

Course Syllabus: Fall 2017  
**PHI3638: Ethical Issues in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century**  
TR 10:30-11:45am CB1 0212



**Course Description and Objectives:**

In this course we will take a wide and topical look at a survey of ethical issues in the 21<sup>st</sup> century through reasoned discussion, conceptual analysis, and critical writing. Our approach will not assume any expert-level knowledge of traditional ethical theories but, instead, will take a broadly pluralistic perspective on ethical inquiry and decision-making. My rationale for guiding you by this perspective is that ethical issues in the 21<sup>st</sup> century are not the domain of solely philosophers but, rather, of an extensive community of inquirers including ethicists, scientists, and policy-makers of all sorts. Our job, as philosophers in this course, is to think carefully and critically about ethical issues and to develop strategies for helping others do this same.

Participants in this course, yourself included, will:

1. understand and identify instances of embedded ethics, broader impacts, and research integrity as they apply to a range of perspectives and disciplines,
2. develop an ability to apply ethical reasoning skills to examples of each of those three domains of research ethics through case-based analyses,
3. and acquire pedagogical skills in ethical inquiry through developing, delivering, and assessing presentation materials on relevant ethical issues in the 21<sup>st</sup> century topics drawn from your home disciplines and/or individual interests.

Students who participate in Phi3638 will gain experience in leading discussions about ethical issues and will be encouraged to begin to identify ways to develop peer mentoring on these important topics. I anticipate that you will actively contribute to the course through discussion and development of unique topics or case studies.

**Office Hours:**

I will guarantee to be available in-person during official office hours from 12:00pm-2:00pm on Wednesdays and will work with you to find a mutually agreeable time to meet in other formats as needed. I will schedule 30 minute meetings during office hours in advance, and those will take priority over drop-ins.

**Instructor Contact:**

Dr. Jonathan Beever  
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**Course Requirements:**

1. Participation and Attendance 15%
2. Online engagement with readings 10%
3. Weekly Online Discussion 10%
4. Annotated bibliography 10%
5. In-class Presentation 15%
6. Evaluation of peer presentations 10%
7. Community Engagement 10%
8. Perspective Essay 20%

**Required Texts & Materials:**

1. Open Access to “RISE: Research Integrity in Science and Engineering” online at Penn State University.

2. Beever, Jonathan and Nicolae Morar. 2012. *Perspectives in Ethics, Science, and Public Policy*. Purdue University Press.
3. Readings and multimedia content provided through our UCF online course site.

**Assignments and Expectations:**

1. Attendance (15%)  
Attendance in face-to-face meetings is required. We will work together to address conflicts and emergencies that would affect your attendance on a case-by-case basis. This is a discussion-based course and benefits greatly from your thoughtful preparation and participation.
2. Engagement with the Readings (10%)
  - a. Post responses (thoughtful questions, comments, or concerns) to the session’s readings.
  - b. Responses should be as clear, concise, and comprehensive as possible within the space of a few short paragraphs.
  - c. Responses are due within 24 hours of the relevant session (either before or after, depending on your interest). Responses will be used to help guide discussions in-class.
  - d. You must complete a response for at least 50% (8) of the course sessions.

Scoring Scale:	0 = insufficient unclear, unthoughtful, failure to engage the readings	1 = sufficient mostly clear, relevant to course content/readings	2 = extra-ficient clear, concise, thoughtful, engaging
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3. Annotated bibliography (10%)  
This list of at least 10 references and summaries will be related to the topic of presentation and submitted to the instructors along with presentation content. The majority of references should be to academic sources. Citation format should be appropriate to the field of your topic. The annotated bibliography is due no later than 11:59pm the day before your presentation.

Annotations should do at least two things. They should foremost tell us why you included it as an entry - why is it important for your talk? Second, they should tell us something about the content - main thesis, approach, important premises, etc. I don’t expect that should take you more than 2 short paragraphs or approximately 100-200 words total.

Scoring Scale:	0 = insufficient incomplete, insufficient effort	1 = sufficient at least 10 references, mostly formatted consistently, some annotation	2 = extra-ficient 10 or more references, formatted consistently, with helpful annotations
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4. Team Presentation (15%)  
Choose a topic from your disciplines or interests related to the content of a class period on which to do a presentation followed by a Q&A session during one class period. Presentations can be in any format, but must include at least some visual content and must centrally address at least one ethical issue related to your topic of choice.

Your team’s presentation should seek to introduce the rest of the class to an ethical issue and your perspective on it, utilizing the framework we develop in class. This could be topical or a specific case study that brings up at least one ethical issue. I will share an evaluation rubric with you in advance.

Each team member *may* write a brief statement, turned in after the presentation, describing roles in the project and assigning participation percentages to the other members of the team. This statement will not be used to penalize any team member, but may be used to credit supererogatory participation in the development of the presentation.

5. Evaluations of peer presentations (10%)

- a. Offer evaluations of two (2) assigned peer presentations using a provided rubric. These should: a) evaluate content delivery, b) assess ethics identification, and c) pose constructive comments, suggestions, and/or questions for the presenter. They will be due, submitted **as an online assignment**, no later than the start of the next class session.
- b. Turn in to me one question or suggestion for each presentation, on paper.

Scoring Scale:	0 = insufficient no comments or no rationale for score, or no score	1 = sufficient both comments and a score	2 = extra-ficient comments to help with final paper, plus justified score
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6. Community Engagement (10%)

Given the important interdisciplinary nature of ethical issues in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, you should consider ways of engaging your disciplinary colleagues or other relevant community. You may complete this requirement by either a) *actually* engaging that community (by writing an editorial, giving a presentation, writing to or meeting with a community leader, connecting to your peers, participating in a community event, etc.) or b) writing a proposal of 500 words offering a strategy and rationale for some way you *would* so engage. Work with me, your disciplinary faculty, and/or college level research deans to complete this engagement project no later than the last day of class. Turning in the essay or evidence of your engagement to me satisfies this requirement.

Scoring Scale:	0 = insufficient not completed, insufficient effort	1 = sufficient complete, but not clearly relevant to course topics	2 = extra-ficient complete, clearly relevant to course topics
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7. Team Perspective Essay (final exam) (20%)

Thoughtful analysis of ethical issues is most readily accomplished by writing about it. And complex issues often demand writing together. The final essay will have two components.

First, your required team-based perspective essay will be an argumentative essay developed out of your presentation, supported by appropriate references, and applying the ethical concepts and frameworks discussed in class. Work together to state your original thesis clearly. Argue well for it. Write clearly and concisely. This essay should be approximately 3000 words in length. I will share an evaluation rubric with you in advance. (75% of this assignment).

Second, you will write an individual reflection on that team-based perspective essay. What are its strengths and weak points? How did the team function in putting together the paper? How does it extend or reflect the work done in your presentation? Submit this individual response in when your team turns in the essay. (25% of this assignment)

Finally, as above each team member *may* write a brief statement, turned in along with the team essay, describing his or her role in the project and assigning participation percentages to the other members of the team. This statement will not be used to penalize any team member, but may be used to credit supererogatory participation in the development of the presentation. (not required)

*\*N.B.: Late assignments will lose 1 point from their earned grade.*

**Academic Integrity:**

This is an ethics class, so it seems unnecessary to say that plagiarism will not be tolerated. Plagiarism, or cheating of any kind on an examination, quiz, or assignment will result at least in an "F" for that assignment and may, depending on the severity of the case, lead to an "F" for the entire course and/or the placement of a "Z" designator with your

grade. Academic dishonesty will subject you to appropriate referral to the Office of Student Conduct for further action. See the UCF Golden Rule and <http://z.ucf.edu> for further information.

**Course Accessibility Statement:**

It is my goal that this class be an accessible and welcoming experience for all students, including those with disabilities that may impact learning. If anyone believes the design of this course poses barriers to effectively participating and/or demonstrating learning, please meet with me (with or without a Student Accessibility Services (SAS) accommodation letter) to discuss reasonable options or adjustments. Helpful information is found at SAS: Ferrell Commons 185; 407-823-2371; [sas@ucf.edu](mailto:sas@ucf.edu). You are welcome to talk to me at any point in the semester about concerns, but it is best if we talk at least one week prior to the need for any modification.

**Teach Act Statement:**

The materials for this course are only for the fair use of students enrolled in this course for purposes associated with this course and may not be retained or further disseminated. The instructor receives no royalty payments for any materials used in this course.

**Syllabus Subject to Change:**

I anticipate that I will follow the schedule outlined here, but I may make adjustments based on your interests and what decisions we make together in class. All changes will be clearly announced in person and online. Remaining in the course after reading this syllabus will signal that you accept the possibility of changes and responsibility for being aware of them.

**Course Calendar and Content will include:**

- Moral Literacy
- Human Subjects in Research
- Nonhuman Animals in Research
- Living Organisms
- Biodiversity and Conservation Science
- Nano and Emerging Technologies
- Synthetic Biology
- Big Data Biobanking
- Privacy, Genetics, and the Human Microbiome
- GMOs and the Environment
- Public Health Ethics
- Sustainability
- Ethical Leadership

- Geoengineering
- Drones
- Academic Freedom