

Professional Ethics

PHIL 320-U820T (Online)
The University of South Dakota

Instructor: Dale L. Clark, Ph.D.

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Office Hours: Skype conversations
by appointment only

D2L Course Website: d2l.sdbor.edu

CDE Online Student Handbook
available [here](#).

“All of us have to work. But only a few of us will become professionals. To choose to enter a profession is to take on a distinct and important set of new responsibilities. A professional will never be able to separate his or her work life from her or her personal, private life. Your personality will be crucial to your success as a professional, and your professional life will influence and change how you interact with your friends and family and even your self-definition. As a consequence of your professional training and, eventually, your career as a professional, you will look at yourself in the mirror a bit (or maybe a lot) differently. Are you ready for it?”

Martin, Vaught, & Solomon
Ethics Across the Professions

Course Description

Grounded in an investigation of the values of human dignity, autonomy, and integrity, this course reviews major ethical theories in order to apply them to the critical study of moral decision making in contexts of professional responsibility.

Course Objectives

1. Acquire general foundational knowledge of moral concepts and ethical theories relevant to ethics in the professions.
 - a. Method of assessment: Discussion Forum Posts, Basic Ethical Systems Exam, Reading Essays
2. Develop critical reasoning skills needed to address emergent issues, solve complex problems, and question dominant thought.
 - a. Method of assessment: Reading Essays, Discussion Forum Posts, Final Essay
3. Demonstrate a personal grasp of how professional values and actions are integrated in practice.
 - a. Method of assessment: Discussion Forum Posts, Midterm Interview, Final Essay

Required Course Texts

- [Ethics Across the Professions: A Reader for Professional Ethics](#), edited by Clancy Martin, Wayne Vaught, and Robert C. Solomon (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012). ISBN: 9780195326680.
- Other required readings may be found via the Internet or the USD Library databases.

Technology Access

- **You must have daily access to a computer and to the internet.** If your home computer or laptop is not working or you don't have access to one for a few days, visit your local public library or use a friend's computer. If you are in the Vermillion area, go to one of the many computer labs on the USD campus.

- **You must be able to view Google Docs/Slides and PDF documents.** Most course material will be distributed in Google Docs format, essentially a complex web page that updated browser software should be able to display. Some course material may be distributed in PDF format, which will require you to download Adobe Acrobat or similar software. You can download Acrobat free of charge at <http://get.adobe.com/reader>. Mac users can use Preview, which is standard software on all Macs. Some course content may be distributed in audio or video form, but audio/visual content will be supplemental in nature.
- **You must be able to submit written work to Desire2Learn Dropboxes.** These Dropboxes will be the medium through which I evaluate your written work. D2L Dropboxes will accept numerous file formats, such as Microsoft Word (.doc, .docx), Adobe PDF (.pdf), OpenDocument format (.odt) and plain text. Please note: D2L dropboxes do not accept documents in Apple iWork format (e.g., files created in Pages, Numbers, and Keynote), so if you are an iWork user, you must export your document in a format that D2L can read. Also note that you do not need to have purchased Microsoft Office to take this course. Numerous other free writing programs are available to you, including:
 - Google Drive (free through USD and from Google; <http://drive.google.com>)
 - Microsoft OneDrive (free through Microsoft; <http://onedrive.live.com>)
 - LibreOffice (free and open-source; <http://www.libreoffice.org>)
- **You must have an active USD e-mail account and a user name and password for USD's Desire2Learn system.** You should be familiar with using your USD e-mail account and basic functions in Desire2Learn (such as sending e-mails to one or more users, viewing your grades in the D2L gradebook, and posting or uploading files) or familiarize yourself with them as soon as possible.

Contacting the Instructor

E-Mail. Contact me by e-mail at Dale.Clark@usd.edu or within the D2L course by using D2L's email function. Please also read the E-Mail Etiquette section of this syllabus (below). My general policy is that I will respond to all e-mail inquiries within 24 hours on weekdays (M-F) and 48 hours on weekends (Sat. and Sun.). If your e-mail arrives late in the day (e.g., after 8:00 or 9:00 PM Central Time), then it may not receive a response until the next day. There may be exceptions to the above from time to time, but I will do my best to let you know when I need to make an exception.

Office Hours. As this is an online course, meetings with students will be done via videoconferencing software by appointment. [Skype](#) will be the default choice, but other software may be used as well, depending on the circumstances. Should you wish to speak with me directly instead of via email, you may email me at Dale.Clark@usd.edu to begin setting up a Skype conversation.

Composition of the Course Grade

The grading system for this course assigns different weights to the assignments. Thus, while each assignment will be worth 100 points, it is important to note that some assignments will count for more at the end of the semester than others. At the end of the semester, final grades will be rounded to the nearest whole percent (e.g., an 89.5% would be rounded up to an A, but an 89.49% would not be rounded up). Your final grade for the course will be composed like this:

Weighted Grade Composition

15% = Discussion Forum Posts and Syllabus Quiz
15% = Basic Ethical Systems Exam
20% = 4 Reading Essays
20% = Midterm Interview
5% = Abstract for Final Paper
25% = Final Paper

Grade Scale

100% - 90% = A
89% - 80% = B
79% - 70% = C
69% - 60% = D
59% and below = F

During the course, a running calculation of your final course grade will be available to you via the D2L Gradebook. This running calculation will drop all ungraded assignments from the calculation, thus showing you only how you are doing up to that point in the course. If you wish to estimate what grades you would need on remaining assignments to earn a certain grade for the semester, you may follow the instructions of any of the numerous available online guides and weighted grade calculators. A WikiHow guide available [here](#) gives general explanations about how to calculate weighted averages, and a recommended weighted grade calculator is [here](#).

Discussion Forum Posts and Syllabus Quiz. Here's a secret to success in a philosophy course: you should think of doing philosophy as a skill which requires regular and frequent practice. You can practice the skill of doing philosophy by being an active participant in the course. In an online course, this participation shall take the form of substantive contributions to discussions on selected topics in a discussion forum on our Desire2Learn course website. Further details on participation and discussion forum posts will be forthcoming in separate documents. Assessment for the discussion forum posts will be done within 2 days according to [these guidelines](#). At the beginning of the semester, a short multiple-choice quiz based on this syllabus will be assigned. The syllabus quiz will be graded automatically by D2L and can be taken as many times as necessary to receive a 100%.

Basic Ethical Systems Exam. This will be a quiz administered through D2L's quiz functionality that is meant to ensure that you have a basic understanding of the ethical systems most prominent in Western moral philosophy: utilitarianism, Kantian deontology, and virtue ethics. This exam will consist primarily of multiple-choice questions, but may have questions in other formats (such as true/false, matching, and so on). Feedback & assessment will be provided automatically by D2L upon completion of the assignment.

Reading Essays. You will produce four of these essays over the course of the semester. These essays will be 500-700 words in length, and they will concern some argument or issue in the assigned reading. You should devote the first half of the essay to reconstruction and analysis of the argument or issue that is your focus and the second half to your critical comment. I will provide sample topics via an assignment sheet for reading essays 1 and 2, but you will need to select the subject of reading essays 3 and 4 on your own (as such, there will be no assignment sheets for 3 and 4). As you can see, these are straightforward philosophy essays with a specific analytical structure. The rationale for this is to promote clear and rigorous thinking and writing. The first two essays will come due prior to the middle of the term; the final two essays will come due after midterm. For more on Reading Essays, go [here](#).

Midterm Interview. As the midterm project of the course, you will be asked to request an interview with a professional (e.g., health care provider, lawyer, college professor [excluding the instructor of this course], etc.) and ask them a series of questions with an emphasis on proper

protocol and ethical issues in their professional life. In the course of the interview, you will be required to respect confidentiality and the professional policies that your interviewee operates under. The purpose of this assignment is to demonstrate your ability to prepare for an interview with a professional, think on your feet during an interview, and use your questions to illustrate how philosophical principles inform the work of a professional.

Abstract/Bibliography for Final Paper. An abstract is a short 150-200 word summary of your paper's thesis and the specific steps you will take to defend your thesis. In scholarly essays, an abstract is often constructed from the essay's introduction. Completing an abstract successfully requires you to have done research on a topic of philosophical importance and have a reasonably settled view about what your position in the paper will be and the steps you will take to defend that position. When you submit this abstract, I will give you feedback in return about the prospects for your Final Paper and advice about how to go about making your argument as strong as possible.

Final Paper. This will be a 1500-2000 word argumentative essay that examines an issue in professional life that is of interest to you and defends a position about that issue. You will be asked to provide a clear thesis (a statement of your position) and a philosophical argument in defense of that thesis. In the course of your argument, I encourage you to provide things like empirical evidence for your thesis and reflections on case studies, real-world examples, and thought experiments that support your thesis. You will also be asked to anticipate and deal with at least one objection to your thesis.

Attendance. Not graded, but mandatory. Attendance in this online course is defined as logging into the course regularly and submitting the coursework scheduled for that week. D2L permits instructors to view student activity within the course, such as when you last logged in and what parts of the course you visited. There will typically be an assignment due each week. A student who fails to log in regularly and submit the coursework scheduled for a week during the assigned window of time will count as absent.

Instructor-Initiated Drops. It is within my discretion to drop you from the course for chronic non-attendance. If you do not regularly attend, you will be notified that you are violating course requirements. If, after such a warning, you do not resume attending class, then you may find yourself involuntarily dropped from the course. If you are having trouble attending, you must provide documentation of a legitimate reason for being absent (for example, a doctor's note). Legitimate reasons for being absent include, but are not limited to, illnesses and family emergencies. I reserve the right to determine if your reason for being absent is legitimate. Please do let me know if you will need to be absent for a legitimate reason, preferably in advance of any coursework deadlines.

Citation Policy for Written Coursework

In this course, as in any course at the university level, it is imperative that you credit your sources for their ideas and work that you are relying upon for your own writing. Hence, I expect you to cite your sources in your work. I do not, however, require the use of any particular citation style. You may use any standard scholarly citation style, so long as you use it correctly and consistently. [MLA style](#), [APA style](#), and [Chicago style](#) are all acceptable. Use whichever style you are most comfortable with.

Following the guidelines of Purdue University's well-known and respected [Online Writing Lab](#), I require you to cite your sources whenever you are reproducing any words, ideas, or productions that you did not originally create. Here are some specific examples of when you should cite your source:

- when you are using words or ideas presented in any published medium (book, article, newspaper, website, radio, advertisement, etc.)
- when you are using information you gain through an interview
- when you reproduce exact words or phrases as a quote in your paper
- when you reproduce any diagrams, illustrations, charts, graphs, etc.
- when you reuse or repost any electronically available media, such as pictures or podcasts
- whenever you make a specific or controversial empirical claim

That last bullet point is important: empirical claims require empirical evidence. Here are some examples of empirical claims. When you make a claim like these in your paper, you must cite your sources according to the citation style you are using:

- "Letting gay couples adopt children harms those children."
- "It is more expensive to execute murderers than it is to put them in prison for life."
- "Illegal drug abuse is generally more harmful than alcohol abuse."

You do not need to cite your sources when you are describing your own thesis, arguments, conclusions, or criticisms, or when you are referring to common knowledge or generally-accepted facts. For more on when you need to cite your sources, visit [the Purdue Online Writing Lab's page](#) dedicated to this purpose.

Just as important as how you cite your sources is which sources you cite. Trustworthy and reliable sources of information can be difficult to find in an age where anyone can publish anything they want on the Internet. Generally, a source is a reliable one if:

- it is published in a peer-reviewed scholarly journal
- it is published by an academic publishing organization or academic source
- it is published by a non-profit or non-partisan source

It is also permissible to cite information published by partisan or advocacy groups, so long as that information is examined for reliability and treated with appropriate caution. For more information on how to evaluate a source as reliable for research purposes, visit the Purdue Online Writing Lab's pages devoted to this topic: [here](#), [here](#), [here](#), and [here](#).

Failure to cite your sources properly in your written work is, at minimum, an unprofessional practice and can be penalized with a grade reduction. In certain egregious cases, it may also constitute a violation of the university's academic integrity policy, and shall be dealt with accordingly.

The Grading Process and Turnaround Time on Graded Assignments

In general, I shall attempt to evaluate all written work within one week of the due date. There

may be exceptions to this policy; if there are, I shall endeavor to let students know about them.

All written coursework will be submitted through Desire2Learn Dropboxes and checked by TurnItIn for originality and academic honesty. I will not accept Reading Essays submitted via email or given to me on physical paper.

Here is the sort of feedback that you can generally expect on your papers. In D2L, I will use a rubric that provides feedback on different aspects of your work, such as the clarity of your thesis and the strength of your argument. In addition to the score based on the rubric, I may also provide you with a short general comment on your work or indications of an error at a specific place in your paper. Rubrics, however, shall constitute the bulk of the feedback you will receive. **Should you desire more feedback than what I will standardly provide**, I am happy to offer you additional individualized line-by-line feedback upon request. Please let me know, via e-mail, if you would like me to comment further on your written work.

The gradebook for the course will reside on our Desire2Learn course website. You may access this gradebook at any time to see how you are doing in the course. Extraneous factors have no bearing on the determination of grades; please see the section of this syllabus entitled “Fair Evaluation” for more on extraneous factors.

Late Coursework

All assignments will be due on the dates listed in the course schedule unless a change is announced. Coursework that you submit up to 1 week after a deadline has passed will receive a lateness penalty of 10%. Coursework submitted more than 1 week late will only be accepted at my discretion; in such a case, a lateness penalty larger than the 10% standard may be assigned. I will be more flexible in excusing late work if you make arrangements with me ahead of the due date.

In general, you will be allowed extra time to submit an assignment without penalty only in situations where you are prevented from doing so for reasons beyond your control. I reserve the right to request verification of your need for extra time to submit an assignment. In such cases, you will not be allowed extra time until I receive the aforementioned verification.

Technical problems that affect only you, or lack of access to a personal or home computer, are not acceptable excuses for missing assignment deadlines. In taking any course, students have a responsibility to get the work in on time (barring unexpected illness, catastrophe, etc.). I may make exceptions to this rule in the event of large-scale technical problems, such as unexpected D2L downtime.

In Desire2Learn, you will see that assignments may have different “Due” and “End” dates. Here’s an explanation:

- **The Due Date** is the day & time at which the assignment is due. Please submit your coursework by this date.
- **The End Date** is the day & time at which the assignment will be closed for submissions. The End Date for any given assignment is 1 week after the Due Date, to allow for submission of late coursework. Late submissions will be assessed a 10% penalty. Work submitted after the End Date will only be accepted at the instructor’s discretion and may

receive a larger-than-standard lateness penalty.

Etiquette and Respect for Others

It is a part of life that we will come across opinions and views with which we disagree. This is especially true in a moral philosophy class. That is not a bad thing, because you can learn much from people you disagree with. In our course, we will discuss controversial issues that you and others may have strong opinions about. I ask you to listen respectfully and attempt to understand opposing views even if you strongly disagree. You are not required to accept someone else's view; however, you should not: (1) reject any other view without due consideration or (2) demonize or disrespect someone who holds a differing position from you.

None of this means that we cannot disagree or argue for different positions on a topic, of course. But it does mean that each participant in the course - and this includes both the instructor and other students! - has both the right to be heard and treated with respect and the responsibility to treat others the same way. This is especially important in an online environment, where our primary form of interaction is through writing, and where there is no possibility of indicating through gestures or facial expression that something was written in jest or that the writer's intended message was different from the one he or she actually sent.

In order to create a comfortable learning environment, it is a requirement of the course that all students follow certain ground rules in our interactions via e-mail and online discussion posts:

1. All participants in an online discussion should recognize that they are free to have an opinion, but that others are equally free to dispute or attempt to rebut it. This is especially important in a philosophy class that focuses, among other things, on argumentative strategies and controversial ethical issues.
2. All participants must be open to considering counterarguments and evidence that may count against their own position or opinion. This includes being open to entertaining seriously positions put forth by a devil's advocate (i.e., a person who proposes a position that he or she does not really hold merely for the sake of argument). It also includes being open to the possibility that your own position is in need of revision.
3. Be careful with jokes, sarcasm, or subtle nuances of meaning that may escape readers who do not know you and who cannot see your face or body language. It is better to err on the side of politeness when composing online communications. Similarly, please resist the temptation to read unfriendly intentions into posts made by others. Unless there is good reason to assume that something was meant directly as a personal attack, it is better to assume that the author of a discussion post or e-mail simply made a mistake in how she or he chose to phrase their message.

E-mail Etiquette. When writing an e-mail to the instructor or fellow students, please follow these rules of basic courtesy:

- Always include a subject line that relates to the question or concern that you have.
- Always include a salutation, such as: "Dear group members," "Greetings, fellow course participants," "Hello, Professor/Dr. Clark," etc.
 - Some salutations are impolite and inappropriate. For example, opening an e-mail to the instructor with "Hey Clark," "You there!" or "Sup Professor," is rude. Remember that our online course is a professional environment. Think of it as training grounds

for relationships with your future employer. You wouldn't greet your future employer in an e-mail with the phrase "Yo dawg!", would you? It's not appropriate in this class either.

- Always sign your e-mail, for instance with closing phrases such as "Thanks," "Best wishes," "Sincerely," "Kind regards," etc.
- To minimize chances of being misunderstood, write in full sentences and avoid colloquialisms or language you would use when texting a friend or participating in an online chat.
- Read over your e-mail draft or use spellcheck before sending it off. Also, check to make sure that you have actually attached the file you meant to send.
- Since errors in e-mail usage do occur (e.g. you accidentally send an e-mail intended for one specific person to a whole group of people), never send anything confidential, personal, or in some way controversial in an e-mail if you are not prepared to accept the consequences of the message reaching people other than the intended addressee.

Academic Integrity

The College of Arts and Sciences considers plagiarism, cheating, and other forms of academic dishonesty inimical to the objectives of higher education. The College supports the imposition of penalties on students who engage in academic dishonesty, as defined in the "Conduct" section of the University of South Dakota Student Handbook. No credit can be given for a dishonest assignment. A student found to have engaged in any form of academic dishonesty may, at the discretion of the instructor, be:

- Given a zero for that assignment.
- Allowed to rewrite and resubmit the assignment for credit.
- Assigned a reduced grade for the course.
- Dropped from the course.
- Failed in the course.

Students who have engaged in academic dishonesty may be referred to the USD Office of Rights and Responsibilities for violation of the Student Code of Conduct.

To be clear on my discretion as an instructor of an ethics course: I will not tolerate any form of plagiarizing or cheating. "Plagiarism" means the intentional unacknowledged use or incorporation of any other person's work in, or as a basis for, one's own work offered for academic consideration or credit for public presentation. Plagiarism includes, but is not limited to, representing as one's own, without attribution, any individual's words, phrasing, ideas, sequence of ideas, information or any other mode or content of expression."

If you are in doubt as to whether what you are doing is cheating, **DO NOT DO IT.**

Anyone that is caught cheating, will fail the course.

Fair Evaluation

Each student is entitled to a fair grade in each course in which he or she is enrolled. It is the right

and the responsibility of an instructor to establish criteria for evaluation for each course which he or she teaches, and to determine the degree to which an individual student has fulfilled the standards set for the course. Students should be apprised that extraneous factors, such as eligibility for sorority or fraternity membership, for scholarship or financial aid awards, for athletics, for timely graduation, or for admission to graduate or professional schools, have no bearing on the determination of grades. The quality of the student's overall performance with respect to standards for evaluation will be the only basis for judgment.

Resolving Complaints about Grades

The first step in resolving a complaint about grades is ordinarily for the student to attempt to resolve the problem directly with the course instructor. If that attempt is unsuccessful, the student may bring the matter to the Department Chair, who will assist the instructor and the student in reaching a resolution. Grade appeals not resolved with the assistance of the Department Chair may be directed to the Office of the Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences (for undergraduates) or to the Dean of the Graduate School (for graduate students), provided that the grading decision at issue would affect the student's final course grade. The student initiating the grade appeal should be prepared to show that the grade was decided unfairly. According to South Dakota Board of Regents Policy 2:9, any academic appeal must be initiated within thirty calendar days from the date that the student received notification of the grade, unless the grade is assigned within fifteen calendar days of the end of the term. In that case, any appeal must be initiated within fifteen calendar days after the start of the next term (fall, spring, or summer).

Freedom in Learning

Under Board of Regents and University policy student academic performance may be evaluated solely on an academic basis, not on opinions or conduct in matters unrelated to academic standards. Students should be free to take reasoned exception to the data or views offered in any course of study and to reserve judgment about matters of opinion, but they are responsible for learning the content of any course of study for which they are enrolled. Students who believe that an academic evaluation reflects prejudiced or capricious consideration of student opinions or conduct unrelated to academic standards should contact Dr. Kurt Hackemer, Chair of the Department of History, to initiate a review of the evaluation.

Disability Accommodation

Any student who feels s/he may need academic accommodations or access accommodations based on the impact of a documented disability should contact and register with Disability Services during the first week of class. Disability Services is the official office to assist students through the process of disability verification and coordination of appropriate and reasonable accommodations. Students currently registered with Disability Services must obtain a new accommodation memo each semester.

Ernetta L. Fox, Director
Disability Services, Room 119 Service Center
(605) 677-6389
Web Site: www.usd.edu/ds
E-mail: dservices@usd.edu

Information for Veterans

If you are a student veteran of, or on active duty with, the United States Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, Coast Guard, Reserves, or National Guard, and are seeking assistance on how to succeed in a philosophy class, please examine [this document](#). It may answer your questions or connect you to people and resources at the University of South Dakota that will be able to answer your questions.

Assessment Disclaimer

Any written work submitted for this course may be used for purposes of program review and/or faculty development.

Diversity and Inclusive Excellence

The University of South Dakota strives to foster a globally inclusive learning environment where opportunities are provided for diversity to be recognized and respected.

