

Michael Reno
Teaching Portfolio

Table of Contents

Teaching Philosophy	2—3
Course Material from PHIL 103, The Committed Life (Introduction to Philosophy with a focus on political thought)	
Syllabus	4—8
Sample Short Writing Assignments	9—11
Sample Reading Questions	12—13
Course Material from PHIL 320, Ethics	
Syllabus	14—17
Sample Short Writing Assignments	18—19
First Paper Assignment	20
Student Evaluations from fall 2014	
PHIL 103, The Committed Life, sections 1 and 2	21—26
PHIL 320, Ethics	27—29

Michael Reno
Statement of Teaching Philosophy

The interactions between teacher and student, and among students, are the relationships in which philosophy most clearly becomes practice. In the most abstract terms, the responsibility of the philosopher revolves around the engagement of students with the social world they inhabit; she is responsible for promoting engaged citizenship. Teaching philosophy well requires we orient ourselves toward contemporary social and political events, both locally and globally, while helping students develop skills that are useful no matter their career.

As such, I take my role as teacher to consist in three interrelated goals. First, the aim is to engage the students in a kind of thinking that is significantly different from their everyday understanding. In particular, as the instrumentalization of reason in the contemporary world proceeds nearly unabated, the philosophy classroom presents a rare island of respite in which another sort of thinking, a thinking that is valued in-itself, is possible. I take philosophical thinking as special in that it emphasizes clarity of concepts, the following of arguments where ever they may lead, and the questioning of dogmas and taboos. This kind of thinking, though, is valued no matter the professional context. Yet, this thinking cannot survive in isolation.

So, the second aim involves relating this sort of thought to the contemporary world. This involves a mode of presentation that at once brings in material from outside philosophy, e.g., films that raise ethical issues, novels that present philosophical ideas in narrative form, and requires that I give up some of the control that an instructor might assert in a traditional lecture course. In classroom practice, then, in the attempt to bring philosophical thinking to bear on the contemporary world, I must go where the classroom discussion leads. Though, I do suggest paths where the problems of the world intersect with the sort of thought developed in philosophy. I also promote this goal through creative group assignments. In collaboration with their classmates, I have found that students will engage with difficult concepts, regarding justice and political legitimacy, for example, through application to their own lives.

Lastly, though I take philosophical thinking as a something to be promoted for its own sake, the overall goal of engaged citizenship requires students to acquire certain skills, especially from introductory classes, which may be the only exposure to philosophy for many if not most of the students. In particular, careful reading, the formulation of arguments, and the ability to consider opposing views are essential. For example, in classes like introduction to philosophy or introductory ethics, I have had success in improving student writing and expression by breaking down the process into smaller tasks. For example, students write five short assignments, each focusing on a specific skill, and which culminate in the writing of an argumentative paper. Through both individualized feedback from me and collaborative classroom discussion about the skills involved, students are able to improve their reading and writing abilities.

Given my interests in social and political thought, and my thinking regarding the relationship between the classroom and the world outside it, I believe that teaching is the key responsibility of philosophers today. I strive to fulfill this responsibility not only through the specific content of my courses, but also in my orientation toward the students in the classroom. It is crucial to maintain a space in which people feel safe and respected, but also one in which they can expect to be challenged, not only by me, but by the other students. For the past two semester, as anti-Black racism became an acute political issue for students who perhaps had not had to confront this history and struggle themselves, my courses facilitated passionate, yet respectful conversations between students with different viewpoints and perspectives. Increasingly, I have

also attempted to extend the challenging aspects of philosophy to areas outside of the classroom. For example, I have attempted to get students engaged in critical assessment of their own practices surrounding food. In introductory courses, content needs to both engage and challenge. Coupled with such exercises, shorter writing assignments in which there is room for both practicing new skills and expressing their honest thoughts on course themes and material work toward these ends.

I consider myself an able teacher. That said, I also take it as part of my responsibility as spelled out above to take a critical stance toward my own teaching practices. I take seriously criticism from both faculty and students. In particular, I have moved toward an open discussion style and small group discussions in which there remain specific concepts, ideas, skills, arguments that must be worked through. And, since I've worked with students from diverse backgrounds, I am able to adapt my teaching style to the different skill sets that students bring to the classroom.

Finally, though it should not have to be mentioned, I take seriously the historical biases of the discipline. It is especially important to use what privilege I have to undermine those biases. Sometimes, this requires movement from a position of neutrality to position of advocacy—though I make it clear when I do move to such a position, and make clear that disagreement with me is not only acceptable but encouraged. It is crucial for students to see that philosophy is done by everyone—not merely the privileged—and, that it speaks to current injustices. In its marrow, philosophy produces the substance with which to dissolve hierarchy and irrational privilege. It should live up to its essence.

Course Information
Fall 2014

PHIL 103 Sec. 2, The Committed Life
Specific Topic: Liberalism and Its Critics
Meetings: CH304, 12:40-1:35
Course website available at:
<https://blackboard.wku.edu/>

Instructor Information

Dr. Michael Reno
Office: CH322
Office Hours: 10-11, M,W,F, and by appt.
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Specific Course Description

Like 101 and 102, PHIL 103 is a general introduction to philosophy, but one which emphasizes practical, social, and political themes. Students may take all three introduction to philosophy courses without redundancy.

This term, we will focus on the Liberal tradition in political philosophy. Two related points to begin: first, Liberal in this sense can be taken literally, believer in individual liberty; second, you must understand that Liberal in this sense does not neatly correspond to the terminology currently used in American politics. That is, here we will be firstly concerned with Liberalism as a tradition of political thought, a tradition that nearly all of mainstream American politics fits within; American conservatives and liberals, republicans, libertarians, democrats, and progressives all fit within this tradition of political philosophy called Liberalism. So, Liberal in this sense contrasts with traditional Conservatism, Monarchism of various stripes, Fascism, anarchism, some versions of communism and some versions of socialism among other political philosophies. The controversies in American politics are largely arguments and disagreements WITHIN Liberalism in this sense.

In this course, students will come to understand the theoretical bases of Liberalism. In particular, students will come to understand social contract theory, the exclusions that this theory seems to imply, the seeming contradiction between the Liberal ideals of freedom and equality, and other controversies emerging from the defense of democratic political legitimation and free market economics. In dealing with these texts, students will also learn to evaluate these foundations critically through both their own investigations and the use of material critical of Liberalism. Through these materials, students should also come to understand the specific suffering of others that motivates many of these criticisms. In terms of specific skills, students should be able to interpret difficult arguments from the history of philosophy as well as critically assess and apply them to current controversies.

Note: Success in this course will require reading and re-reading, writing and re-writing, asking questions in and out of class, and generally hard work.

Required Texts

1. Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, Hackett Publishing, 9780872201774
2. John Locke, *Second Treatise on Government*, Hackett Publishing, 9780915144860

3. J.J. Rousseau, *The Basic Political Writings*, Hackett Publishing, 9781603846738
4. Karl Marx, *Selected Writings*, Hackett Publishing, 9780872202184
5. Charles Mills, *The Racial Contract*, Cornell UP, 9780801484636
6. There will also be REQUIRED readings on Blackboard.

General Education Statement

Philosophy 103 Fulfills the Arts and Humanities requirement of II. Explorations: Knowledge of Human Cultures and the Physical and Natural World.

Students analyze concepts, theories, methodologies, and practices from the arts and humanities in order to interpret the human experience through literary, visual, and performing arts. Courses offer opportunities for students to explore cultural expressions and enduring questions about human experience. Students will demonstrate the ability to:

1. Utilize basic formal elements, techniques, concepts and vocabulary of specific disciplines within the Arts and Humanities.
2. Distinguish between various kinds of evidence by identifying reliable sources and valid arguments.
3. Demonstrate how social, cultural, and historical contexts influence creative expression in the arts and humanities.
4. Evaluate the significance of human expression and experience in shaping larger social, cultural, and historical contexts.
5. Evaluate enduring and contemporary issues of human experience.

Assignments and Grading

We will spend some time in class developing our writing. There will be three major writing assignments. I will post a detailed assignment sheet as the due date approaches. There will also be shorter writing assignments in which we aim to develop a particular writing skill.

Here is the grade breakdown for the course.

Five Short Writing Assignments: 15%

FIRST PAPER: 25%

SECOND PAPER: 25%

THIRD PAPER: 25%

Attendance and Participation: 10%

Classroom Conduct

Treat others with respect. This is a philosophy class, so disagreement is expected. But, disagreement does not require shouting or personal attacks. Rather, in engaging with others' views, we address the underlying evidence and reasoning.

Things not to do in class: text, social network, check your email, study for another

course...basically anything that is not conducive to you and everyone else's learning in the classroom. If we need to, we'll have a no electronic device policy.

Emails I will not respond to:

1. "I missed class on _____, what did I miss/did I miss anything important?" Class is always important; if you miss it, it's your responsibility to figure out what you missed.
2. "When is _____ due?" (I will always give you a due date on the assignment and post it on Blackboard).
3. "What grade am I getting in the course?" (If you know your grades on the assignments, the syllabus gives you everything you need to determine your current course grade and what you need to get to achieve a certain grade).
4. Any other question that is easily answerable by consulting the syllabus or assignment sheets.

All that said, feel free to ask other questions, even if you might think they aren't relevant.

Academic Honesty

Don't plagiarize. It insults me, the other students, and the institution. Plagiarism frequently comes from desperation. If you are feeling desperate, talk to me, send me a message, anything but plagiarize. If you do plagiarize, I will catch you (I've been doing this for a while). And the penalty is automatic failure in the course. I may also report this to Judicial Affairs, which can result in your removal from the University.

Disability

Please see me regarding any issues or differences in learning styles or other concerns you have about how the course is running...we'll see what we can do.

But, from disability services: "In compliance with university policy, students with disabilities who require academic and/or auxiliary accommodations for this course must contact Student Disability Services in Downing University Center, A-200. The phone number is 270-745-5004. Please DO NOT request accommodations directly from the professor or instructor without a letter of accommodation from Student Disability Services."

Rough Course Schedule (may be changed by online or in-class announcement):

WK1 August, Hobbes

M, 25th Course Introduction

W, 27th Hobbes, Introduction, Chapter 13

F, 29th Hobbes, Chapter 14 and 15

WK2 September, Hobbes

M, 1st: LABOR DAY, No Class

W, 3rd Hobbes, Chapter 17 and 18
F, 5th Hobbes, Chapter 21 and 26

WK3 September, Locke
M, 8th Locke, Preface, Chapter 1
W, 10th Locke, Chapter 2 and 3
F, 12th Locke Chapter 4 and 5

WK4 September, Locke
M, 15th Locke, Chapter 6 and 7
W, 17th Locke, Chapter 8 and 9
F, 19th Locke, Chapter 10 and 11

WK5 September, Rousseau
M, 22nd Rousseau, On the Origins of Inequality, Part I
W, 24th Rousseau, On the Origins of Inequality, Part II
F, 26th Rousseau, The Social Contract, Part I, Secs. 1-9

WK6 September/October, Rousseau
M, 29th Rousseau, The Social Contract, Part II, Secs. 1-2
W, 1st Rousseau, The Social Contract, Part III, Secs. 1-7, FIRST PAPER DUE
F, 3rd: FALL BREAK, No Class

WK7 October, Rousseau
M, 6th: Rousseau, The Social Contract, Part III, Secs. 8-18
W, 8th: Rousseau, The Social Contract, Part IV, Secs. 1-4
F, 10th: Rousseau, The Social Contract, Part IV, Secs. 7-9

WK8 October Marx
M, 13th: Intro to Marx, Alienated Labor
W, 15th: Marx, The German Ideology, excerpt.
F, 17th: Marx, The Communist Manifesto, excerpt.

WK9 October, Marx
M, 20th: Marx, The Manifesto
W, 22nd: Marx, Commodity Fetishism
F, 24th: Marx, Commodity Fetishism

WK10 October, Marx
M, 27th: Marx, Capital as Subject, Grundrisse
W, 29th: Manufactured Landscapes, film and discussion
F, 31st: Manufactured Landscapes, film and discussion

WK11 November, Mills

M, 3rd: Catch up Day, SECOND PAPER DUE
W, 5th: Charles Mills, Chapter 1,
F, 7th: Charles Mills, Chapter 1, continued

WK12 November, Mills

M, 10th: Charles Mills, Chapter 2
W, 12th: Charles Mills, Chapter 2, cont.
F, 14th: Charles Mills, Chapter 3

WK13 November, Mills

M, 17th: Charles Mills, Chapter 3, cont.
W, 19th: Charles Mills, Conclusion
F, 21st: MacKinnon, Liberalism and the Death of Feminism, BB

WK14 November, MacKinnon

M, 24th: MacKinnon, Difference and Dominance, BB
W, 26th: NO CLASS, Thanksgiving Break
F, 28th: NO CLASS, Thanksgiving Break

WK15 December, MacKinnon

M, 1st: MacKinnon, Reflections on Sex Equality Under Law, BB
W, 3rd: MacKinnon, Gender, The Future
F, 5th: Peer Review for Final Paper.

WK16 December

Finals Week

Final Writing Assignment Due: Thursday, December 11th

PHIL 103
Second Short Writing Assignment
Due Monday, Sept. 22nd

Below are the questions you will choose from for your first paper assignment. **You goal here is to write a thesis statement for one of those questions.** I will not hold you to this statement of your views nor will I even hold you to that particular topic. Still this should be taken as a chance to both develop you skills in writing a thesis statement and to test out your ideas about an answer to one of these questions.

A couple of things about writing a good thesis statement for this kind of paper:

1. It should make a claim. Example of a sentence that doesn't make a clear or strong claim: "In this paper I will explore the differing views of Locke and Hobbes on..."
Example of a clear and strong claim: "Locke is right about the conditions under which rebellion is justified"
2. It should tell the reader how you will support this claim. So, take the better example in 1. "In justifying rebellion when under the yoke of a tyrannical government, Locke offers an account of both the role of government and the responsibility of citizens which is superior to Hobbes's account of the same." This tells the reader both WHAT the argument is about and HOW the argument will be made.
3. Remember, be clear, be concise. Don't worry about rules like don't use I or your thesis must be one sentence only (it shouldn't be like 5 sentences, but if you can't stuff all the elements I'm asking for into one sentence, there is nothing wrong with making your thesis statement two sentences long, especially if this makes it clearer what you are doing).

THE QUESTIONS

1. Locke claims that once money is established, it "can be hoarded up without injury to any one," (Second Treatise of Government, Ch. V, Section 50, p. 29) that is, accumulated without limit. Write an essay in which you first spell out the limits that Locke places on the acquisition of property, how Locke thinks these limits are overcome, and finally evaluate whether his claim that money can be hoarded up without limit is consistent with his earlier claims about the limits of property acquisition. In other words, is Locke successful in showing that money justifies both the unlimited acquisition of property and thus inequality? In answering this question, be sure to say something about the issue of consent.
2. Write an essay which evaluates Hobbes' argument for the legitimacy of the Leviathan state. What is Hobbes' conception of reason? Does this conception of reason offer a way to get from the state of nature to a political society? Is Hobbes consistent in his conception of human nature and reason here? In evaluating Hobbes' argument be sure to at least briefly explain what exactly Hobbes' state of nature is supposed to be and what it is supposed to explain.

3. While Locke explicitly defends the right to rebellion or revolution in the face of either a tyrannical rule on the part of the government or the invasion of some foreign power (see Chapters XVIII and XIX of the Second Treatise), Hobbes seems to rule out rebellion (see Chapter XXI and IXXX of Leviathan). In part, this difference seems to evolve out of their differing conceptions of the state of nature and human nature. Write an essay in which you argue for or against either Hobbes' or Locke's views on the right to rebellion and illustrate your argument using either a contemporary example or the case of colonial America.

4. Rousseau is clearly taking aim at the Hobbesian conception of the state of nature. But, more than this, he seems to be theorizing how exactly the self or subject comes into being. Locke and Hobbes, too, in their own ways seem to either explicitly or implicitly present a conception of the subject/self. Write an essay in which you deal with at least two of Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau, and in which argue for a conception of selfhood.

PHIL 103
Fourth Short Writing Assignment

After reading at least pp. 405-408 in the reading for Monday, answer the question in about a page (double-spaced, 12 pt font, 1 inch margins).

Why, according to Marx, is competition not the highest form of human liberty? That is, explain Marc's argument here in your own words. At this point, we are still just trying to summarize the argument. This is not an exercise where you need to say what you think about the argument. Just tell me what Marx's argument is.

PHIL 103
Hobbes Leviathan
Reading Questions IV

Chapter XXI

1. What does Hobbes mean in saying that the concepts of liberty and freedom can “be applied no less to irrational and inanimate creatures than to rational” (para. 1)?
2. Is fear consistent with liberty (para. 3)?
3. Hobbes is defending a view of freedom here that you may find odd. But think it through. He proceeds from two claims: 1. Every event has some cause (para. 4) and 2. a definition of freedom/liberty as “absence of external impediment.” Both of these seem fairly plausible. So, the question: What does Hobbes mean that “Liberty and necessity are consistent AND is this plausible? If you think this can’t be right, do you have to give up one of the two claims (1. Every event has some cause (para. 4) and 2. a definition of freedom/liberty as “absence of external impediment.”)?
4. Examine the argument in para. 4 regarding the relationship between free will and God. Why would the lack of necessity in our will undermine the omnipotence of God?

Charles Mills
Reading Questions 1

Introduction

1. Why, in Mills' thinking, should we use the notion of a contract to think through the problems he is highlighting?
2. How does Mills use Rousseau's thinking to develop his idea of the Racial Contract?
3. How is the contract Mills is interested in different from the contract of Hobbes or Locke?
4. Why, then does he still use the notion of the social contract as an explanatory mechanism?

Course Information:

PHIL 320 Ethics

Meeting: T, R 9:35-10:55, CH309

Course website available at:

blackboard.wku.edu

Instructor Information

Dr. Michael Reno

Office: CH322, Office Hours: 10-11,
M,W,F, and by appt.

Email: michael.reno@wku.edu

Ph.: 745-5756

Course Description:

This course deals with theoretical and practical questions surrounding ethics. Over the course of the semester we will ask about our responsibilities to others and to ourselves. Do we have any at all? Do we have any responsibility for others? For just our family? Our friends? Our community? Our nation? Our species? What are the nature of our responsibilities? Are our actions all that matter? Or, do the consequences matter too? Or, are our responsibilities merely a matter of our character?

While this is an introductory course in ethics, many of the readings are not introductory. Prepare to sometimes be confused. Our readings require focused reading and re-reading for comprehension. In addition, you will be required to write in this course. And, write in a particular fashion. One aim, in the end, is for you to be able to construct a brief, but cogent argument for a position, and in doing so deal with potential objections that position. As you will see, this will also be the nature of many of the readings.

To these ends, we will read both text-book summaries of positions and original philosophical pieces. These readings be grouped into 3 general areas: Meta-ethics, normative ethics, and practical ethics. We will deal with each in turn. In the first section we will deal with meta-ethical questions. These ask whether ethics is even possible by asking, for example, whether claims about what is right can be true (or false) or, again, for example, whether moral knowledge is possible. Normative ethics deals with theories of right and wrong. Most likely, this is what you think of when you think of ethics. Normative ethics asks questions regarding what we ought to do by asking, for example, what rules we should follow or what virtues we ought to possess. Lastly, we will attempt to think through the implications of these metaethical and ethical theories by examining specific moral issues. In particular, we will deal with at least some issues surrounding food and the environment.

Note: Success in this course will require reading and re-reading, writing and re-writing, asking questions in and out of class, and generally hard work.

Required Texts:

1. Shafer-Landau, Russ. *The Fundamentals of Ethics*, Second Edition, Oxford UP, ISBN: 978-0-19-977355-8. Referred to as “**Fundamentals**” on Schedule.
2. Shafer-Landau, Russ, editor. *The Ethical Life*, Second Edition, Oxford UP, ISBN: 978-0-19-977352-7. Referred to as “**Life**” on Schedule.
3. Other required readings will be posted on Blackboard.

Assignments and Grading

I will post a detailed assignment sheet regarding each of these at least one week before they are due. Attendance and Participation means that you must participate, not merely be present.

Paper 1: 25%

Paper 2: 25%

Paper 3/Alternative Assignment 3: 25%

Attendance and Participation: 10%

Weekly Writings: 15%

Classroom Conduct

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Rough Course Schedule (may be changed by in-class announcement and/or Blackboard announcement)

Week 1

Tuesday, August 26th: Course Introduction. "The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas."
(BB)

Thursday, August 28th: Fundamentals, Introduction, pp. 1-17, Fundamentals, Chapter 19, Ethical Relativism, pp. 289- 305. Life, Chapter 19, Gensler, pp. 198-206.

Week 2

Tuesday, September 2nd: Fundamentals, Chapter 20, pp. 306-319. Life, Chapter 17, Ayer, pp. 175-187.

Thursday, September 4th: and Chapter 18, Mackie, pp. 188-197.

Week 3

Tuesday, September 9th: Fundamentals, Chapter 21, Replies to 10 Arguments against Moral Objectivity, pp. 320-338. Life, Smith, pp. 207-216.

Thursday, September 11th: Fundamentals, Religion and Ethics, Chapter 5, pp. 61-73. Life, Chapter 7, Plato, "Euthyphro," pp. 63-71.

Week 4

Tuesday, September 16th: Fundamentals, Natural Law Theory, Chapter 6, pp. 74-88. Life, Chapter 8, Philippa Foot, pp. 72-83.

Thursday, September 18th: Fundamentals, Egoism: Psychological and Ethical, Chapters 7 and 8, pp. 89-115. Life, Chapter 9, Ayn Rand, pp. 84-91.

Week 5

Tuesday, September 23rd: Fundamentals, Chapter 9, Consequentialism, pp. 117- 132 and J.S. Mill, Chapter II, What Utilitarianism Is, d2l.

Thursday, September 25th: Life, Chapter 10, J.C.C. Smart, pp. 92-101 and John Harris, Chapter 26, pp. 272-281.

Week 6

Tuesday, September 30th: Fundamentals, Chapter 10, Problems with Consequentialism, pp. 133- 153.

Thursday, October 2nd : NO CLASS. FALL BREAK.

Week 7

Tuesday, October 7th: Fundamentals, Chapter 11, Kant, Justice and Fairness, pp. 154-167.
Life, Kant, pp. 102-114. Handouts on Kant, BB.

Thursday, October 9th: Fundamentals, Chapter 12, Kant, Autonomy and Respect, pp. 168-186.

Week 8

Tuesday, October 14th: Barbara Herman, "What Happens to the Consequences?" d2l.

Thursday, October 16th: Life, Chapter 24, Bennett, pp. 251-265.

Week 9

Tuesday, October 21st: Fundamentals, Chapter 17, pp. 252-271. Life, Chapter 14, Aristotle, pp. 138-149.

Thursday, October 23rd: Fundamentals, Chapter 18, pp. 272-286. Life, Chapter 15, Hilde Lindemann, pp. 150-161.

Week 10

Tuesday, October 28th: Michael Slote, "Our Obligations to Others," BB.

Thursday, October 30th: Roger King, "Eating Well," BB. Begin Food, Inc.

Week 11

Tuesday, November 4th: Food, Inc. continued.

Thursday, November 6th: J.M. Coetzee, "The Philosophers and the Animals," BB.

Week 12

Tuesday, November 11th: J.M. Coetzee, "The Poets and the Animals," BB.

Thursday, November 13th: Life, Chapter 29, Alastair Norcross, pp. 307-322.

Week 13

Tuesday, November 18th: Jeff McMahan, "Our Fellow Creatures" and Stephen Mulhall, "Fearful Thoughts," BB.

Thursday, November 20th: Christine Korsgaard, "Fellow Creatures: Kantian Ethics and Our Duties to Animals," BB.

Week 14

Tuesday, November 25th: Life, Chapter 31, Thomas Hill, Jr., pp. 336-350.

Thursday, November 27th: NO CLASS. THANKSGIVING BREAK.

Week 15

Tuesday, December 2nd: Aldo Leopold, "The Land Ethic" and "Thinking Like a Mountain," BB

Thursday, December 4th: TBD.

Week 16 FINALS WEEK

PHIL 320
First Short Writing Assignment
Due Thursday, September 4th

Answer one of the following in about a double-spaced, normal (1-in) margined, 12pt font, page. (around 300 words). You should be making a claim and supporting that

1. Summarize error theory (p. 307 of Fundamentals) and take a position, giving one clear argument for your position. (Go beyond the text). You could, for example, give one argument of Mackie's (p. 188 in Life) and respond to it...
2. Examine the following argument: College athletes should be compensated monetarily; it is the right thing to do. Collegiate athletes earn billions for universities and colleges. It is their labor that earns this money. It is only moral that those who labor reap the fruits of that labor. The right thing to do would be for colleges and universities and the NCAA to set aside a significant portion of the money earned through TV, attendance, team logo merchandise for the athletes who brought the money in.

Now, explain what either moral nihilism or relativism (cultural or subjective) mean for this argument. Is the moral nihilist or relativist correct? Why or why not?

PHIL 320
Second Short Writing Assignment
Due Tuesday, September 23rd

Here, we're going to work on two related skills. Summarizing an argument and dealing with an objection.

After reading Philippa Foot's "Natural Goodness," and Schafer-Landau's summary of Natural Law Theory, you are to do THREE things. 1. Summarize Foot's claim and what you take to be the best argument for that claim. 2. Come up with the best objection to this claim that you can. 3. Defend Foot's claim from that objection.

Note. Here I am not asking you to personally take a position; I'm telling you what position to defend. We're working on summarizing someone else's argument and dealing with an objection, we're not yet working on figuring out what we think and why it is right.

WKU Fall 2014
PHIL 320
First Essay Assignment
DUE October 14th

In this paper, I am asking you to address the implications of utilitarianism for specific moral issues. An effective paper on one of these topics will have a clear thesis, sound arguments, and will anticipate and answer objections to these. Your paper should be between 1200 and 1500 words. This is approximate. As with the short writing assignments, submit your paper via blackboard. I suggest submitting it as an attachment in one of the following formats (.doc, .docx, .rtf, .odt). But you may cut and paste your text into the blackboard submission box. Choose ONE of the topics below.

1. John Harris, in “The Survival Lottery,” presents a case for reorganizing the organ donation system. Now, his solution is actually more of a thought experiment. Imagine we can implement such a system. That is, assume that there are no technical glitches and assume that we have perfected organ transplantation surgeries. Evaluate the morality of this solution. In doing so, be sure you are aware of the basic facts about our current system. Your essay should also be sure to deal with the issue of killing innocents and the related distinction between killing and letting die.
2. Peter Singer, in “The Singer Solution to World Poverty” presents the case that we ought to give much more than we are giving to alleviate the suffering of distant others. Write a paper in which you argue for or against this claim. In the course of your argument, also be sure to articulate the implications of your claim for our thinking about ethics in general. That is, if you are right about the problem of distant suffering, what does this imply about what the correct ethical theory is.
3. Alastair Norcross’s piece on the immorality of eating factory farmed meat has “the argument from marginal cases” at its heart. Write an essay in which you take a position on the moral permissibility of eating factory farmed meat, and in which you address the argument from marginal cases as presented by Norcross. Is Norcross right that it is morally wrong to eat factory farmed meat? Why or why not?

Western Kentucky University
Fall 2014 Full Term Course Evaluations

Course: PHIL103001 : THE COMMITTED LIFE

Instructor: Michael Reno *

1 - What is your expected grade in this course?				
Response Option	Weight	Frequency	Percentage	Percent Responses
A	(1)	12	75%	
B	(2)	3	18.75%	
C	(3)	1	6.25%	
D	(4)	0	0%	
F	(5)	0	0%	
				0 25 50 75 100
Return Rate				
16/33 (48.48%)				

2 - My instructor displays a clear understanding of course topics.														
Response Option	Weight	Frequency	Percentage	Percent Responses					Means					
Strongly Agree	(5)	16	100%						5.00	4.51	4.56			
Agree	(4)	0	0%											
Neutral	(3)	0	0%											
Disagree	(2)	0	0%											
Strongly Disagree	(1)	0	0%											
				0	25	50	75	100	Question	College Summary	Department Summary			
Return Rate	Mean	STD	Median	College Summary			Mean	STD	Median	Department Summary		Mean	STD	Median
16/33 (48.48%)	5.00	0.00	5.00	13,894			4.51	0.78	5.00	657		4.56	0.77	5.00

3 - My instructor is well-prepared for class.														
Response Option	Weight	Frequency	Percentage	Percent Responses					Means					
Strongly Agree	(5)	15	93.75%						4.94	4.50	4.57			
Agree	(4)	1	6.25%											
Neutral	(3)	0	0%											
Disagree	(2)	0	0%											
Strongly Disagree	(1)	0	0%											
				0	25	50	75	100	Question	College Summary	Department Summary			
Return Rate	Mean	STD	Median	College Summary			Mean	STD	Median	Department Summary		Mean	STD	Median
16/33 (48.48%)	4.94	0.25	5.00	13,894			4.50	0.77	5.00	657		4.57	0.70	5.00

4 - Performance measures (exams, assignments, etc.) are well constructed.														
Response Option	Weight	Frequency	Percentage	Percent Responses					Means					
Strongly Agree	(5)	13	81.25%						4.81	4.25	4.19			
Agree	(4)	3	18.75%											
Neutral	(3)	0	0%											
Disagree	(2)	0	0%											
Strongly Disagree	(1)	0	0%											
				0	25	50	75	100	Question	College Summary	Department Summary			
Return Rate	Mean	STD	Median	College Summary			Mean	STD	Median	Department Summary		Mean	STD	Median
16/33 (48.48%)	4.81	0.40	5.00	13,894			4.25	0.97	5.00	657		4.19	1.01	4.00

Western Kentucky University

Fall 2014 Full Term Course Evaluations

Course: PHIL103001 : THE COMMITTED LIFE

Instructor: Michael Reno *

5 - My instructor provides helpful feedback.												
Response Option		Weight	Frequency	Percentage	Percent Responses					Means		
Strongly Agree		(5)	14	87.5%						4.88	4.26	4.32
Agree		(4)	2	12.5%								
Neutral		(3)	0	0%								
Disagree		(2)	0	0%								
Strongly Disagree		(1)	0	0%								
					0	25	50	75	100	Question	College Summary	Department Summary
Return Rate	Mean	STD	Median	College Summary	Mean	STD	Median	Department Summary	Mean	STD	Median	
16/33 (48.48%)	4.88	0.34	5.00	13,894	4.26	0.98	5.00	657	4.32	0.90	5.00	

6 - Overall, my instructor is effective.												
Response Option		Weight	Frequency	Percentage	Percent Responses					Means		
Strongly Agree		(5)	13	81.25%						4.81	4.30	4.37
Agree		(4)	3	18.75%								
Neutral		(3)	0	0%								
Disagree		(2)	0	0%								
Strongly Disagree		(1)	0	0%								
					0	25	50	75	100	Question	College Summary	Department Summary
Return Rate	Mean	STD	Median	College Summary	Mean	STD	Median	Department Summary	Mean	STD	Median	
16/33 (48.48%)	4.81	0.40	5.00	13,894	4.30	0.94	5.00	657	4.37	0.85	5.00	

7 - I have learned a lot in this course.												
Response Option		Weight	Frequency	Percentage	Percent Responses					Means		
Strongly Agree		(5)	11	68.75%						4.56	4.17	4.31
Agree		(4)	3	18.75%								
Neutral		(3)	2	12.5%								
Disagree		(2)	0	0%								
Strongly Disagree		(1)	0	0%								
					0	25	50	75	100	Question	College Summary	Department Summary
Return Rate	Mean	STD	Median	College Summary	Mean	STD	Median	Department Summary	Mean	STD	Median	
16/33 (48.48%)	4.56	0.73	5.00	13,894	4.17	1.03	4.00	657	4.31	0.96	5.00	

8 - My instructor treats me fairly with regard to race, age, sex, religion, national origin, disability, and sexual orientation.												
Response Option		Weight	Frequency	Percentage	Percent Responses					Means		
Strongly Agree		(5)	16	100%						5.00	4.70	4.80
Agree		(4)	0	0%								
Neutral		(3)	0	0%								
Disagree		(2)	0	0%								
Strongly Disagree		(1)	0	0%								
					0	25	50	75	100	Question	College Summary	Department Summary
Return Rate	Mean	STD	Median	College Summary	Mean	STD	Median	Department Summary	Mean	STD	Median	
16/33 (48.48%)	5.00	0.00	5.00	13,894	4.70	0.62	5.00	657	4.80	0.49	5.00	

Western Kentucky University

Fall 2014 Full Term Course Evaluations

Course: PHIL103001 : THE COMMITTED LIFE

Instructor: Michael Reno *

9 - Please provide additional feedback:

Return Rate	7/33 (21.21%)
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- Dr. Reno is very knowledgeable and extensive in his coverage over course material. I have learned a lot about philosophical history throughout the course and it has challenged me to think in a different way. Would love to take another class with him!

- Mike is a really down-to-earth guy who truly understands and seems to love philosophy. I personally don't understand all of the topics perfectly well, but his passion makes me want to.

- I strongly suggest professor Michael Reno as teacher. Throughout his course he has not failed to make me think, and see life in a completely new perspective.

- This is a real great course, Dr. Reno is a great person

- I enjoy this class, though the material is very dense and makes the class boring. Professor is enthusiastic over the material which makes it easier to understand.

- Very passionate about philosophy.

- Maybe explain difficult topics more clearly.

Western Kentucky University
Fall 2014 Full Term Course Evaluations

Course: PHIL103002 : THE COMMITTED LIFE

Instructor: Michael Reno *

1 - What is your expected grade in this course?				
Response Option	Weight	Frequency	Percentage	Percent Responses
A	(1)	9	52.94%	
B	(2)	6	35.29%	
C	(3)	2	11.76%	
D	(4)	0	0%	
F	(5)	0	0%	
				0 25 50 75 100
Return Rate				
17/30 (56.67%)				

2 - My instructor displays a clear understanding of course topics.												
Response Option	Weight	Frequency	Percentage	Percent Responses					Means			
Strongly Agree	(5)	12	70.59%						4.59	4.51	4.56	
Agree	(4)	4	23.53%									
Neutral	(3)	0	0%									
Disagree	(2)	1	5.88%									
Strongly Disagree	(1)	0	0%									
				0	25	50	75	100	Question	College Summary	Department Summary	
Return Rate	Mean	STD	Median	College Summary			Mean	STD	Median	Department Summary		
17/30 (56.67%)	4.59	0.80	5.00	13,894			4.51	0.78	5.00	657		

3 - My instructor is well-prepared for class.												
Response Option	Weight	Frequency	Percentage	Percent Responses					Means			
Strongly Agree	(5)	11	64.71%						4.59	4.50	4.57	
Agree	(4)	5	29.41%									
Neutral	(3)	1	5.88%									
Disagree	(2)	0	0%									
Strongly Disagree	(1)	0	0%									
				0	25	50	75	100	Question	College Summary	Department Summary	
Return Rate	Mean	STD	Median	College Summary			Mean	STD	Median	Department Summary		
17/30 (56.67%)	4.59	0.62	5.00	13,894			4.50	0.77	5.00	657		

4 - Performance measures (exams, assignments, etc.) are well constructed.												
Response Option	Weight	Frequency	Percentage	Percent Responses					Means			
Strongly Agree	(5)	10	58.82%						4.47	4.25	4.19	
Agree	(4)	5	29.41%									
Neutral	(3)	2	11.76%									
Disagree	(2)	0	0%									
Strongly Disagree	(1)	0	0%									
				0	25	50	75	100	Question	College Summary	Department Summary	
Return Rate	Mean	STD	Median	College Summary			Mean	STD	Median	Department Summary		
17/30 (56.67%)	4.47	0.72	5.00	13,894			4.25	0.97	5.00	657		

Western Kentucky University

Fall 2014 Full Term Course Evaluations

Course: PHIL103002 : THE COMMITTED LIFE

Instructor: Michael Reno *

5 - My instructor provides helpful feedback.												
Response Option		Weight	Frequency	Percentage	Percent Responses					Means		
Strongly Agree		(5)	13	76.47%						4.76	4.26	4.32
Agree		(4)	4	23.53%								
Neutral		(3)	0	0%								
Disagree		(2)	0	0%								
Strongly Disagree		(1)	0	0%								
					0	25	50	75	100	Question	College Summary	Department Summary
Return Rate	Mean	STD	Median	College Summary	Mean	STD	Median	Department Summary	Mean	STD	Median	
17/30 (56.67%)	4.76	0.44	5.00	13,894	4.26	0.98	5.00	657	4.32	0.90	5.00	

6 - Overall, my instructor is effective.												
Response Option		Weight	Frequency	Percentage	Percent Responses					Means		
Strongly Agree		(5)	10	58.82%						4.53	4.30	4.37
Agree		(4)	6	35.29%								
Neutral		(3)	1	5.88%								
Disagree		(2)	0	0%								
Strongly Disagree		(1)	0	0%								
					0	25	50	75	100	Question	College Summary	Department Summary
Return Rate	Mean	STD	Median	College Summary	Mean	STD	Median	Department Summary	Mean	STD	Median	
17/30 (56.67%)	4.53	0.62	5.00	13,894	4.30	0.94	5.00	657	4.37	0.85	5.00	

7 - I have learned a lot in this course.												
Response Option		Weight	Frequency	Percentage	Percent Responses					Means		
Strongly Agree		(5)	8	47.06%						4.29	4.17	4.31
Agree		(4)	7	41.18%								
Neutral		(3)	1	5.88%								
Disagree		(2)	1	5.88%								
Strongly Disagree		(1)	0	0%								
					0	25	50	75	100	Question	College Summary	Department Summary
Return Rate	Mean	STD	Median	College Summary	Mean	STD	Median	Department Summary	Mean	STD	Median	
17/30 (56.67%)	4.29	0.85	4.00	13,894	4.17	1.03	4.00	657	4.31	0.96	5.00	

8 - My instructor treats me fairly with regard to race, age, sex, religion, national origin, disability, and sexual orientation.												
Response Option		Weight	Frequency	Percentage	Percent Responses					Means		
Strongly Agree		(5)	13	76.47%						4.76	4.70	4.80
Agree		(4)	4	23.53%								
Neutral		(3)	0	0%								
Disagree		(2)	0	0%								
Strongly Disagree		(1)	0	0%								
					0	25	50	75	100	Question	College Summary	Department Summary
Return Rate	Mean	STD	Median	College Summary	Mean	STD	Median	Department Summary	Mean	STD	Median	
17/30 (56.67%)	4.76	0.44	5.00	13,894	4.70	0.62	5.00	657	4.80	0.49	5.00	

Western Kentucky University

Fall 2014 Full Term Course Evaluations

Course: PHIL103002 : THE COMMITTED LIFE

Instructor: Michael Reno *

9 - Please provide additional feedback:

Return Rate	6/30 (20%)
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- A little scattered. I would like to see more concrete formatting in the lecture like a PowerPoint so that I know what information I'll need to know.
- The readings were difficult and confusing, but the professor used class time to make the material clear, which was extremely helpful. Although this class was outside of my usual academic interests, I enjoyed how it challenged me to think.
- I have literally heard Reno say "Ooh, what's that, it's shiny!" He is very easily distracted. Other than that he is a very proficient teacher.
- Learned many new things in this course and the instructor did a good job at keeping me interested-a difficult thing to do in a college course.
- he is more than eager to help me with the material he makes sure everyone understands what he is asking for and gives very helpful feedback
- Friendly and understanding, Mr. Reno is INCREDIBLY proficient in what he does and is able to assess our questions with perfect accuracy. Lectures are open for discussion and actively promotes us students to be involved and to ask questions and provide answers.

Western Kentucky University

Fall 2014 Full Term Course Evaluations

Course: PHIL320001 : ETHICS

Instructor: Michael Reno *

1 - What is your expected grade in this course?				
Response Option	Weight	Frequency	Percentage	Percent Responses
A	(1)	12	52.17%	
B	(2)	9	39.13%	
C	(3)	2	8.7%	
D	(4)	0	0%	
F	(5)	0	0%	
				0 25 50 75 100
Return Rate				
23/33 (69.7%)				

2 - My instructor displays a clear understanding of course topics.												
Response Option	Weight	Frequency	Percentage	Percent Responses					Means			
Strongly Agree	(5)	12	52.17%						4.48	4.51	4.56	
Agree	(4)	10	43.48%									
Neutral	(3)	1	4.35%									
Disagree	(2)	0	0%									
Strongly Disagree	(1)	0	0%									
				0 25 50 75 100	Question	College Summary	Department Summary					
Return Rate	Mean	STD	Median	College Summary	Mean	STD	Median	Department Summary	Mean	STD	Median	
23/33 (69.7%)	4.48	0.59	5.00	13,894	4.51	0.78	5.00	657	4.56	0.77	5.00	

3 - My instructor is well-prepared for class.												
Response Option	Weight	Frequency	Percentage	Percent Responses					Means			
Strongly Agree	(5)	14	60.87%						4.52	4.50	4.57	
Agree	(4)	7	30.43%									
Neutral	(3)	2	8.7%									
Disagree	(2)	0	0%									
Strongly Disagree	(1)	0	0%									
				0 25 50 75 100	Question	College Summary	Department Summary					
Return Rate	Mean	STD	Median	College Summary	Mean	STD	Median	Department Summary	Mean	STD	Median	
23/33 (69.7%)	4.52	0.67	5.00	13,894	4.50	0.77	5.00	657	4.57	0.70	5.00	

4 - Performance measures (exams, assignments, etc.) are well constructed.												
Response Option	Weight	Frequency	Percentage	Percent Responses					Means			
Strongly Agree	(5)	8	34.78%						4.04	4.25	4.19	
Agree	(4)	8	34.78%									
Neutral	(3)	7	30.43%									
Disagree	(2)	0	0%									
Strongly Disagree	(1)	0	0%									
				0 25 50 75 100	Question	College Summary	Department Summary					
Return Rate	Mean	STD	Median	College Summary	Mean	STD	Median	Department Summary	Mean	STD	Median	
23/33 (69.7%)	4.04	0.82	4.00	13,894	4.25	0.97	5.00	657	4.19	1.01	4.00	

Western Kentucky University
Fall 2014 Full Term Course Evaluations

Course: PHIL320001 : ETHICS

Instructor: Michael Reno *

5 - My instructor provides helpful feedback.												
Response Option		Weight	Frequency	Percentage	Percent Responses					Means		
Strongly Agree		(5)	11	47.83%						4.39	4.26	4.32
Agree		(4)	10	43.48%								
Neutral		(3)	2	8.7%								
Disagree		(2)	0	0%								
Strongly Disagree		(1)	0	0%								
					0	25	50	75	100	Question	College Summary	Department Summary
Return Rate	Mean	STD	Median	College Summary	Mean	STD	Median	Department Summary	Mean	STD	Median	
23/33 (69.7%)	4.39	0.66	4.00	13,894	4.26	0.98	5.00	657	4.32	0.90	5.00	

6 - Overall, my instructor is effective.												
Response Option		Weight	Frequency	Percentage	Percent Responses					Means		
Strongly Agree		(5)	9	39.13%						4.26	4.30	4.37
Agree		(4)	12	52.17%								
Neutral		(3)	1	4.35%								
Disagree		(2)	1	4.35%								
Strongly Disagree		(1)	0	0%								
					0	25	50	75	100	Question	College Summary	Department Summary
Return Rate	Mean	STD	Median	College Summary	Mean	STD	Median	Department Summary	Mean	STD	Median	
23/33 (69.7%)	4.26	0.75	4.00	13,894	4.30	0.94	5.00	657	4.37	0.85	5.00	

7 - I have learned a lot in this course.												
Response Option		Weight	Frequency	Percentage	Percent Responses					Means		
Strongly Agree		(5)	9	39.13%						4.09	4.17	4.31
Agree		(4)	10	43.48%								
Neutral		(3)	2	8.7%								
Disagree		(2)	1	4.35%								
Strongly Disagree		(1)	1	4.35%								
					0	25	50	75	100	Question	College Summary	Department Summary
Return Rate	Mean	STD	Median	College Summary	Mean	STD	Median	Department Summary	Mean	STD	Median	
23/33 (69.7%)	4.09	1.04	4.00	13,894	4.17	1.03	4.00	657	4.31	0.96	5.00	

8 - My instructor treats me fairly with regard to race, age, sex, religion, national origin, disability, and sexual orientation.												
Response Option		Weight	Frequency	Percentage	Percent Responses					Means		
Strongly Agree		(5)	16	69.57%						4.65	4.70	4.80
Agree		(4)	6	26.09%								
Neutral		(3)	1	4.35%								
Disagree		(2)	0	0%								
Strongly Disagree		(1)	0	0%								
					0	25	50	75	100	Question	College Summary	Department Summary
Return Rate	Mean	STD	Median	College Summary	Mean	STD	Median	Department Summary	Mean	STD	Median	
23/33 (69.7%)	4.65	0.57	5.00	13,894	4.70	0.62	5.00	657	4.80	0.49	5.00	

Western Kentucky University

Fall 2014 Full Term Course Evaluations

Course: PHIL320001 : ETHICS

Instructor: Michael Reno *

9 - Please provide additional feedback:

Return Rate	8/33 (24.24%)
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- Professor Reno is a great teacher. One thing I would recommend is that the professor do something to make the class more interesting.
 - Though this class was dry at some points I felt that my instructor did his best to make it interesting and enjoyable to participate in. Mr. Reno is a very good teacher.
 - I enjoyed this class a lot. He is a really good teacher
 - Fantastic class and the professor is wonderful. The only problem is that it is at 930am and with such a serious and complex issue the class has a hard time being fully interactive to create a lively discussion.
 - This class was a challenge for me. I don't think it was the teachers fault and I don't think it was really the course content. I think it was just a clash between teaching and learning styles and sometimes that just happens and it's nobody's fault. I did enjoy Mr. Reno as a teacher.
 - This was an interesting class. the material covered was good. The instructor was good ans he responded to emails and questions on time. The content in this class was somehow difficult to understand, but he took his time to explain the content.
- I recommend him for other students.
- This is a note to the department rather than to the instructor. This class has a lot of fundamental material key terms and ideals that need to be laid out in a power point.
- Sometimes it was hard to follow the intentions of the professor due to the hand written notes. Maybe consider a bit more structure, with notes and their presentation. The use of examples with each theory would really help.
- Overall, really guy who truly knows his material, he is a good teacher and a worthy addition to the school! Would recommend and take again!
- i love this class and the teacher is very passionate about it and i have learned a whole lot and i am glad that i took this course