a zero for the quiz. Each quiz is worth five points and features some combination of multiple choice, true/false and short answer questions. The questions gauge your retention of the key points of the emphasized during the week. The quizzes are "open note"; you may begin and save your answers to review before submitting.

All of these assignments are designed to help you grow as a thinker by developing your reasoning and reading skills. Generally, for any assignment, the better you explain your reasoning, the better your grade.

Attendance and Class Participation Policy:

Students are responsible for attending class, in whatever form that takes. Students are responsible for consistent engagement with course materials and lectures. Failure to watch a lecture during the relevant week will count as an absence. Beginning with the second absence of the term, students will lose two points from their final grade, and an additional two points for each subsequent absence. Additionally, I reserve the right to add up to five bonus points to the final grade of students whose comments in the discussion section consistently generate meaningful discussion.

Active Learning Statement:

The material in this course cannot be learned in a passive manner. This course has little purpose if it is taken merely as a foundational information provider. Therefore, informed and active engagement in discussion and debate in class is essential in grasping this often conflicting and/or controversial subject matter. You are strongly encouraged to share your ideas and relevant experiences in an open-minded, non-judgmental, and interactive setting.

Extra Credit and Late Work policy:

Late work is accepted, but will not be returned with comments, and all grades on late work are final. Furthermore, any assignment submitted more than seven days late will be graded down significantly. Late work will also not be given priority in grading; it will be graded as I can get to it. My basic rule is that I would rather see you do the work than not, and I would rather see you do the work well than poorly. If you require a few extra days to complete an assignment properly, please let me know so that I might accommodate you as I see fit. In any case, I strongly urge you not to take a zero for any assignment.

Extra credit is available in the form of a fifteen-minute presentation on a piece of secondary literature that I send you (based on your research interests), but must be set up with me at least THREE weeks prior to the last day of classes. You will not have to present in front of the class, but you will have to “teach” me the contents of the article. Extra credit can be used to replace a missing assignment, or to boost an unsatisfactory grade from a previous assignment (excepting late work). The extra credit assignment itself is worth 5 points.

Additional Materials

Incompletes:

University policy holds that I can only give an incomplete if the student cannot fulfill their requirements due to extreme circumstances and has already completed at least 50% of the course work. If you wish to take an incomplete, please consider if you have met those conditions before asking to receive one.

Disability Statement:

If you are in need of academic support for this course, accommodations can be provided once you share your accommodations indicated in a Letter of Accommodation issued by the Office of Disability Services (ODS). If you have already registered with ODS and have your letter of accommodations, please share this with me early in the course. If you have not registered with ODS and you have or think you have a disability (learning, sensory, physical, chronic health, mental health or attentional), please contact ODS by first visiting their website <https://success.camden.rutgers.edu/disability-services>. The website will further direct you who to contact and how to contact them depending on the free, confidential services you are in need of.

Please Note: Accommodations will be provided only for students with a Letter of Accommodation from ODS. Accommodation letters only provide information about the accommodation, not about the disability or diagnosis.

Code of Conduct and Academic Integrity:

Rutgers University-Camden seeks a community that is free from violence, threats, and intimidation; is respectful of the rights, opportunities, and welfare of students, faculty, staff, and guests of the University; and does not threaten the physical or mental health or safety of members of the University community, including in classroom space, and a community in which students respect academic integrity and the integrity of your own and others' work.

As a student at the University you are expected adhere to the Student Code of Conduct and Academic Integrity Policy. To review the academic integrity policy, go to <https://deanofstudents.camden.rutgers.edu/academic-integrity> To review the code, go to: <https://deanofstudents.camden.rutgers.edu/student-conduct>

Please Note: The conduct code specifically addresses disruptive classroom conduct, which means "engaging in behavior that substantially or repeatedly interrupts either the instructor's ability to teach or student learning. The classroom extends to any setting where a student is engaged in work toward academic credit or satisfaction of program-based requirements or related activities." Please be aware of classroom and out-of-classroom expectations by making yourself familiar with and by following the Student Code of Conduct

Basic Needs Security

If you have difficulty affording groceries or accessing sufficient food to eat every day, lack a safe and stable place to live, and/or do not have regular access to technology, and believe this may affect your performance in the course, you are urged to contact the Dean of Students for support and/or can utilize the Rutgers University-Camden Food Pantry.

- **Dean of Students Office-** You can learn more about the free services by calling 856-225-6050, emailing deanofstudents@camden.rutgers.edu, or visiting the website at <http://deanofstudents.camden.rutgers.edu/>
- **Rutgers-Camden Food Pantry-** You can learn more about this free service by calling 856-225-6005, emailing scarlet-raptor-foodpantry@camden.rutgers.edu or visiting the website at <https://wellnesscenter.camden.rutgers.edu/ru-camden-raptor-pantry/>

Canvas Rutgers Shout Out

Within Canvas, turn on Rutgers Shout-Out to all students to type the phonetic spelling of their name, list their preferred pronouns, and pronounce their name in a video recording for your course

Chosen Name (Preferred Name)

If you have a chosen name or preferred name other than what is listed on the roster, kindly let me know.

If you would like to have your name changed officially on the Rutgers University-Camden rosters please visit: <https://deanofstudents.camden.rutgers.edu/chosen-name-application>

Complaints

Rutgers University—Camden is committed to providing quality services, a great education and an engaged and caring experience for our students. Sometimes problems arise, and students may find that they would like to file a complaint about their experience or a particular situation. To file a complaint, students can complete the form at this link and someone will connect with you to discuss your complaint, explain options and to address the issue that was raised. Students do have the option of filing a complaint anonymously, but then there will be no way for the office handling the complaint to be able to let the student know how it was addressed. Filling out a form will allow students to understand all options and the different ways an issue can be addressed. The form is located here: <https://deanofstudents.camden.rutgers.edu/reporting>

Dean of Student Office- CARES Team

College is a time when you may be testing your independence and/or striving to find yourself. It's not uncommon for these journeys to have rough points. The Dean of Students Office is here to assist you by strategically and effectively handling and referring student concerns/needs across all areas of the campus and University as needed. For some students, personal, emotional, psychological, academic, or other challenges may hinder their ability to succeed both in and outside of the classroom. The Dean of Students Office serves as your initial contact if you need assistance with these challenges. You can learn more about the free services by calling 856-225-6050, emailing deanofstudents@camden.rutgers.edu, or visiting the website at <http://deanofstudents.camden.rutgers.edu/>

Learning Center- Learning Specialists and Tutoring

I am committed to making course content accessible to all students. The Learning Center provides Learning Specialists who can help you build a learning plan based on your strengths and needs. Tutors, study groups and more services are available you for free. Many services are available in virtual formats and after normal business hours. In addition, if English is not your first language and this causes you concern about the course, the Learning Center can help. You can learn more about these services by calling 856-225-6442, emailing rclc@camden.rutgers.edu or

learningcenter@camden.rutgers.edu, or visiting the website <https://learn.camden.rutgers.edu/> You can schedule an appointment with Learning Specialist to create a plan of action using the website.

Office of International Students and Programs- International (F-1) Students

If you are an international student at Rutgers University-Camden and you need assistance with documentation, travel, campus assistance and/or advising, the Office of International Students and Programs provides support services. You can find more information by calling 856-225-6832, emailing ois@camden.rutgers.edu or by visiting the website at <https://international.camden.rutgers.edu/>

Office of Military and Veteran Affairs- Veteran, Active Duty and National Guard Member Services

The Office of Military and Veterans Affairs and Rutgers University-Camden supports our students who have served and their family members, including explanation of benefits, referrals to resources on and off campus, supporting students who are deployed for active duty and answering questions. If you are in need of assistance and are an active duty, National Guard or veteran (or are a family member), the Office of Military and Veteran Affairs can assist. You can find more information by calling 856-225-2791 or visiting the website at <http://veterans.camden.rutgers.edu/>

Pronouns

This course affirms people of all gender expressions and gender identities. If you have a preferred gender pronoun, feel free to correct me. If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me directly.

Title IX and the Violence Prevention & Victim Assistance Office

If you have experienced any form of gender or sex-based discrimination or harassment, including sexual assault, sexual harassment, relationship violence, or stalking, know that help and support are available. The Rutgers University-Camden community is committed to helping to create a safe learning environment for all students and for the university as a whole. Rutgers University-Camden has staff members trained to support survivors in navigating campus life, accessing health and counseling services, providing academic and housing accommodations, and more. The University strongly encourages all students to report any such incidents to the University. If you wish to speak to a free, confidential employee who does not have this reporting responsibility, you can speak to staff in the Office of Violence Prevention & Victims Assistance. You can learn more about these resources by calling 856-225-2326 or by visiting the website <http://respect.camden.rutgers.edu>. You can schedule an appointment to connect with a member of the office by using this website.

Please Note: *All Rutgers employees (other than those designated as confidential resources such as advocates, counselors, clergy and healthcare providers as listed in Appendix A to Policy 60.1.33) are required to report information about such discrimination and harassment to the University.* This means that if you tell me or any faculty member about a situation of sexual harassment or sexual violence, or other related misconduct, we must share that information with the University's Title IX Coordinator

Undocumented and DACAmented Student Services

Undocumented students enrich our university community. Rutgers University-Camden is steadfast in its effort to protect and support all members of our community, regardless of immigration status or personal circumstance. If you are in need of resources (legal, career and support) you can find more information and schedule appointments on the website <https://undocumented.camden.rutgers.edu/>

Wellness Center- Health and Wellbeing Resources

Health and well-being impact learning and academic success. Throughout your time in college, you may experience a range of concerns that can cause barriers to your academic success. These might include illnesses, strained relationships, anxiety, high levels of stress, alcohol or drug problems, feeling down, or loss of motivation. The Wellness Center Medical and Counseling staff can help with these or other issues you may experience. You can learn about the free, confidential medical and mental health services available on campus by calling 856-225-6005, visiting the website at <https://wellnesscenter.camden.rutgers.edu/> or visiting the Wellness Center on the 2nd Floor of the Campus Center.

Writing and Design Lab-Writing Support and Services

If you need assistance with writing, audio recordings, web creation or other creating software used in class, the Writing and Design Lab can help. They provides personal tutoring, workshops and online assistance. You can learn more by emailing rutgers.wdl@rutgers.edu or visiting the website <https://wdl.camden.rutgers.edu/about-2/>. On the website you can schedule an appointment.

National and State Resources for Wellbeing (Alphabetical Order)

Crisis Text Line: text HOME to 741741

Crisis Text Line for Students of Color: text STEVE to 741741

National Domestic Violence Helpline: 1-800-799-7233 or text LOVEIS to 22522

the National Substance Abuse helpline, SAMHSA's National Helpline, [1-800-662-HELP \(4357\)](https://www.samhsa.gov/1-800-662-HELP)

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 1-800-273-8255

NJ HOPE line- <https://njhopeline.com/>

The Sexual Assault helpline at [1-800-656-HOPE](https://www.1-800-656-HOPE.org) (4673)

Trevor Lifeline (LGBTQ+): 1-866-488-7386

and the National Substance Abuse helpline, SAMHSA's National Helpline, [1-800-662-HELP \(4357\)](https://www.samhsa.gov/1-800-662-HELP)

General Notes

- In case of emergency, Rutgers-Camden Police can be contacted at 856-225-6009.
- **PLEASE NOTE** that the times and dates on this syllabus are tentative; they may change as the course unfolds. Make sure to stay in contact with me if you miss class and to check your email regularly throughout the term.
- I will occasionally ask students to provide a brief written summary of the content of the day's session at the end of class. This is not graded, but is invaluable in gauging the reception of the lecture.
- Rutgers-Camden's Writing Assistance Program is a valuable resource. If at any time you find yourself struggling with the assignments, do not hesitate to use their services.
- There is no *best way* to succeed in this class, as each student brings their own unique set of skills. However, you will get the most out of this course if you approach each author and argument with an open mind, and try to give them the benefit of the doubt before you come to any conclusions.
- A class such as ours puts greater demands on each of you to come prepared to class. If you do so, I think you'll find that our time together will be worth it.