



CU Succeed
University of Colorado **Denver**

PHIL 1020-01: Right, Wrong, and the Difference: Introduction to Ethics

CRN: 41625

**Department of Philosophy
University of Colorado Denver
Course syllabus
Spring Semester, 2026**

Instructor name: Dr. Roger K. Green

Instructor phone: Please email and wait 24 hours for a response during weekdays. I take weekends off)

Instructor email: Roger.Green@ucdenver.edu

Class meeting days: M, TR

Class meeting hours: Black Schedule, 10:00am-11:35am

Class location: Denver School of the Arts

Office hours: Online by appointment

No prerequisites

3 credits

Required Texts and Materials

Texts and the syllabus are available at www.ccctheory.org. Click on Intro to Ethics in the top menu. All content is available online for free, but students are welcome to purchase the texts and bring hard copies to class.

You will need regular access to the internet and our Online Learning Platform (Canvas) to submit work and see your grades.

You will need one blank book / journal for your Commonplace Book. You are expected to bring it to class daily for free writes and notes.

University course catalog description

Introductory course in philosophy that focuses on some of the central questions of philosophy, including theories of reality and the nature of knowledge and its limits. The knowledge of these areas is essential to the student for informed participation in the resolution of contemporary problems in today's society. Max hours: 3 Credits. GT: Course is approved by the Colorado

Dept. of Higher Education for statewide guaranteed transfer (GT-AH3).

Guaranteed Transfer Information: “GT Pathways”

The Colorado Commission on Higher Education has approved PHIL 1012, 1020 and 2441 for inclusion in the Guaranteed Transfer (GT) Pathways program in the GT-AH3 category. For transferring students, successful completion with a minimum C- grade guarantees transfer and application of credit in this GT Pathways category. For more information on the GT Pathways program, go to <http://highered.colorado.gov/Academics/Transfers/gtPathways/curriculum.html>.

Arts and Humanities Content Criteria for GT-AH3:

Respond analytically and critically to ways of thinking, by addressing one or more of the following:

- a. Logic
- b. Ethics
- c. The different questions dealt with by leading philosophers and/or theologians and their positions on those questions

Competencies and Student Learning Outcomes for GT-AH3:

1. Explain an Issue
 - a. Use information to describe a problem or issue and/or articulate a question related to the topic.
2. Utilize Context.
 - a. Evaluate the relevance of context when presenting a position.
 - b. Identify assumptions.
 - c. Analyze one’s own and others’ assumptions.
3. Understand Implications and Make Conclusions
 - a. Establish a conclusion that is tied to the range of information presented.
 - b. Reflect on implications and consequences of stated conclusion.

Specific Course Overview

This course is an introduction to ethics through a survey of various philosophical questions and literature. The texts have been chosen not only for their influence on the development of philosophy but also as points of access to a variety of philosophical conversations. This course will provide (at least partially) both a historical and conceptual overview of topics and problems in ethics and questions concerning “what kind of life we should, both as individuals and a society, strive?”

Course Goals and Learning Objectives

In the Humanities, we use texts, including artifacts, to understand culture and thought. Guiding the teaching in this area is the importance of being able to actively engage with a text in order to draw from it its structure and the cultural, historical, and intellectual influences shaping its meaning. The following learning outcomes have been identified for core courses in the

Humanities. By the end of a general education course in the Humanities, students should be proficient in the following areas.

1. Textual analysis. Analyze texts and artifacts, distinguishing the various philosophical, historical, or literary elements of a text.
2. Interpretive skills. Explain the relationships among the various philosophical, historical, or literary elements of a text.
3. Context awareness. Articulate the cultural, historical, and intellectual influences on a text.
4. Ethical thinking. Recognize ethical situations and ideas, and distinguish ethical positions from simple opinions or self-interest.

In addition to being an introduction to philosophical literature and fundamental philosophical terms and concepts, this course is designed to provide both content and context to develop critical reading and thinking through the following areas:

- **Comprehension:** the ability to interpret primary source materials (which are often difficult) and to express complex ideas and arguments;
- **Analysis and evaluation:** the ability to discuss and distinguish different perspectives, approaches, and methods to philosophical questions;
- **Synthesis:** the ability to compare, contrast, and relate ideas across contexts, cultures, and history with awareness of the appropriate differences and similarities of those ideas;
- **Writing:** developing clarity and precision in expressing ideas, integrating appropriate evidence in support of those ideas (particularly from primary texts), exegesis of complex problems, and creativity of expression;
- **Communication:** articulating, discussing, criticizing, and defending ideas both in verbal discussion and in writing.

Evaluation / Grading Procedures

Grading Scale

94% - 100% = A
90%-93% = A-
87%-89% = B+
83% - 86% = B
80%-82%= B-
77%-79% = C+
70% - 79% = C
70%-72% = C-
67% - 69% = D+
60%-66% = D
59% and below = F

Your total grade may fall somewhere between each of these units. In general, I will round to the nearest grade. As far as D'Evelyn is concerned, in accordance with their policy, your final grade will only be recorded as a full letter grade (e.g., B+/B/B- will all count as a B); your UCD grade, however, will be recorded as indicated above. The grade you receive in this course

will be recorded on an official CU Denver transcript and will become a part of your permanent University of Colorado academic record (which will also follow you if you attend or transfer to another university). A grade below C could affect your admission to a CU or other campus. If you earn a grade of C- or lower and are later admitted to a CU campus, you will be on academic probation for the first semester of attendance and subject to University policies on satisfactory academic progress.

Grade Breakdown and Assignments:

Participation and Attendance (including commonplace book image uploads): 40%

Introductory Reflection: 5%

Two Short Essays: 20%

Midterm Essay: 20%

Oral Presentation of Final Reflection (built from commonplace books): 15%

* Please note that due dates for commonplace book assignments and formal reading responses are NOT listed below in the course schedule. They will vary and will show up in your to do list in Canvas. It's your responsibility to be attentive in class to those instructions. Many basic terms and concepts will be covered there.

Inclusive Excellence:

Inclusive Excellence (IE) is the recognition that a community or institution's success is dependent on how well it values, engages and includes the rich diversity of students, staff, faculty, administrators, and alumni constituents. This comprehensive approach requires a fundamental transformation by embedding and practicing the five dimensions of Inclusive Excellence in all that we do: Intrapersonal Awareness, Curriculum Transformation, Inclusive Pedagogy, Inclusive Learning. This adheres to the Association of American Colleges and Universities definitions as well.

Dr. Green's Commitment to Inclusive Excellence

While my course lectures will at times point to the limitations of liberal politics of recognition, as a faculty member, I honor and value Inclusive Excellence in practice. As part of my commitment to inclusive excellence, I try to incorporate diversity as a framework of my courses by highlighting intellectual differences among authors, audiences, perspectives or theories. Because every reader and writer has an age, race, gender, ethnicity, national origin, sexuality and intellectual perspective, diversity can become a part of the fabric of every student's development. These identities include, but are not limited to, ability, age, ethnicity, gender identity and expression, immigration status, intellectual differences, national origin, race, religion, sex, and sexual orientation. Please note that I do not consider political party affiliations or ideologies to be identity categories in need of active attention for inclusive pedagogy.

Attendance & Participation Grade

Students lose 2% of their *final course grade* each time they miss class. This excludes religious observances, but they need to be noted in advance. Please notify me in advance, in writing, of any possible class or assignment conflicts due to religious observances. The electronic gradebook in Canvas will not reflect that automatically, so please keep track of days you've missed. When in class, please be fully present and as undistracted as possible. If you speak in class but clearly have not read or finished reading the text for the day, you will be asked not to speak and marked absent.

A maximum of nine absences can be made up by extra reading responses. In other words, the course demands you attend about 80% of class meetings, and the other 20% has some flexibility. Every absence that you don't make up will count off your final grade. My teaching methods emphasize the classroom as a discursive environment, and that means that much of the learning comes from both listening and contributing to others. Missing class damages the community-space of the classroom. Philosophical study is inherently discursive. In my classes, we try to generate an ongoing discussion that attaches to larger discussions in academia. As a class, we use the classroom as a space to articulate our positions within those discussions both in writing and in talking. When you miss class, it cannot be simply answered with a question like "what did I miss?" Again: **Up to nine absences can be made up with extra formal reading responses on the material assigned for the days you were absent. Those must be turned in via Canvas before finals week.**

Class Participation

Talking about philosophical texts is a learned skill. It is what makes our field different from simply pontificating about deep questions of life, book club, or leisure-reading group. When students speak in class without having done the reading for the day or regularly arrive late, it is unprofessional and disrespects our shared learning space by preventing other students from contributing. Disrespecting that space will therefore affect students' participation grade. For these reasons, I hold attendance, *informed participation*, and acknowledgement of appropriate audiences as fundamental to your course grade. This is reflected in the grade breakdown above. If you don't regularly speak in class discussions, your participation grade will be a maximum of 30 out of 40 percentage points.

Attendance is not "just showing up" in body. While you lose part of your overall course grade for missing class, most of your participation points will be based on your discursive *contributions* to our environment. Obviously, on days when I lecture there will be less opportunity to speak, nor do you have to say something every single day. As a community, we should know who you are and your contributions to class discussion should reflect that you've been listening to peers, your professor, and reading the texts in a thoughtful and reflective way. A good way to make sure you're on track is to be regular with your reading responses and commonplace books. You also need to be aware that this is not just about having thoughts, it's about sharing them in dialogue with others. Philosophers share their thoughts, and you should too. Finally, be aware that if you over speak in class, it takes space away from others. After speaking, leave space for others to join in. Record thoughts unable to be expressed in open discourse in your commonplace book.

Disruptive Behavior Policy

Cellphones are not permitted to be in use in my classrooms. They should be on silent and out of site. Use of laptops or tablets are permitted for specific in-class activities involving textual reference. They should not be opened or on your desk otherwise. Headphones should be removed from ears before entering the classroom.

Disruptive In-Class Behavior:

Because participation is part of your grade for this class, disrupting class time will not be accepted. Disruptive behavior can be carrying on side conversations during class lecture, diverting class discussion from the topic for the day, participating in class discussion when you have not done the reading for the day, or dominating class discussion and distracting the professor or learning environment. You will also lose participation points for being “checked out” and unresponsive during class-time or being “too cool” to participate in discussions. Racial or gender slurs directed at another student or the professor will not be tolerated, nor will comments meant to silence or intimidate others. Active or veiled threats of violence are unacceptable.

Model In-Class Behavior

Students should generally:

- respect themselves, others, the university, and surrounding community;
- honor differences and gain an appreciation for living in a diverse society;
- maintain high standards of their personal and academic integrity;
- understand the impact of their actions and choices upon themselves, others, the University, and surrounding communities; and
- seek opportunities to repair harm, restore trust, and acknowledge the impact of their actions and choices.

Mature Discussions

A good scholarly discussion is a collective activity that is a **learned skill** we practice daily in class. We talk differently in professional environments than with our friends and family. I expect all students to engage in a professional manner with the material for the day and to keep the discussion progressive and on track. Some days I will refuse to speak and only track student discourse to encourage students to articulate thoughtful responses to the literature. That method is called Critical Discourse Analysis. Class discussion is not the space for long-winded anecdotes about what it felt like to read the text. If you are comfortable talking in a group, please be aware that others are not necessarily like you and leave them space to enter the conversation. This is a balance we all need to be to collectively attend.

Formal Essay and Reading Response Formatting

All typed assignments should follow MLA format conventions. Repeated format errors will result in lower grades. Descriptions and examples can be found free at the Purdue Online

Writing Lab or “OWL”:

https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/mla_style/mla_formatting_and_style_guide/mla_formatting_and_style_guide.html

Here is a link to a sample paper for how your spacing, font, and citations should look:

https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/mla_style/mla_formatting_and_style_guide/mla_sample_paper.html

Commonplace Books

You will take a lot of notes for this class. Every few weeks, I will check your commonplace book. We’ll talk more extensively about these, but for now you need a blank notebook. The philosophical tradition has largely been shaped by thoughts recorded before mass printing or the immediate dissemination of ideas we find common to our current world. In order to emphasize historical context and heighten attention to learning modalities outside of late capitalist contexts that inevitably shape our day-to-day lives, we will use an “outdated” but long-used method of recording our thoughts by hand. From a current scientific perspective, doing so allows us to develop more neural flexibility too. This is also a reaction to a ready-made world of instant information. Since we are more interested in thought processes and thinking in this class, it is more important to work with our own brains and cognition than with the wonderful access to information we have with current technology and artificial intelligence. I’m interested in your thoughts about what you’re reading, not in you spitting back to me something a machine can do in a few seconds. This is not to hate on A.I. technology. It’s just not relevant to what we are doing in our class. I will have specific details on expectations from commonplace books, but from the beginning of class students need a full-page (close to 8.5” x 11”) blank notebooks to record their thoughts from class discussions and readings.

Reading Response and Short Essay Writing Guidelines (used for making-up absences)

There is some formal writing required for all students throughout the semester. You will get specific instructions for the essays. Students are also able to make up nine absences by writing a reading response to the readings for each class missed. All formal writing needs to be turned in through Canvas and in MLA format.

If you are making up a missed class, go to the attendance date in your Canvas Modules and submit your response there. Each response should be written for a *wider audience* than our class. It should paraphrase and summarize the content of the reading with brief citations, providing textual support in MLA format. It should directly identify the main idea or thesis of the reading as you understand it. It often helps to present a *theme* you noticed in the text and engage with critical readings we cover in class or that you research on your own. It should also record your reflections, opinions, and criticism of the readings through a professional synthesis of concepts presented in the reading while building on previous readings from our class.

By “criticism” I’m not looking for knee-jerk, consumer criticism about whether you liked or disliked the reading, found it challenging or boring or exciting, etc. We are not here to say what the author should have done to make it better or to read as consumers.

While it's okay to write in first-person, you should not narrate your reading with self-referential phrases like "as I was reading, I was reminded of..." or "I was confused when..." or say how enlightening it was for you – how you'd "never thought of that before," etc. Instead, your criticism should be professionally discursive (and civil). Disagreements are fine. Long, accusatory diatribes are not okay. By "professionally discursive," I mean it should engage with the material we are reading in class and seek to further critical discussions we have been having in class. Responses should illustrate that you have read, engaged with, and tried to understand the text to the best of your abilities. A good way to do this is to employ specific analytical terms that come up in class in your reading.

At the end of each response, you should provide **two well-thought discussion questions for class discussions**. Go beyond yes/no or taste-based questions about what people liked or disliked. Go beyond overly general questions like, "what did you all think?" Reading response formatting should be used if you are making up an absence.

Late Work

Late work will not receive a higher grade than a "D" (65%) of the assignment. I usually set Canvas assignments to be due at midnight. As long as the work is in by 8am the next morning, I won't consider it late. I don't generally close Canvas assignments, so if you're wondering if you can turn something in late, the answer is always yes up to finals week. Students requesting extensions on a formal essay should notify me no less than twenty-four hours before a paper is due. Students with specific accommodations letters will of course have individual cases.

Midterm Essay

Students will write a formal midterm essay. You will receive specific guidelines sheet in canvas. Like reading responses, it must be in MLA format.

Oral Presentation Final

Final examinations will be **timed**, oral and presented as online videos. Students will upload their presentation notes and outline to Canvas with their video. More details will appear closer to the final.

Religious observances: Please notify me in advance, in writing, of any possible class or assignment conflicts due to religious observances.

Disability Access

CU Denver's disability access policy is the following: The University of Colorado Denver is committed to providing reasonable accommodation and access to programs and services to persons with disabilities. Students with disabilities who want academic accommodations must register with Disability Resources and Services (DRS) in Academic Building 1, Suite #2116 (Phone: 303-315-3510; Fax: 303-315-3515). I will be happy to provide approved

accommodations, once you provide me with a copy of DRS's letter. DRS requires students to provide current and adequate documentation of their disabilities. Once a student has registered with DRS, DRS will review the documentation and assess the student's request for academic accommodations in light of the documentation. DRS will then provide the student with a letter indicating which academic accommodations have been approved. However, I do not require CU Succeed students to go through the DRS office. I will accept either a 504 plan issued by DSA or I will make arrangements with you on your request at any time.

Gender Designation

I recognize that gender is fluid and shifting throughout our lives and that how we feel in our bodies may not always correspond to public conceptions of gender or the gender we assigned at birth, often out of a confusion among medical professionals between "sex" and "gender." In the interest of inclusivity, if you have a preferred pronoun or other linguistic marker related to self-definition, please do let me know. It's of course okay for pronouns to change during our time together too, but please know communication helps and mistakes happen. Note that if you change your preferred pronouns, you need to let those around you know so they don't unintentionally disrespect you. Part of why we have class as a community space is so we can practice healthier ways of communicating with one another than in past circumstances.

Accommodations & Disabilities

Students with disabilities must get a letter from the university documenting them. I am not a healthcare professional, and you do not need to submit doctors' notes to me or disclose any disabilities. Please refer to CU Denver's website for services to document disabilities. Documented disabilities are not retroactive for missed assignments. Professors are required by law to accommodate students with documented disabilities.

Plagiarism / Academic Dishonesty

Plagiarism, whether intentional or not, is grounds for failing grades, failing courses, and disciplinary measures up to and including expulsion from the university. **This includes A.I. generated essays in part or in whole.** Turning in work previously written for other courses that you wrote is still considered academically dishonest.

Course schedule

We will generally stay on this schedule, but I reserve the right to alter the reading schedule at any time. If you miss class, it is your responsibility to verify the reading and/or assignment for the next class so you can prepare accordingly.

* Please note that due dates for commonplace book assignments and formal reading responses are NOT listed below in the course schedule. They will vary and will show up in your to do list in Canvas. It's your responsibility to be attentive in class to those instructions.

Course Schedule

Week 1: Course Introduction

Tuesday 1/6: Introduction to the course. What makes life worth living?

Homework: REGISTER FOR CLASS THROUGH UC DENVER:

<https://clas.ucdenver.edu/cusucceed/>. We are section 01 and our course number is 41625

Begin reading Victor Frankl online.

Thursday 1/8: Lecture 1: What is Ethics?

Homework: Read Victor Frankl, *Man's Search for Meaning*, "Part 1: Experience in a Concentration Camp" from online: <https://archive.org/details/viktor-emil-frankl-mans-search-for-meaning/page/n1/mode/2up>

Write Introduction in your commonplace book.

Week 2: Frankl, *Man's Search for Meaning*

Monday 1/12: Discuss Frankl, Freedom & Responsibility / "Decent and Indecent"

Homework: Read Frankl, "Part 2: Logotherapy in a Nutshell": <https://archive.org/details/viktor-emil-frankl-mans-search-for-meaning/page/n1/mode/2up>

Thursday 1/15: Discuss Frankl, Part 2

Homework: Read Plato, *Protagoras*: <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/1591/1591-h/1591-h.htm>

Week 3: Plato *Protagoras* / Aristotle's Moral Philosophy, *Politics* (*eudaimonia*, *virtue*, *polis*, *justice*)

Tuesday 1/20: Discuss Plato, *Protagoras*

Homework: Read Book I from Aristotle's *Politics*:

<https://historyofeconomicthought.mcmaster.ca/aristotle/Politics.pdf>

Thursday 1/22: Discuss Aristotle

Homework: Read Book II from Aristotle's *Politics*:

<https://historyofeconomicthought.mcmaster.ca/aristotle/Politics.pdf>

Week 4: Aristotle's Moral Philosophy, *Politics* (*eudaimonia*, *virtue*, *polis*, *justice*) continued

Monday 1/26: Discuss Aristotle

Homework: Read Book III from Aristotle's *Politics*:

<https://historyofeconomicthought.mcmaster.ca/aristotle/Politics.pdf>

Thursday 1/29: Discuss Aristotle

Homework: Read Book IV from Aristotle's *Politics*:

<https://historyofeconomicthought.mcmaster.ca/aristotle/Politics.pdf>

Week 5: Aristotle's Moral Philosophy, *Politics* (*eudaimonia*, *virtue*, *polis*, *justice*) continued

Monday 2/2: Discuss Aristotle

Homework: Read Book V from Aristotle's *Politics*:

<https://historyofeconomicthought.mcmaster.ca/aristotle/Politics.pdf>

Thursday 2/5: Discuss Aristotle

Homework: Read Book VI from Aristotle's *Politics*:

<https://historyofeconomicthought.mcmaster.ca/aristotle/Politics.pdf>

Week 6: Aristotle's Moral Philosophy, *Politics* (*eudaimonia*, *virtue*, *polis*, *justice*) continued

Monday 2/9: Discuss Aristotle

Homework: Read Book VII from Aristotle's *Politics*:

<https://historyofeconomicthought.mcmaster.ca/aristotle/Politics.pdf>

Thursday 2/12: Discuss Aristotle

Homework: Read Martha Nussbaum: "Non-Relative Virtues: An Aristotelian Approach"

Week 7: Nussbaum and a Contemporary View on Aristotle's Virtue Ethics

Tuesday 2/17: Discuss Nussbaum

Homework: Write Short Paper 1

Thursday: 2/19: Review

Homework: Read Chapters 1-25 from *Genesis* in the Hebrew Bible (NRSVtranslation) **Paper #1 due by Midnight Saturday**

Week 8: Hebrew-Jewish Contexts

Monday 2/23: Discuss *Genesis* 1-25

Homework: Read *Genesis* 26-50

Wednesday 2/26: NO CLASS

Homework: (Maybe start Reading *Matthew*)

Week 9: Judeo-Christian Contexts

Monday 3/2: Discuss *Genesis*

Homework: Read *Matthew* NRSV

Thursday 3/5: Discuss *Matthew*

Homework: Read “Preface” and Section 1 of Kant’s *Groundwork for a Metaphysic of Morals*.

Week 10: Modernity / Immanuel Kant

Monday 3/9: Modernity Lecture

Homework: Read Section 2 of Kant’s *Groundwork for a Metaphysic of Morals*.

Thursday 3/12: Discuss Kant

Homework: Read Section 3 of Kant’s *Groundwork for a Metaphysic of Morals*.

Week 11: Modernity and Enlightenment

Monday 3/16: Discuss Kant

Homework: Work on Midterm

Thursday 3/19: Review

Homework: Finish Midterm

Week 12: Spring Break, no class

Week 13: Utilitarianism

Monday 3/30: Nineteenth Century Themes Lecture / Classic Liberalism

Homework: Read John Stuart Mill, *Utilitarianism*, Chapters 1-3 (“General Remarks,” “What Utilitarianism Is,” and “Of the Ultimate Sanction of the Principle of Utility”)

Thursday 4/2: Discuss Mill

Homework: Finish reading Mill, *Utilitarianism*

Week 14: Utilitarianism / Nietzsche

Monday 4/6: Discuss Mill

Homework: Read *Genealogy of Morals*, Preface

Thursday 4/9: Discuss Nietzsche
Homework: Read *Genealogy of Morals*, First Essay
Short Paper 2 Due on Friday 4/11 by midnight.

Week 15: Nietzsche *Genealogy of Morals*

Monday 4/13: Discuss Nietzsche
Homework: Read *Genealogy of Morals*, Second Essay

Thursday 4/16: Discuss Nietzsche
Homework: Read *Genealogy of Morals*, First Essay

Week 16: Native American Critiques of eurochristian Morality

Monday 4/20: Discuss Nietzsche
Homework: Begin reading Tinker “Redskin, Tanned Hide”

Thursday 4/23: Iliff Book Context, Doctrine of Discovery
Homework: Finish Reading Tinker “Redskin, Tanned Hide”

Week 17: Local History: The Iliff Book

Monday 4/27: Discuss Tinker
Homework: Read Joseph Marshall III, chapters 1, 2 & 3

Wednesday 4/29: NO CLASS

Homework: Lakota (Native American) Ethics

Week 18: *The Lakota Way*

Monday 5/4: Discuss Marshall
Homework: Read Joseph Marshall III, chapters 4, 5. & 6

Thursday 5/7: Discuss Marshall
Homework: Read Joseph Marshall III, chapters 6, 7, & 8

Week 19: *The Lakota Way*, continued

Monday 5/11: Discuss Marshall
Homework: Read Joseph Marshall III, chapters 8, 9, 10

Thursday 5/14: Discuss Marshall
Homework: Read Joseph Marshall III, chapters 11, 12, Afterword
FINAL DUE SATURDAY MAY 16 BY MIDNIGHT

