

Sample Syllabi

This document contains sample syllabi from all the courses I have taught at UC Santa Barbara as well as a seminar I have designed but have not taught. In some cases, syllabi have been slightly modified or improved since I used them in my class. The first syllabus (for an introductory ethics course) appears in an unabridged form. The rest of the syllabi appear in abridged form in order to make perusing their relevant contents easier (full versions of all syllabi are available upon request). Each syllabus is designed for a quarter system (typically involving ten weeks of instruction with at least two and a half hours of lecture time and fifty minutes of discussion section time per week), but each syllabus can be adapted to a semester system.

1. Introduction to Ethics Syllabus (Unabridged)

Philosophy 4: Introduction to Ethics

University of California, Santa Barbara

[*QUARTER, YEAR*]

Instructor of Record

Daniel Story
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Office Hours: [*TIME*]
South Hall 5720

Teaching Assistants

[*NAME*]
[*EMAIL*]
Office Hours: [*TIME*]
[*LOCATION*]

Course Description

Broadly, ethics is the branch of philosophy concerned with answering questions about what sort of life is worth living, how we should treat ourselves and others, what actions or states of character are deserving of praise and blame, and so on. Our journey into this branch of philosophy will proceed in two stages. The first stage will be mostly theoretical; we will begin by examining three major traditions in ethical theory: consequentialism, deontology, and virtue ethics. This will prepare us for the second stage of the course, in which we will examine a series of relatively concrete ethical problems: the badness of death and the ethical status of euthanasia and non-human animals. By the end of the course you will have gained a deeper understanding of some of the major problems and approaches in contemporary ethics, and you will have greatly developed your ability to engage in ethical reasoning.

Course Materials

- Course Reader containing all readings (can be purchased at SB Printer or borrowed from the library)
- Gauchospace (supplemental material will occasionally be posted and announced in class)

Course Schedule

Note 1: Dates are subject to change. You must come to class to receive an up-to-date schedule.

Note 2: Optional readings will be discussed in lecture, but I will not assume that you have read them. Material from optional readings will show up on exams only if that material was covered in lecture.

Unit 1. Normative Theory (Weeks 1-6)

1.1 Introduction, Setting the Stage (Week 1)

“Should we eat the bodies of the dead or burn them? If you were a Greek, one answer would seem obviously correct; but if you were a Callatian, the opposite would seem equally certain.” – James Rachels

Required Readings:

- James Rachels, “The Challenge of Cultural Relativism”
- Martha Nussbaum, “Judging Other Cultures: The Case of Genital Mutilation”

1.2 Utilitarian Consequentialism (Weeks 2-3)

“The Creed which accepts as the foundation of morals, Utility, or the Greatest Happiness Principle, holds that actions are right in proportion as they tend to promote happiness, wrong as they tend to produce the reverse of happiness.” – John Stuart Mill

Required Readings

- John Stuart Mill, *Utilitarianism*, Chapters 1-2
- Peter Singer, “Famine, Affluence, and Morality”

Optional Reading:

- Mohist selection, “Condemning Music”

1.3 Kantian Deontology (Weeks 3-4)

“Now I say that the human being and in general every rational being exists as an end in itself, not merely as a means to be used by this or that will at its discretion; instead he must in all his actions, whether directed to himself or also to other rational beings, always be regarded at the same time as an end.” – Immanuel Kant

Required Readings:

- Immanuel Kant, Selections from *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*
- Onora O’Neill, “Kantian Approaches to Some Famine Problems”

Optional Reading:

- Christine Korsgaard, “Kant’s Formula of Universal Law”

1.4 Virtue Ethics (Weeks 5-6)

“...the virtue of man also will be the state of character which makes man good and which makes him do his own work well.” – Aristotle

Required Readings:

- Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* Books 1-2
- Rosalind Hursthouse, “Virtue Theory and Abortion” (Part 1)

Midterm Exam (Date) (Time)

Unit 2. Applied Ethics (Weeks 7-10)

2.1 The Badness of Death (Week 7)

“Accustom yourself to the belief that death is nothing to us. For all good and evil lie in sensation, whereas death is the absence of sensation.” – Epicurus

Required Readings:

- Epicurean Selections
- Thomas Nagel, “Death”

Optional Reading:

- Anthony L. Brueckner and John Martin Fischer, “Why is Death Bad?”

2.2 Euthanasia (Weeks 8-9)

“A few months with cancer had taught me that a tumor rarely invades a region smaller than an extended family.” – David Velleman

Required Readings:

- Philippa Foot, “Euthanasia”
- David Velleman, “A Right of Self-Termination?”

2.3 Animal Ethics (Week 10)

“So, what gives puppies a higher moral status than the animals we eat?” – Alastair Norcross

Required Reading:

- José Ortega y Gasset, Selections from *Meditations on Hunting*
- Alastair Norcross, “Puppies, Pigs and People: Eating Meat and Marginal Cases”

Final Exam (DATE) (TIME)

Grade Distribution

Section Participation: 10%

Gauchospace Quizzes: 15%

Midterm: 35% (Scheduled for [DATE, TIME], Returned on [DATE])

Final Exam: 40% (Scheduled for [DATE, TIME])

Assignment Details

- Your TA will inform you about how your section participation grade will be calculated on the first day of section.
- Starting week 2, Gauchospace quizzes will be published once a week on Gauchospace and will contain questions covering material from the required readings and lectures of the previous week. Gauchospace quizzes are designed to be study tools, and you are encouraged to use your book and your notes as well as to work with your classmates to complete them. Your lowest quiz grade will be dropped.
- You will be required to complete two written exams, which will contain short answer and short essay prompts on topics provided by the instructor relating to the material covered in the course. These exams are designed to test your comprehension and your ability to write clearly and succinctly. One week before each exam, you will be provided with a study guide that will contain a list of possible essay questions, a subset of which will appear on the exam. You are encouraged to discuss the exam study guide with your instructor or TA during section, office hours, and review sessions.

Email Correspondence

When sending emails to your instructor or TA, please write respectfully and clearly. You should expect a response from your instructor or TA within two business days. If you do not receive a response within that timeframe, please resend your original email.

Academic Integrity

According to the UCSB Office of Judicial Affairs, “All members of the UCSB community share the responsibility of upholding academic integrity at the University. Academic dishonesty is a serious act that erodes the University’s mission, cheapens the learning experience, and the value of one’s degree. It is expected that all UCSB students will support the ideal of academic integrity and that they will be responsible for the integrity of their work. Materials (written or otherwise) submitted to fulfill academic requirements must represent a student’s own efforts unless otherwise permitted by an instructor.” Students caught cheating on an assignment in any capacity will receive no credit for that assignment, and, depending on the severity of the case, risk automatically failing the course and expulsion from the school.

Accommodations

If you have a disability or other special circumstance for which you may need special accommodations in this course, contact me (Daniel) within the first two weeks of class and/or contact the UCSB Disabled Students Program (email: dsp.help@sa.ucsb.edu) so appropriate accommodations can be made.

Online Resources

- Gauchospace: <https://gauchospace.ucsb.edu/courses/>
- Campus Learning Assistant Services (for help with writing): <http://clas.sa.ucsb.edu/services/writing-esl-foreign-language>
- Disabled Students Program: <https://dsp.sa.ucsb.edu/>
- UCSB Health and Wellness: <http://wellness.sa.ucsb.edu/>
- Counseling and Psychological Services: <http://caps.sa.ucsb.edu/>

2. Critical Thinking Syllabus (Abridged)

Philosophy 3: Critical Thinking

Course Description

This course is an introduction to basic methods of critical thinking. Throughout the course, students will learn how to identify and construct different types of arguments, learn what makes an argument good or bad, formalize arguments in propositional logic, and classify and evaluate different types of inductive arguments. This class will equip students with the skills necessary to critically evaluate arguments in both academic and non-academic settings.

Course Materials

- *Concise Guide to Critical Thinking* by Lewis Vaughn (Oxford University Press), 1st Edition, (ISBN-10: 0190692898)
- [PDF Provided on Gauchospace] Chapter 7 of *Logic: Concise Edition* by Stan Baronett (Oxford University Press), 3rd Edition, (ISBN: 978-0-19-026620-2)
- Gauchospace

Course Schedule

Note: Dates are subject to change. You must come to class to receive an up-to-date schedule.

Unit 1. The Basics of Critical Thinking (Weeks 1-2)

1.1 The Basics of Critical Thinking: Definitions, Distinctions, and Obstacles (Week 1)

Required Reading:

- *Concise Guide to Critical Thinking*, Chapters 1-2

1.2 Distinguishing Deductive and Inductive Arguments (Week 2)

Required Reading:

- *Concise Guide to Critical Thinking*, Chapter 3

Unit 2. Deductive Reasoning: Basic Propositional Logic (Weeks 3-5)

2.1 Constructing and Translating Statements Using Propositional Logic (Weeks 3-4)

Required Reading:

- *Logic: Concise Edition* pp. 307-341 [PDF on Gauchospace]

2.2 Evaluating Statements and Deductive Arguments Using Truth Tables (Weeks 4-5)

Required Reading:

- *Logic: Concise Edition*, pp. 341-367 [PDF on Gauchospace]

Midterm Examination (DATE) (TIME)

Unit 3. Inductive Reasoning (Weeks 6-9)

3.1 Enumerative Induction (Week 6)

Required Reading:

- *Concise Guide to Critical Thinking*, Selections from Chapter 5, pp. 81-92

3.2 Analogical Induction (Weeks 6-7)

Required Reading:

- *Concise Guide to Critical Thinking*, Selections from Chapter 5, pp. 92-106

3.3 Reasoning About Causal Claims (Week 7-8)

Required Reading:

- *Concise Guide to Critical Thinking*, Chapter 7

3.4 Inference to the Best Explanation (Week 8-9)

Required Reading:

- *Concise Guide to Critical Thinking*, Chapters 8-9

3.5 Reasoning About Evidence, Testimony, and Experts (Week 9)

Required Reading:

- *Concise Guide to Critical Thinking*, Chapter 6

Unit 4. Informal Fallacies (Week 10)

4.1 Seven Common Fallacy Forms (Week 10)

Required Reading:

- *Concise Guide to Critical Thinking*, Chapter 10

Final Exam (DATE) (TIME)

Grade Distribution

Section Attendance: 10%

Gauchospace Quizzes: 15%

Midterm Exam: 35% (Scheduled for [DATE, TIME]; Returned on [DATE])

Final Exam: 40% (Scheduled for [DATE, TIME])

Assignment Details

- Starting week 2, attendance will be taken every day in section. You are permitted to miss one day of section, but after that your attendance grade will drop 20% for each day you are absent.
- Quizzes will periodically be announced in class and published on Gauchospace. Quizzes will contain questions covering recent material from the required readings and lectures. Gauchospace quizzes are designed to be study tools, and you are encouraged to use your book and your notes as well as to work with your classmates to complete them.

- You will be required to complete two exams. On exams, you will be required to answer both multiple choice and short-answer style questions. Some questions will be conceptual (e.g. “Define validity”) and some questions will involve the application of concepts learned in class (e.g. “Determine whether the following argument is valid”). Students are expected to bring their own blue books to class on exam days. One week before each exam, you will be provided with a study guide that will contain a list of the topics that will appear on the exam. You are encouraged to discuss the exam study guide with your instructor or TA during section, office hours, and review sessions.

3. Epistemology Syllabus (Abridged)

Philosophy 100B: Epistemology

Course Description

This course is an advanced introduction to core issues in contemporary epistemology. The course is divided into three sections. The first section concerns the attempt to define knowledge, beginning with a classic challenge which purports to show that knowledge must be more than just true, justified belief. The second section concerns the challenge of global skepticism, arguments for which purport to prove that we cannot know anything about the external world. The third section concerns the nature and structure of justification. In essence, it deals with the following question: assuming that many of our beliefs are justified, what makes them that way? By the end of the course, students will have an understanding of many of the problems and approaches that characterize contemporary philosophical thought on this subject.

Course Materials

- Course Reader containing all readings (can be purchased at SB Printer or borrowed from the library)
- Gauchospace (supplemental material will occasionally be posted and announced in class)

Course Schedule

Note: Dates are subject to change. You must come to class to receive an up-to-date schedule.

Unit 1. The Analysis of Knowledge (Weeks 1-3)

Required Readings:

- Gettier, “Is Justified True Belief Knowledge?” (1963)
- Clark, “Knowledge and Grounds: A Comment on Mr. Gettier’s Paper” (1963)
- Goldman, “A Causal Theory of Knowing” (1967)
- Zagzebski, “The Inescapability of Gettier Problems” (1994)

Unit 2. Global Skepticism (Weeks 4-7)

Required Readings:

- Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy* I (1641)
- Moore, Selection from “Proof of an External World” (1939)
- Nozick, “Knowledge and Skepticism” (1981)
- Stine, “Skepticism, Relevant Alternatives, and Deductive Closure” (1976)
- Pryor, “The Skeptic and the Dogmatist” (2000)

Unit 3. The Nature and Structure of Justification (Weeks 8-10)

Required Readings:

- Aristotle, *Posterior Analytics* I.3 (4th Century BCE)

- Chisholm, “The Myth of the Given” (1964)
- Goldman, “What is Justified Belief?” (1979)
- Bonjour, “The Coherence Theory of Empirical Knowledge” (1976)
- Klein, ‘Human Knowledge and the Infinite Regress of Reasons’ (1999)

Grade Distribution

Section Attendance: 10%

Paper 1: 20% (Assigned Week 3, Due Week 4, Returned Week 6)

Paper 2: 30% (Assigned Week 7, Due Week 8, Returned Week 10)

Paper 3: 40% (Assigned Week 10, Due Week 11 (Online))

Assignment Details

- Starting week 2, attendance will be taken every day in section. You are permitted to miss one day of section, but after that your attendance grade will drop 20% for each day you are absent.
- Students will be required to write three short papers on a topic provided by the instructor. These assignments are designed to test comprehension and writing skills. Students will have one full week to write the paper after it has been assigned. During that time, students are welcome to discuss their writing with either the TA or instructor. If you would like feedback on a draft, you should make an appointment with one of your instructors for this purpose. At least one section will be dedicated to the topic of how to write a philosophy paper.

4.4 Metaphysics Syllabus (Abridged)

Philosophy 100E: Metaphysics

Course Description

This course is an advanced introduction to metaphysics. Roughly, metaphysics is a branch of philosophy concerned with studying aspects of reality that lie outside the purview of science. The course will be divided into three sections. In the first section, we will be concerned with the ontological status of things that seem to exist without having any material reality, like numbers, properties, and fictional characters. In the second section, we will be concerned with philosophical questions about time and the possibility of time travel. In the third section, we will be concerned with the nature and persistence conditions of persons. By studying these three topics, students will gain a general understanding of the discipline of metaphysics as it exists today.

Course Materials

- Course Reader containing all readings (can be purchased at SB Printer or borrowed from the library)
- Gauchospace (supplemental material will occasionally be posted and announced in class)

Course Schedule

Note: Dates are subject to change. You must come to class to receive an up-to-date schedule.

Unit 1. Non-Material Objects (Weeks 1-3)

Required Readings:

- Lewis & Lewis, “Holes” (1969)
- Russell, “The World of Universals” (1912)
- Quine, “On What There Is” (1948)
- Thomasson, “If We Postulated Fictional Objects, What Would They Be?” (1999)

Unit 2. Time (Weeks 4-7)

Required Readings:

- McTaggart, “Time” (1927)
- Prior, “The Notion of the Present” (1970)
- Smart, “The Space-Time World” (1963)
- Lewis, “The Paradoxes of Time Travel” (1976)

Unit 3. Persons and Personal Identity (Weeks 8-10)

Required Readings:

- Parfit, “Personal Identity” (1971)
- Lewis, “Survival and Identity” (1976)
- Baker, “The Ontological Status of Persons” (2002)
- Olson, “An Argument for Animalism” (2003)
- Bonus: Unger, “I Do Not Exist”

Grade Distribution

Section Attendance: 10%

Paper 1: 20% (Assigned Week 3, Due Week 4, Returned Week 6)

Paper 2: 30% (Assigned Week 7, Due Week 8, Returned Week 10)

Paper 3: 40% (Assigned Week 10, Due Week 11 (Online))

Assignment Details

- Starting week 2, attendance will be taken every day in section. You are permitted to miss one day of section, but after that your attendance grade will drop 20% for each day you are absent.
- Students will be required to write three short papers on a topic provided by the instructor. These assignments are designed to test comprehension and writing skills. Students will have one full week to write the paper after it has been assigned. During that time, students are welcome to discuss their writing with either the TA or instructor. If you would like feedback on a draft, you should make an appointment with one of your instructors for this purpose. At least one section will be dedicated to the topic of how to write a philosophy paper.

4.5 Philosophy of Mind Syllabus (Abridged)

Philosophy 100D: Philosophy of Mind

Course Description

This course is an advanced introduction to philosophical thought about the mind. Throughout the course we will consider questions relating to the nature of mental states, mental content, consciousness, and more. By the end of the course, students will have a historically-informed understanding of many of the major problems and approaches that characterize contemporary philosophical thought on this subject.

Course Materials

- *Philosophy of Mind: A Beginner's Guide*, Ian Ravenscroft, Oxford UP
- Gauchospace (supplementary papers will be posted online)

Course Schedule

Note: Dates are subject to change. You must come to class to receive an up-to-date schedule.

Unit 1. The Nature of Mental States (Weeks 1-6)

1.1 Dualism (Week 1)

Required Reading:

- Ravenscroft, *Philosophy of Mind: A Beginner's Guide*, Chapter 1
- Robinson, "Dualism," Section 3 (Mind-Body Interactions)

1.2 Behaviorism (Week 2)

Required Reading:

- Ravenscroft, *Philosophy of Mind: A Beginner's Guide*, Chapter 2
- Ryle, *The Concept of Mind*, Chapter 1 (Descartes' Myth)
- Putnam, "Brains and Behavior"

1.3 Type-Identity Theory (Week 3)

Required Reading:

- Ravenscroft, *Philosophy of Mind: A Beginner's Guide*, Chapter 3
- Kean, "Phineas Gage, Neuroscience's Most Famous Patient"
- Block & Fodor, "What Psychological States are Not" pp. 159-164

1.4 Functionalism (Week 4)

Required Reading:

- Ravenscroft, *Philosophy of Mind: A Beginner's Guide*, Chapter 4 and pp. 81-86

- Putnam, “The Nature of Mental States”
- Block & Fodor, “What Psychological States are Not” pp. 164-181

1.5 Eliminativism and Fictionalism (Week 5)

Required Reading:

- Ravenscroft, *Philosophy of Mind: A Beginner’s Guide*, Chapter 5

Unit 2. Syntax and Semantics (Weeks 7-8)

3.1 The Computational Theory of Mind (Week 7)

Required Reading:

- Ravenscroft, *Philosophy of Mind: A Beginner’s Guide*, Chapter 6
- Searle, “Is the Brain’s Mind a Computer Program?”

3.2 Whence Mental Content? (Week 8)

Required Reading:

- Ravenscroft, *Philosophy of Mind: A Beginner’s Guide*, Chapter 9

Unit 3. Consciousness and Qualia (Weeks 9-10)

Required Reading:

- Ravenscroft, *Philosophy of Mind: A Beginner’s Guide*, Chapters 11-12
- Nagel, “What Is It Like to Be a Bat?”
- Jackson, “What Mary Didn’t Know”

Final Exam (DATE) (TIME)

Grade Distribution

Section Attendance: 10%

Paper 1: 40% (Assigned Week 5, Due Week 7, Returned Week 9)

Paper 2: 50% (Assigned Week 9, Due Week 11 (Online))

Assignment Details

- Starting week 2, attendance will be taken every day in section. You are permitted to miss one day of section, but after that your attendance grade will drop 20% for each day you are absent.
- Students will be required to write two papers on a topic provided by the instructor. These assignments are designed to test comprehension and writing skills. Students will have two full weeks to write the papers after they have been assigned. During that time, students are welcome to discuss their writing with either the TA or instructor. If you would like feedback on a draft, you should make an appointment with one of your instructors for this purpose. At least one section will be dedicated to the topic of how to write a philosophy paper.

4.5 Seminar on Social Action and Responsibility (Abridged)

Note: Unlike the other syllabi in this dossier, this syllabus has not been used. The course could function either as a graduate seminar or an advanced undergraduate seminar.

Philosophy 296: Seminar on Social Action and Responsibility

Course Description

This course is an advanced investigation into the nature of joint and corporate action as well as the related moral phenomena of shared and collective responsibility. Roughly, joint action occurs whenever multiple people do something together, and collective action occurs whenever a group agent does something. After briefly covering some background introductory material on basic concepts in action theory, we will begin the course by surveying leading philosophical accounts of joint action. Next, we will examine the phenomenon of corporate action, and we will ask ourselves whether there is any fundamental difference between corporate and joint action. Following these investigations, we will shift our focus to shared and collective responsibility. Roughly, shared responsibility occurs whenever an individual is responsible for what another individual or group does, and collective responsibility occurs whenever a collective *as such* is responsible for something. We will examine several arguments for the existence of these phenomena. Along the way, we will have occasion to think about different ways of understanding these phenomena and their relation. We will also reflect on their connection to joint and corporate action. At the end of the seminar, participants will have a grasp on the major issues and debates that animate the literature on these topics.

Course Materials

- Gauchospace (PDFs of all readings will be posted online)

Course Schedule

Note: Dates are subject to change. You must come to class to receive an up-to-date schedule.

Unit 1. Setting the Stage, or A Crash Course in Action Theory (Week 1)

Required Reading:

- Wilson & Shpall, “Action” (2012)
- Setiya, “Intention” (2018)

Unit 2. Social Action (Weeks 2-6)

2.1 Joint Actions and Shared Intentions (Weeks 2-4)

Required Reading:

- Searle, “Collective Intentions and Actions” (1990)
- Gilbert, “Walking Together: A Paradigmatic Social Phenomenon” (1990)
- Bratman, “Shared Intention” (1993)
- Velleman, “How To Share An Intention” (1997)

- Gold & Sugden, “Collective Intentions and Team Agency” (2007)

2.2 Corporate Action (Weeks 5-6)

Required Reading:

- French, “The Corporation as a Moral Person” (1979)
- List & Pettit, *Group Agents: The Possibility, Design, and Status of Corporate Agents* (2013), Introduction and Chapters 1-3
- Rovane, “Is group agency a social phenomenon?” (2017)

Unit 3. Moral Responsibility for Social Action (Weeks 7-10)

3.1 Shared Responsibility (Weeks 7-8)

Required Reading:

- May, *Sharing Responsibility* (1992), Chapter 2
- Kutz, *Complicity: Ethics and Law for a Collective Age* (2000), Chapter 5
- Sadler, “Shared Intentions and Shared Responsibility” (2006)

3.2 Collective Responsibility (Weeks 9-10)

Required Reading:

- Feinberg, “Collective Responsibility” (1968)
- Thompson, “Collective Responsibility for Historic Injustice” (2006)
- Isaacs, *Moral Responsibility in Collective Contexts* (2011), Chapters 1-2, 4
- List & Pettit, *Group Agents: The Possibility, Design, and Status of Corporate Agents* (2013), Chapter 7

Grade Distribution

Seminar Participation: 20%

Argumentative Essay Draft (Due Week 8): 10%

Argumentative Essay (Due Week 11): 70%

Assignment Details

- Each student will be required to lead (or, if the class size is large, jointly lead) the seminar’s discussion of one of the readings on the syllabus. Discussion leaders are expected to prepare a handout or other visual aid for their colleagues. Each student’s participation grade is dependent on (i) the student’s completion of this task and (ii) the student’s seminar attendance record.
- Each student will be required to write an argumentative essay on a topic covered in the course. Students may choose their topic, but topics must be approved by Daniel *before* writing begins. Sometime before the end of week 8, each student must submit a first draft (between 1000-3000 words) of their essay. Drafts will be returned with comments one week after submission, and each student will receive full credit for their draft so long as their draft reflects a good faith effort. Final drafts of essays are due at the end of week 11. Essays should be no more than twenty pages long. Students may want to begin looking for a topic early and read ahead as necessary.