

Introduction to Ethics:

Moral Competence

Hybrid Online and Land-Based Course

Fall 2012

Syllabus with Complete Descriptions of the Assignments.

# Phly 161 B101 (2420)

# Mondays 1–2:15 PM in SC 208

# And on Angel

# and

# Phly 161 B102 (2605)

# Wednesdays 1–2:15 PM in SC 208

# And on Angel

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Email is the best way to contact me. I promise to respond to all emails within 48 hrs, and generally respond within 24.

# How to Use this Syllabus

# This syllabus is very long, because it explains everything you will need to do for the next fifteen weeks. You need to read over the whole thing at the start of class to get the basics of how the course will work. There is a short quiz online over the contents of this syllabus. You will need to get a 100 on this quiz in order to unlock the rest of the course. Don’t worry, you can take the test as many times as you like, you can look at the syllabus during the test, and the test stays the same each time you take it. The test is just here to insure that everyone knows up front what they are signing up for.

# Once you pass the online syllabus quiz, you will still need to hang on to this syllabus. Later in the course, when you have to do things like write the paper, you will need to refer back to a lot of these instructions and policies.

“Our examination does not aim, as others do, at study; for the purpose of our examination is not to know what virtue is, but to become good, since otherwise the inquiry would be of no benefit to us.”

–Aristotle, *Nichomachean Ethics* 1103b26

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# Course Information

## Important Announcements

**This is a hybrid land-based/online course. You must complete both the online and in-class activities to pass the course.**

Please turn off all cell phones and pagers during class.

If you have a disability and need special accommodation, please see me early in the semester.

Read this syllabus carefully! Although it is long, it contains everything you need to know for all the major assignments

Important announcements for this course will be sent by email. Please check your email regularly.

Tutoring is available through the Academic Support Center. 1-800-955-9222 (ext. 4057) or (440) 366-4057. See www.lorainccc.edu/tutoring+and+testing+center/

## Course Texts

Liszka, James Jakôb. 2002. *Moral competence: an integrated approach to the study of ethics*. 2nd ed. Upper Saddle River, N.J.: Prentice Hall. ISBN: 0-13-034154-1

Readings from sources other than Liszka will be posted as .pdf files on Angel.

## Course Description

The focus of this course is on the idea of *moral competence*. The word “competence” is used in many fields to describe someone who is proficient in an activity, and can do it on her own without constant outside guidance. One has linguistic competence, for instance, if one can speak a language fluently. Competence is compatible with making many mistakes, however. Indeed, if you pay attention, you will be surprised how many linguistic mistakes native speakers make routinely. A competent person is generally able to recognize her mistakes and correct them when necessary. Similarly, one is morally competent if one can live one’s life as a decent human being, without coercion from someone else, making periodic mistakes, but being able to recognize and correct them.

One difference between moral competence and other sorts of competence is that the exact boundaries of moral competence are hotly debated. While we can all agree that torturing babies for fun is wrong, no one can agree whether aborting a fetus is wrong, and as a result whether a morally competent person can ever have an abortion. The role of context in evaluating moral competence is also hard to determine. Were the slave owning founders of our country all morally incompetent, or were they competent people who made a mistake that would be easy to make in their place and time? Is there something about current society that might make us all look morally incompetent to future generations?

It would be the deepest hubris to pretend that this course can make you morally competent. The truth is, most of that work has already been done by your upbringing. Instead, this course will give you an understanding of what you are doing when you are exercising your own moral competence. It will give you reflective knowledge about what is hopefully already going on in your life. You will then be able to turn around and use this self understanding to refine your own competence. It will also help you understand what goes on when competence breaks down, when people are just unable to live their lives well.

## Course Expectations

**This is a hybrid online/land-based course, and students are expected to complete both the online and land-based activities.** The total amount of work for a hybrid course should be the same as for a regular course. This course meets once a week for 75 minutes, while a normal course meets for a total of 150 minutes a week. The normal course also has two hours of homework for every hour of class time, or five hours a week. Putting the homework time together with the extra 75 minutes of time you are supposed to put in on line, the average student should spend about seven and a half hours a week at home working on this course, either online or as regular homework reading and writing. Your individual time will vary, depending on how naturally you take to the material.

## Catelogue Course Description and Prerequisites

A study of traditional and contemporary moral theories, focusing on the question of what is the criterion of moral goodness and moral rightness. Contemporary moral, social and political issues are discussed against the background of these theories. *Humanities core course. No prerequisites.*

## Course Outcomes

This course will give you…

* A general background in ethical theory, the set of ideas and principles philosophers have developed over the centuries for dealing with all kinds of ethical problems
* Skills to apply ideas from ethical theory to practical situation in your life
* Skills to navigate areas of cultural conflict in ethics
* Skills to develop, explain, and justify an informed position of one’s own on issues in ethics.
* An appreciation of the value of pursuing ethics rationally and with an understanding of multiple points of view

# Schedule

## This course is divided into five three-week parts. Most of the assignments for each section—the readings, videos, online and in-class exercises, and discussion boards—must be completed by the end of that part. Some assignments—the tests, in class exercises, and components of the paper project—will either be done in particular class sessions or are due by that class session. You will find the list of items that that are due in each class session listed below by the number of that class session. All assignments not submitted in class must be submitted by midnight on the day they are due.

This semester, there are two sections for this course. Section B101 meets Mondays from 1:00 to 2:15 and B102 meets Wednesdays from 1:00 to 2:15. If you cannot attend the class for the section you signed up for, you may go to the other section that week.

## Part 1: Introduction and Moral Sentiment.

Monday, August 27 – Monday September 17.

**Online and at home**

Readings: This syllabus; Liszka, Chapter 1; Haidt “When Morality Opposes Justice” on Angel.

Videos: Haidt at TED, Goleman at TED, My presentation on theories of moral emotion, My presentation on argument.

Online Exercises: Guided peer questioning, “Your Morals” questionnaire, Argument exercise, Kant and Confucius on nobility, Practice test.

Discussion Board: The study of morality and moral emotion.

**Class Sessions**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Class 1 | Mon., Aug. 27 or Wed., Aug. 29. | Completed in class: Mencius exercise, Ikea lamp ad, |
| *Monday, September 3, Labor Day, no class.* | | |
| Class 2 | Wed., Sept. 5 or  Mon., Sept. 10 | Completed in class: Trust exercise |
| Class 3 | Wed., Sept. 12 or  Mon., Sept. 17 | Completed in class: Open discussion, **Test 1.** |

## Part 2: Moral Strength and Autonomy.

Tuesday, September 18 – Monday, October 8

**Online and at home**

Readings: Liszka, Chapter 2, Nils Rauhut, *Ultimate Questions* chap. 4, on Angel

Videos: Writing presentation

Online Exercises: Sentence exercise, Paragraph exercise, Kant and Nietzsche, Practice test.

Discussion Board: Autonomy and strength of will

**In Class**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Class 4 | Wed., Sept. 19 or Mon., Sept 24 | Completed in class: Rauhut free will exercise, My moral luck |
| Class 5 | Wed., Sept. 26 or Mon., Oct. 1 | Completed in class: Princess Diana, |
| Class 6 | Wed., Oct. 3 or  Mon., Oct. 8 | Completed in class: **Test 2.** |

## Part 3: Moral Virtues

Tuesday, October 9 – Monday, October 29

**Online and at home**

Readings: Liszka, Chapter 3

Videos: To be announced.

Online Exercises: Paper grading exercise

Discussion Board: Virtues

**In Class**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Class 7 | Wed., Oct. 10 or  Mon., Oct. 15 | Completed in class: Virtue list exercise |
| Class 8 | Wed., Oct. 17 or  Mon., Oct. 22 | Completed in class:Virtue as a mean |
| Class 9 | Wed., Oct. 24 or Mon., Oct. 29 | **Due at start of class session: Paper draft 1**  Completed in class: Paper peer response part 1, **Test 3.** |

## Part 4: Moral Wisdom and Practical Reason

Tuesday, October 30 – Monday, November 19

**Online and at home**

Readings: Liszka, Chapter 4,

Videos: Dan Gilbert at TED**.**

Online Exercises: Practice test

Discussion Board: Wisdom

**In Class**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Class 10 | Wed., Oct. 31 or Mon., Nov. 5 | Completed in class: Your stories, |
| *Tuesday, November 6, Election Day, Go vote.* | | |
| Class 11 | Wed., Nov. 7 or Mon., Nov. 12 | Completed in class: Comparative Council Exercise |
| Class 12 | Wed., Nov. 14 or Mon., Nov. 19 | Completed in class: **Test 4**. |

*Friday, November 16: Last day to withdraw from class without documented extenuating circumstances.*

## Part 5: Moral Knowledge

Monday, April 9 – Sunday, April 29

**Online and at home**

Readings: Liszka, Chapter 5; LeGuin “The ones who walk away from Olemas”

Videos: To be announced.

Online Exercises: Olemas exercise.

Discussion Board: Knowledge

**In Class**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Class 13 | Wed., Nov. 21 or Mon., Nov. 26 | Confucius on Knowledge |
| Class 14 | Wed., Nov. 28 or Mon., Dec. 3 | To be announced. |
| Class 15 | Wed., Dec. 5 or Mon., Dec. 10 *from 12 to 1:50 PM.* | Completed in class: **Test 5.**  **All discussion forums will be closed midnight.** |

Monday, December 10. Final draft of paper due in the Angel dropbox.

There is no final exam for this course. The final exam period for the Monday section will be used to make up the class day we lost on Labor Day.

# Assignments Overview

## Grading

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| 5% Attendance  5% Videos  10% Exercises  20% Discussion forum participation | 20% Quizzes  20% Paper, 1,500–2,000 words  20% Rewrite of paper, at least 600 words of new material. |

Individual assignments are graded on a 100 point scale. Your total grade for the semester is also computed on a 100 point scale. Only when I turn in final grades is anything converted to LCCC’s letter system. The final conversion is done using the standard scale 0–59: F, 60–69: D, 70–79: C, 80–89: B, 90–100 A.

## Attendance

There will be a sign in sheet every day. (It will actually be one long sign up sheet that covers both sections.) Attendance is graded by dividing the number of classes you signed in for by the total number of classes and multiplying by one hundred. Thus in a term with 15 classes, each absence costs you about 6.6 points from your attendance grade. It is your responsibility to sign the attendance sheet each class.

The best way to be sure that an absence is excused is to email me before the class to let me know you will absent. Absences can be excused if you are sick, a child or other dependent is sick, a family member or loved one passes away or is close to passing away, you or a loved one gives birth to a child, or you have unexpected transportation problems. If you know you will be absent far in advance, please let me know far in advance. I do not require documentation for an absence if you contact me in advance and have three absences or fewer.

Attendance records are kept on Angel as a part of the gradebook. To access the gradebook, go to “reports” then select “Learner Profile” in the drop down field under “Category” and “gradebook grades” in the drop down field under “Report” and then click “Run.” Attendance for the individual classes are marked as “Class 1,” “Class 2,” etc. If you have a 100, you have credit for attending the class. If you have a 0, you have an unexcused absence. If the field is grayed out or blank, either you have an excused absence or the grade has not been entered yet.

## 

## Videos

There are a number of videos you are required for this class. The links for all of these will be on Angel in the folder for that part of the course. Some of the videos were made by top thinkers in moral philosophy and psychology, and are hosted on a website called TED. Others are videos I have made during pervious incarnations of this class. These will be hosted on Youtube, LCCC’s streaming server, and Itunes U. I copies on Itunes you cannot be linked to straight from Angel; you need to use the Itunes software. Instructions will be available on Angel.

Grading for the videos is simple: you watch the video, you get full credit. Credit will be awarded automatically when you watch the videos. If you are not credited automatically for watching the videos, please email me.

## Exercises

This class will feature a number of exercises to help you explore concepts and apply the ideas we are discussing. The exercises include surveys, free-writes and brainstorming activities. Some exercises will be done online and some in the classroom. For some classroom exercises, you will be asked to take them home and work on them further. Some will be done individually, and some in groups. For all exercises, you get full credit (100 points) for making a good faith effort to do the work. Classroom exercises will be collected as they are completed and entered in the gradebook. If you miss class for any reason, you will be able to download the exercise, or an alternative exercise, do it at home, and turn it in to me the next day. For the online exercises, Angel will send me a notice when you complete them. I will then check to see that it was actually done and enter the grade in the gradebook.

Some exercises, such as logic exercises and practice tests, will be the sort of thing where there are correct and incorrect answers. For most exercises, however, there will be no right answers. The point is simply to help you clarify your own ideas. If the exercise has correct answers, they will be posted after the exercise is done.

Discussion Forums

There will be an online discussion board for each of the five parts of this course. These boards will be a chance for you to express your opinion, ask questions, and in general mull over the material in theis course. Details on how these forums are graded are in the next major section of the syllabus, on page 9.

Quizzes

There will be five quizzes during the semester to test your knowledge of the concepts and arguments introduced in the dialogues and class sessions. These quizzes will rely on short answer and multiple choice questions. For each quiz there will be a review sheet and a practice quiz, available online. If you have an excused absence on the quiz day, you can take a make up quiz in the Testing and Assessment Center, located in Room 233 of the College Center.

## The Paper Project

The capstone for this course is the paper project, which will involve rough draft and a final draft. Each of these will be graded separately, and together they amount to 40% of your grade. Details on what is expected for the paper start on page 14.

# Discussion Forums

## Overview

The most active part of the course will be the question boards. There will be five boards, one in each major part of the course. Each comment will be given a number of points between zero and five. I will add up the number of points you score to a maximum of 10 points. This score is then multiplied by 10 to get your grade. Thus two average comments should be enough to get you a 60. You can get a 100 on the discussion forum by posting two five- point comments, two four-point comments and a two-point comment, etc. Final grades will not be tabulated until the end of the course, so you have time to get things right. The question can ask for a clarification about a part of the reading that was confusing, or it can be a more general puzzle about the topic addressed. It must, however, be a question addressed to the whole class, which you sincerely want answered. I will also post questions, and sometimes offer answers, if the answers you guys generate get too far off base.

Online discussion forums can be incredibly productive places for exchanging ideas or they can be a useless mess of people typing whatever pops into their heads. A productive online discussion forum will not only help you learn the material; it will help you do better on tests and papers. Here are some guidelines for making the online discussion forums work along with some notes about how I am going to grade the forums.

## Basic rules of etiquette

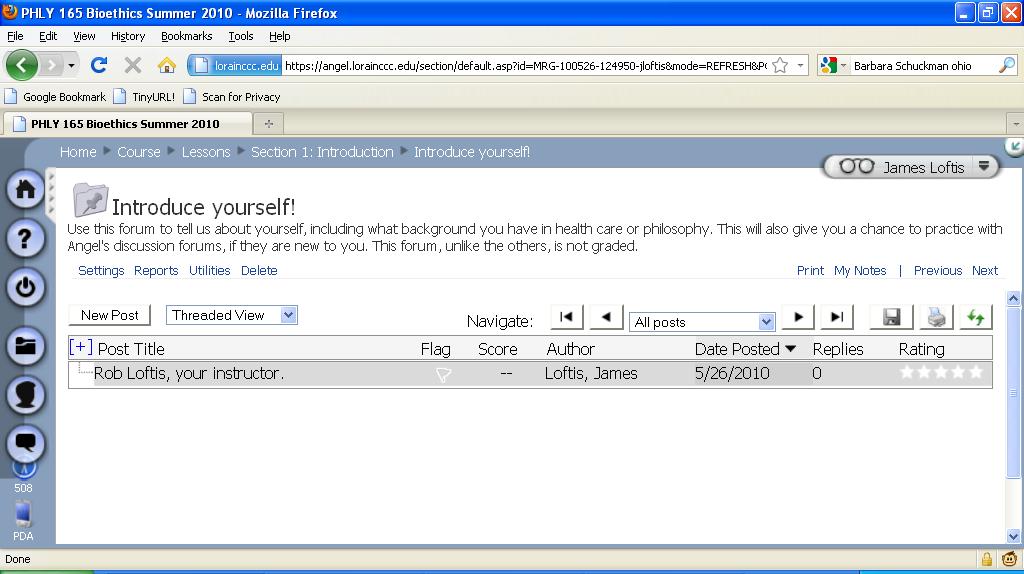
There are a lot of rules for politeness on the internet. Following these rules will not only keep the other commenters happy, they will make you appear gracious and intelligent and people will take what you say more seriously. Different internet communities have different rules, but the rules I am listing here apply pretty much everywhere.

**1. Do not use ALL CAPS.** Writing in ALL CAPS is extremely rude. Typically, all capital letters are used to indicate shouting. If you write the whole comment in all caps, it looks like you are yelling at people.

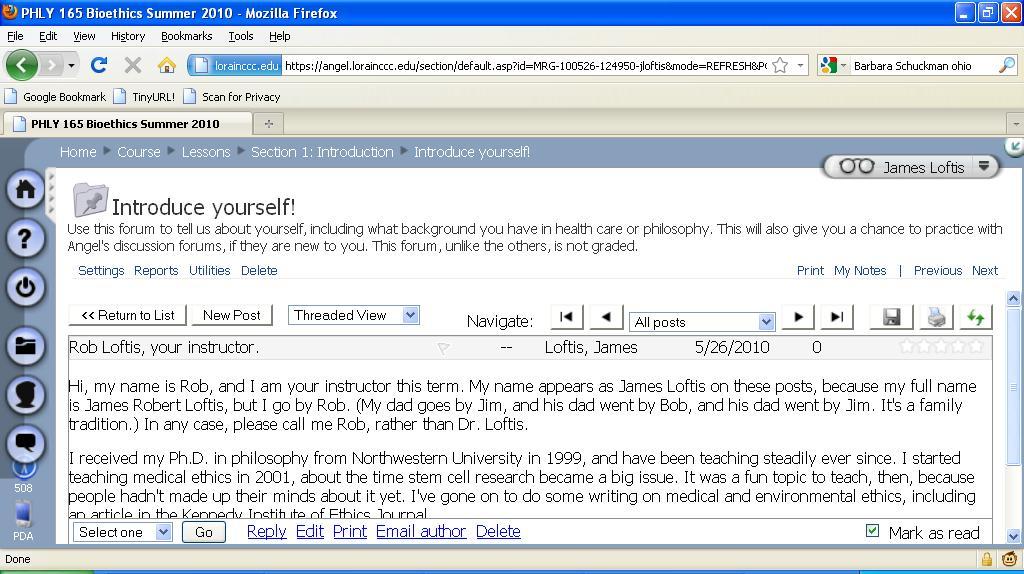
**2. Use descriptive subject lines.** If the whole discussion forum is on moral emotions, putting “moral emotions” in the subject line doesn’t give the reader any new information. If there are dozens of posts on all different aspects of the topic and everyone is simply titled “moral emotions” there is no way to find the part of the board that you are interested in. Good subject lines will name specific cases, aspects of the issue, or arguments.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Bad | Good |
| “moral emotions” | “contrasting guilt and shame” |
| “self control” | “Klausner’s fifth method for developing self control” |
| “morality” | “Kant’s argument about the good will” |

**3. Post replies to the relevant thread**.There are two ways you can make posts in Angel. When you are looking at all the whole discussion board, you can use the “new post” button.



When you are looking at an individual post, you can use the “reply.”



If you are replying to someone else, please click on their post, and then hit “reply.” This will keep posts on the same topic together, creating strings of posts called “threads.” In the main window you can see all the posts in a thread by clicking on the plus sign next to first post in the thread.

**4. Check basic punctuation, spelling and grammar.** Everyone accepts that discussions on the internet will be filled with typos and misspellings, but after a certain point, too many typos make the comment hard to read, and this reflects badly on the commenter. I recommend that you either preview your comments before posting or write them first in a word processor that can check spelling. For a good sense of how much poor grammar, spelling and punctuation can affect the way you are perceived on the internet, check out http://www.stupidfilter.org/.

## Suggestions for thoughtful comments

The etiquette rules are about the form of your comment. The really important part of your post though, is the content. Here are some suggestions for making insightful comments.

**1. Don’t just post an emotional response.** Many topics we discuss will offend and outrage people. However, simply expressing outrage doesn’t help us understand the issue. Rather than simply announcing that you are mad, explain *why* you think something is wrong

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Bad | Good |
| “As the parent of an autistic child, I find her behavior shocking!” | “Withholding treatment was unjustified because the baby had a very good chance for a high quality of life, and there are plenty of resources available to help care for the child” |
| “I can’t believe any mother would let her child suffer like that!” | “A quick death is more in the child’s interest than prolonged suffering. Although doctors could have prolonged the child’s life, each additional moment was more a burden than a benefit.” |
| “That’s just sick!!!!” | “You can tell reproductive cloning is morally wrong because it resembles other unacceptable practices like incest.” |

**2. Don’t ask questions that simply repeat the dilemma being discussed.** Everyone has read the same thing, and we all understand the basic dilemma. Questions need to move the discussion forward by calling attention to specific parts of the problem.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Bad | Good |
| “It seems like a drunk driver is responsible for the accident, but all the other people in the example did things wrong, too. Who is to blame?” | “One factor in determining responsibility is the nature of the rule being violated, and drunk driving is a very serious wrong. Does this mean that the driver is responsible for Princess Diana’s death?” |
| “We think of a fireman as brave, but really they are just doing what they are trained to do, and some random guy who runs into a burning building is taking a bigger risk. But it seems wrong to say that firemen are not brave. What do you think?” | “How does discipline relate to bravery? If we think that discipline is actually something that makes people brave, shouldn’t we say that professionals like firemen are made more brave by their training?” |

**3. Don’t ask a series of vague unrelated questions.** A good discussion question is open ended, meaning it can lead to a long discussion. But it can’t do this if it provides no direction whatsoever. You need to be focusing the reader’s attention, not just spitting out every question that bubbles into your head.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Bad | Good |
| What do you think you would do if you knew you or were dying or you were in such great pain that you though would never end? So when do we make our decision? Is it right to do it right away or give it some time? I can look from my view and say to give it some time, however I have never been put in that situation. How can we decide when we are in such pain that we cannot even think straight? It is not right for our autonomy to ever be taken away, but sometimes it is unavoidable. | Pain hurts our ability to think clearly. Does this mean we should make end of life decisions quickly, before the pain becomes too great? |

**4. Don’t just agree with other people or repeat the content of their comment.** If you aren’t saying anything new, your post will just clutter the board and make things harder to read. If you agree with someone, you can say so, but you also need to add something to what they said.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Bad | Good |
| “Oh, I agree Susan, I think our conscience is the best guide to what is right.” | “I agree Susan. Moral decision making requires us to pay attention to the feelings of others and those can really be understood by or intuitive sense of empathy. This intuitive knowledge comes to us as the voice of conscience. So conscience really is a good guide to morality” |
| “I agree with you.” | “I agree. The emotions can be easily fooled. Remember how the Ikea ad we say got us feeling sorry for a lamp!” |

**5. Read before you comment**: This discussion board is for *discussion*. This means you need to both talk and listen. Reading other people’s comments will let you avoid repeating what other people say and let you learn about other people’s viewpoints.

**6. Try to understand the other side of the argument**: When you have very strong opinions about a subject, it is easy to imagine that anyone who disagrees with you is either extremely stupid or simply evil. Generally, this is not the case. The fact is intelligent people of good faith can reach very different conclusions about an issue. You will show respect for others and come to understand the issues you are discussing better if you can see how others reached different conclusions.

**7. Give reasons for your opinions:** Simply announcing what you believe generally doesn’t help anyone else. But if you explain why you believe what you believe, and the reasons you give are one’s that other people share, then you can actually help others and yourself learn.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Bad | Good |
| “People should forgive each other unconditionally, no matter what wrong has been done to them.” | “Forgiveness means letting go of negative emotions. These negative emotions hurt the person who hold them, but don’t affect the wrongdoer at all. *Therefore* there is no reason to every hang on to them and every reason to forgive.” |
| “Forgiveness is only for the repentant.” | “People say that we should forgive just as God forgives. But God doesn’t really forgive unconditionally. He demands that we should ask his forgiveness and let Jesus into our hearts. *Therefore* if we are to be Godly, we should only forgive those who seek forgiveness.” |

Notice that both of the posts listed under “good” use the word *therefore.*  The word *therefore* indicates that reasons are being given for belief.

**8. Refer to specific parts of the reading.** The readings are the core of the course. They provide perspectives and information you are unlikely to get elsewhere. If you can intertwine the readings and the discussion, you will reinforce and deepen your understanding of the material.

**9. Draw connections between the remarks of several commenters or comments and the reading.** Learning is like creating structures in your mind. The more connections between the parts of the structure the more stable it is—the more you’ll remember things later. If you see that an argument in one of the readings is like an argument made by a commenter, you are likely to remember both arguments better. If you post a remark noting this, you are even more likely to remember it, as will the people who read your comment. The goal is to form a network of associations in your brain which includes the readings, the material you have learned in other courses, your own personal experience, and the things you learn from the other students.

**10. Get to know the people you are talking with and where they are coming from.** At first, any online discussion will seem like a bunch of chatter that is impossible to wade through. After a while, individual voices will become distinct as people’s individual styles start to come out. As this happens, the whole conversation becomes clearer. This will happen more quickly if you make an effort to get to know people.

## Grading

I’ve decided to create a more detailed grading system to reflect the quality of the posts. Each comment will be given a number of points between zero and five. I will add up the number of points you score to a maximum of 10 points. This score is then multiplied by 10 to get your grade. So you can get a 100 on the discussion forum by posting two five- point comments, two four-point comments and a two-point comment, etc. Final grades will not be tabulated until the end of the course, so you have time to get things right.

Below are some examples of comments and the number of points they would score, with some explanations:

**Zero Point Comments** are comments that violate basic rules of etiquette or have no content whatsoever. Examples:

* “That’s just sick!!!!”
* “IF YOU THINKS ADULTARYS ACCEPTABLE, YOUR GOING TO SUFFER IN HELL”
* “I agree. The emotions can be easily fooled.”

**One Point Comments** are comments follow basic rules of etiquette, but go against my suggestions for content above. Examples:

* “It seems like a drunk driver is responsible for the accident, but all the other people in the example did things wrong, too. Who is to blame?”
* “We think of a fireman as brave, but really they are just doing what they are trained to do, and some random guy who runs into a burning building is taking a bigger risk. But it seems wrong to say that firemen are not brave. What do you think?”
* “I agree. The emotions can be easily fooled. Remember how the Ikea ad we say got us feeling sorry for a lamp!

**Two and Three Point Comments** have some substantial content, but are short and undeveloped. They typically do *one* of the right things I have outlined above, but that is it.

* “I agree. The emotions can be easily fooled. Remember how the Ikea ad we say got us feeling sorry for a lamp! This makes it dangerous to base morality on the emotions. Bad people can trick you into making bad decisions.”
* “I agree Susan. Moral decision making requires us to pay attention to the feelings of others and those can really be understood by or intuitive sense of empathy. This intuitive knowledge comes to us as the voice of conscience. So conscience really is a good guide to morality”

**Four and Five Point Comments** Are much longer and more detailed, and do *many* of the good things I outlined above.

* “People say that we should forgive just as God forgives. But God doesn’t really forgive unconditionally. He demands that we should ask his forgiveness and let Jesus into our hearts. *Therefore* if we are to be Godly, we should only forgive those who seek forgiveness.”
* “Forgiveness means letting go of negative emotions. These negative emotions hurt the person who hold them, but don’t affect the wrongdoer at all. *Therefore* there is no reason to every hang on to them and every reason to forgive. Liszka claims that forgiving to much indicates weakness, and will lead to people walking all over you, but it actually takes strength to let go of anger, and you can still let go of anger and not let people into your life who are going to hurt you.”

# Paper Project

## Overview

Forty percent of your grade will come from a major paper project where you will write a first draft and a second draft. Each of these will work slightly differently than they do in other courses, so read this carefully. The first draft of the paper will be 1,600–2,000 words long and cover on one of the topics we have discussed in class. The final draft doesn’t have to be longer than 1,600 words, but could get as long as 2,700 words. In the paper you will take a stand on a philosophical issue related to this course and defend it. You will not be graded on the stand you take—you can take any stand you want—but on how well you defend it. In other words the paper will be judged on the quality of its *arguments.* You may think that because your paper can take any stand you want the paper will be easy. Actually, because you must defend your views, it will be one of the hardest papers you ever write. It is easy enough to state what you believe. It is much harder to come up with reasons why the reader should agree with you.

This is an argument paper, not a research paper. All of the information you need is in the readings. If you want to bring in outside material, that is fine, especially if it is stuff you are already familiar with. But there is no need to look outside. The main thing an argument paper is about is your own ideas. You are supposed to give your answer to a philosophical question raised by one of the readings, and defend it. The Liszka text has an appendix on writing philosophy papers, but it is mostly geared to research papers in philosophy, not argument papers.

In addition to having an argument, a good philosophy paper is *original*. It is not enough to simply repeat arguments found in the readings. You need to go beyond the reading to present new reasons for your beliefs. Now, it is true that there is nothing new under the sun. The odds are quite strong that any idea you have has already been thought by someone else. But you need to make an effort to say something original. You can’t simply repeat what was in the reading. Additional information on original content, avoiding plagiarism, and citing your sources is in the section below “Plagiarism and Citation Conventions” and in the video on writing your paper.

You should imagine that the audience for your paper is someone with a college education who has not taken this particular course and has passing knowledge at best of the books you are discussing. This means that, although your paper is mostly about the argument, you will need to explain some of the basic facts and concepts from the textbook so that the reader will understand what you are talking about. Don’t explain facts or concepts from the reading that are not needed for the reader to understand your argument. There are two common mistakes involving explaining background information. The first is to not give any and instead launch right into your argument, as if the reader knew the textbook inside and out. I think people who make this mistake imagine that they are simply taking to their instructor in an email, rather than writing a formal argument paper. The second, more common mistake, is to explain too much, devoting paragraph after paragraph to explaining whole sections of the book, even when the reader doesn’t need to know these things to follow the argument. I think people who make this mistake imagine that they are writing a book report, as if their job in this paper was just to prove that they did the reading and understood it.

The main thing I am looking for in your writing is simplicity and clarity. Don’t worry too much about being formal. I have no problem, for instance, with people using “I” in their writing. It is much easier, if you are arguing for a thesis, to say “I believe this,” rather than creating a complicated or affected sentence involving “we” or “the author of this paper.”

**The first draft is due Wednesday October 24 for the Wednesday section and Monday October 29 for the Monday section. For both sections the final draft is due Monday December 10.** There is no final exam for this course. The paper is your final project. All papers must be submitted electronically to the Drop Box on Angel, even for students in the land based version of the course. Further submission and formatting instructions for each part of the assignment are below.

## Recommended and Supported Word Processors

Many students returning to college after time in non-white collar jobs have trouble getting up to speed with contemporary word processors. This course demands a fair amount of proficiency with word processors. For instance, I ask you to use the “track changes” feature on the rewrite. (See the instructions for the rewrite below.)

***I recommend that students use either MS Word or Open Office, and will provide help to the best of my ability in the use of these two programs.*** I also request that all documents be submitted as either Word .doc or Open Office .odt files.

Word is the most widely used word processor, but it costs money. If you want to use software that is completely free and just as powerful as Word, you can download Open Office from [www.openoffice.org](http://www.openoffice.org/). I do not recommend using MS Works. It is an evil program designed to annoy you into buying the full priced product.

## Selecting a topic and a thesis

The first thing you need to do is select a topic and a thesis. Don’t just select a topic, select a thesis about that topic. Don’t simply decide that you are going to write about forgiveness. Decide what you are going to say about forgiveness, for instance “we should always forgive people unconditionally.” The important thing about choosing a thesis is that you need to choose a controversial thesis. It needs to be something that someone else would disagree with. You are writing an argument paper, and no one argues about things that people all agree on. Here are some common mistakes in coming up with a thesis, along with improved versions of the thesis.

| Bad | Improved |
| --- | --- |
| The topic statement:  Shame and guilt are different moral emotions that effect people differently. | Shame and guilt are both equally necessary for moral competence. |
| The topic statement (again):  Compatibilism is one way free will and determinist can play a role in our lives | The compatibilist is correct to assert that the existence of free will is compatible all events being determined in advance. |
| The “people disagree” thesis:  Different people have different ideas about the role of the emotions in morality. Kant thought the emotions played no role in morality, while the emotivists thought that morality simply was the expression of emotion, and Hume and Haidt believe that morality begins in the emotion and is developed by reason. | Hume and Haidt are right when they argue that morality begins with the emotions and then is amplified by reason. |
| The “important things are important” thesis:  Forgiveness has been promoted by all the religions of the world and is a crucial part of morality. | Forgiveness should be automatic and unconditional. |

The first two bad theses aren’t really theses for an argument paper at all. They are topic sentences for reports of some sort. A report doesn’t try to convince the reader of a viewpoint. It simply relates a series of facts that are all related to some topic, which is given in the topic sentence. The words “shame” and “guilt” appear in the first topic sentence, but that doesn’t mean it takes a stand on a moral issue. Similarly the second bad sentence introduces the idea of free will, but doesn’t take a stand on in. In each case, the sentence is fixed by taking a stand. The third bad thesis also describes an interesting issue, but it doesn’t take a stand on it. This means that the paper isn’t giving an argument of its own. It is still only reporting. The final bad thesis does take a stand, so it is not just reporting, but it doesn’t take a stand on an interesting issue. Anyone would agree that forgiveness is important in morality. Your thesis needs to be controversial: it needs to be something that someone else would disagree with. You are writing an argument paper, and no one argues about things that people all agree on.

Every page of your book has at least one topic worth writing on. In case you have trouble selecting a topic, I have listed eight below. If you use one of the topics listed, you don’t need to turn anything in. But if you come up with your own topic, you should run it by me first.

## Suggested Topics

The topics below consist of a main question in boldface followed by several subquestions. Your thesis should be an answer to the main question. The subquestions are questions you might have to answer in the course of answering the main question. You do not have to answer all of the subquestions, and you do not have to take them in any particular order. They are just there to spark further thought.

**1. Is morality founded on the emotions?** Chapter 1 gives us three possible pictures of the relationship between emotions and morality. Kant believes that only the cool light of reason lets us distinguish right from wrong, and that emotions at best accidentally lead us to act correctly. The positivists, on the other hand, thought that moral judgments were actually nothing more than emotive outbursts. Hume, as well as later feminist thinkers, believed that the emotions serve as a start for morality, which is then further shaped by reason. Who do you agree with, if anyone? Consider examples where the moral emotions push people towards right actions and cases where they push people to wrong actions. If emotions are unreliable, how can reason help us? What is the connection between rationality and goodness? Consider also Liszka’s replies to the three groups of thinkers he discusses.

**2. Which is more important for motivating ethical behavior, shame or guilt?** Explain the difference between the two emotions. Which is a better guide to morality, or are they both necessary? Which feeling should society use to guide its citizens? Do you attempt to cultivate either a sense of guilt or shame in yourself? Why does Bennedict think guilt is more important for a just society? What does this say about her notion of morality? How does Liszka respond to her?

**3. Free will, determinism, or both?** Onpages 84 to 90, Liszka gives a sequence of arguments on the issue of free will, including arguments for and against determinism, libertarianism, and compatiblism. Which of these three positions is closest to your own view? Explain how your own view is like and unlike the viewpoint in Liszka that is closest to yours. Then look at one of Liszka’s arguments for one of the other two views, explain it and reply to it.

**4. Is your moral competence mostly a matter of luck?** Are our emotional make up and ability to control our impulses largely a matter of genes and childhood experience? Do our virtues and moral wisdom mostly come from our upbringing? Where does moral knowledge come from? If all of these are factors out of our control, isn’t moral competence a matter of moral luck? What about the factors external to our own competence, such as the situations we find ourselves in and the long chain of consequence of our actions, are these under our control? How does this affect how we evaluate each other morally?

**5. Does consequential moral luck mean we should change the way we punish people?** Right now in Ohio if you drive drunk, you receive a minimum 3 days in jail, but if you drive drunk and kill someone you receive at least 10 years in jail. But the difference between the former case and the latter could be completely out of the control of the driver. One drunk driver may not have hit anyone simply because there wasn’t anyone else on the road to hit. But we generally only hold people responsible for things under their control. So is this difference is punishment fair? If it is unfair, how do you fix it? Alternately, can we just accept the idea that sometimes we are punished for things outside our control?

**6. Can mental illness reduce or eliminate people’s responsibility for their actions?** Do all mental illnesses reduce responsibility, or is an illness like psychopathy different than an illness like schizophrenia? Consider the case of Patty Hearst or John DuPont: do their experiences or mental problems mean that they are not guilty of any crimes, even though they did criminal things? Consider the Aristotle’s taxonomy for human action. Does this help us understand when someone is responsible and when they are not? Consider some reasons why a person might be considered less responsible because they are mentally ill. Are they less responsible because they do not know the difference between right and wrong? Are they less responsible because they cannot control their actions? Are they less responsible because the cannot control whether they are mentally ill?

**7. Is it possible to have all the virtues?** Plato is often said to have believed in the *unity of virtues*, that is, he felt that you could not have one virtue unless you had them all. As Liszka notes on p.199, Aristotle and Aquinas believed in the *integral theory of virtues*, under which the virtues were separate, but reinforced each other, and could only be perfected as a whole. Flanagan, as noted on p.144 believes in the *contradictory nature of the virtues*, that is, he feels that it is impossible to have all the virtues all at once. Pick one of these stances and expand on it. Why does the author believe in it? Is it true? Does it fit with current psychological research?

**8. Are virtues limited to context?** Thestandard view is that to have a virtue, one must have it globally, in all contexts. Thus if one is honest, one must be both honest in your business dealings and honest in your marriage. The book presents evidence that this simply doesn’t much. People who are honest in their business dealings are no more or less likely to cheat in their marriage. Should we say that you only have a virtue if you have it in all contexts? Will anyone count as virtuous by that standard.

**9. What is a fair grading system?** On page 173 Liszka outlines four standards for judging when a cooperative practice is fair. On p. 175 Liszka offers three different grading systems. Using the standards of justice Liszka outlines, evaluate the grading systems. Do all the grading systems come out as fair by Liszka’s criteria? Are there other criteria beside’s Liszka’s which might show that some of these systems are unfair? If you would like, consider some other grading systems. *Contract grading* for instance, grades you simply on the amount of time you work, or the number of assignments you complete, regardless of the quality of the work.

**10. Is forgiveness a mean between extremes?** Kant and Murphy argue that you can forgive too much. On the other hand, many religions, including most branches of Christianity and Buddhism, teach that you should forgive unconditionally. Should one forgive everyone automatically? Is forgiveness something the forgiver does for herself, or for the wrongdoer? Does forgiving too quickly make you a doormat? What has to happen in order to say that one person has forgiven another?

**11. When should one forgive?** If you believe that it is possible to be too forgiving, the question becomes when to forgive? Consider the list of conditions for forgiveness on p. 197. (Liszka attributes these conditions to Holmgren, but the citation is mistaken. For your paper just call them Liszka’s conditions.) Are all of these necessary for forgiveness? Consider the first condition: should you forgive people who have not acknowledge their own wrongdoing? How can we relate morally to people who do not or cannot acknowledge their own wrongdoing? Can we forgive the dead if they died before repenting? Consider the third condition: it is clearly meant to capture a notion of punishment. Is this the right way to punish? Is this the right reason to punish? Is this sort of punishment even necessary?

**12. Are all virtues a mean between extremes?** Pick a few virtues, such as honesty, courage or anger, and consider whether they are best viewed as a mean between extremes. Is it possible to have too much of them? Too little? What happens when one has too much or too little of these character traits? Is every emotion good in moderation?

A final note on research: I said before, you do not need to do any outside reading for this paper, and doing too much outside reading can take time from more important parts of the paper. However I was irked to find that had a citation wrong in the forgiveness section. If anyone wants to fact check Liszka as a part of their essay, it would definitely help their grade. Basically, I want to find Liszka’s source and confirm if it says what he says it says. This will take some advanced research skills, but the reference librarian at LCCC should be willing to help you. This is by no means mandatory, but if you feel up to it, I’d appreciate it if you did it.

## The Full Paper

The next step is to write up the full paper. **The first draft is due Wednesday October 24 for the Wednesday section and Monday October 29 for the Monday section.** This should be a complete, **1,500–2,000 word**, draft of the paper. **Although you are going to write another draft, you should pretend that this is the finished product.** Make the paper as good as you think you can make it. I guarantee you will find, after you get your graded paper with feedback, that there are still plenty of improvements to be made in the final draft.

For some of you, if you have done the earlier steps carefully enough, this part will come easily. Other times it will not, and you may need to abandon parts of your original paper plan, or even the entire paper topic. This is fine.

When you submit on angel, submit as an attachment; do not cut and paste, because that will remove all of your formatting. Please submit your file as an MS Word .doc or an Open Office .odt file. I can read other files, but the formatting generally gets screwed up. The file name should contain your last name, followed by your first name if you have a common last name, the words “first draft,” and a one or two word name for your topic. So here are some good examples of file names.

Doe, Jane, first draft, Forgiveness.doc

Garspunwitz, first draft, Free will.doc

Please do not submit files with names like “Philosophy paper 1” If everyone does that, I can’t tell the files apart. Your outline should appear in Angel by midnight the day it is due. If it is not there, it will be counted as late.

In addition to the electronic copy, you need to bring a paper copy to class to be read by your peers. The peer response exercise will be a part of your exercise grade. Instructions are available on Angel and will also be distributed the day the outline is due.

The paper should be 1,500-2,000 words long. This is the length requirement for the first draft. Don’t submit a shorter paper thinking that you will be able to add the extra words in the next draft.

When you print the version for the class, please do not give me a cover sheet, title page, or a little plastic glossy cover. Besides being a waste of resources, there is just something weird about a glossy cover and a title page on a paper that barely breaks five pages. Also, if at all possible, print on both sides of the page.

## Paper Rewrite

Once you have written your paper and received a grade on it, I will ask you to rewrite it. **For both sections the final draft is due Monday December 10.** To assist you in the rewrite, both I and another student will write comments on your first paper. This rewrite must contain 600 words of new material. You can accomplish this by adding 600 words to your paper, or by changing 600 words of the existing paper, or some combination of the two. The new material must be integrated into the old paper. This is a *rewrite* of the old paper. Your grade for the rewrite will be determined mostly by your ability to respond to criticism, and only a little bit by the quality of the final product. The rewrite should be submitted electronically, just as the first paper was.

To measure how much you have changed in the second draft, I request that you use the track changes feature on your word processor. If you are using MS Word you can activate the track changes feature by opening the reviewing toolbar, and clicking on the red “track changes” button. In the drop down menu on the right of the reviewing toolbar select “Final Showing Markup.” Now every new thing you type should appear underlined and in red, and everything you delete will appear crossed out. If this screen looks too cluttered to you, you switch the drop down menu to say “Final” and your changes will be hidden, but still recorded so I can count them later. The method tracking changes in OpenOffice is similar. Go to Edit/Changes and check on “Record” and “Show.” As in MS Word, new things you write will be underlined in red, and things you delete will be crossed out. If you do not want your screen to be so cluttered, you can uncheck “Show,” but be sure to leave “Record” checked.

The document I return to you will have comments and changes from me included in it. As you rewrite your paper, please either accept or reject the changes I made to the paper and delete my comments. I recommend using the comments in the draft I return to you as a kind of ‘to do’ list. For each comment, decide if there is a change that you need to make to the paper in response to that comment. Once you have either made the necessary changes or decided to do nothing in response to a comment, you can delete the comment.

## Explanation of Paper Grades

These are the standards I use to grade major writing assignments. Standards are different for assignments where you have less time, like in class assignments, or assignments where I am just trying to get your initial response to the reading.

**0–59 (F):** This paper did not meet the basic requirements of the assignment. This could be because you completely ignore all of the ideas and topics we cover in the class or it could be because your writing is so garbled I can’t understand you. You may have made factual errors that would be obvious to anyone who had attended class for a day. Papers that are dramatically shorter than the assigned length and leave obvious lines of thought uninvestigated also receive an F. Plagiarized papers at a minimum receive and F.

**60-69 (D):** This paper completed the assignment in a perfunctory fashion, but shows no real evidence of thought or is marred by a writing style that distracts from the content. It might be more of a book report than a philosophy paper, because it doesn’t introduce any ideas or arguments not already in the reading. The thesis might be unclear, missing, or trivial. Arguments might be missing or circular. You may have substituted ranting for argument. The paper might have a hint of original thought, but bury it so deep tangled prose that the reader cannot extract and examine it. You might also have made serious mistakes explaining the facts of the issue or the beliefs of writers covered.

**70–79 (C):** This paper is ok. You have a clear thesis and make some attempt at an original argument. Your logic probably starts to stumble when you venture too far from arguments that have already been discussed in class. There are mistakes in style, but nothing that really keeps me from understanding what you mean. There may be a few mistakes in explaining more advanced or technical concepts in philosophy, or in explaining the beliefs of authors who are a little obscure. Factual mistakes are generally common or understandable misconceptions.

**80-89 (B):** This paper is good. You have a clear thesis and an argument worth thinking about. The argument is novel in the sense that it was not presented in the reading or other material given to you. Stylistic mistakes are little more than slips of the pen. You have a clear grasp of all of the facts and concepts relevant to the issue, and can explain even the more difficult ones in your own words.

**90–100 (A):** This paper is way cool. The thesis is insightful and the argument compelling. Ideas show up here that rarely appear in student papers. The writing is lively and elegant. I learned from reading this paper.

## Plagiarism and Citation Conventions

Because your paper must contain original thought, it is vital that you be perfectly clear about which ideas are yours and which ideas are things that you have read. Failure to give proper credit for ideas is plagiarism. More concretely, the student code of conduct defines plagiarism this way: “to steal or pass off as one's own ideas, words, writings, sources of another without giving direct and complete credit; to commit literary theft; to present as new and original ideas, phrases, photos, sentences or products of any length derived from an existing source without citing the quotation as such and listing the complete source” (sec. 3A).[[1]](#footnote-1) People who plagiarize will be reported to the director of enrollment services, who can expel you from the school. Details on disciplinary procedures are available in the Student Code of Conduct. Although it is not plagiarism to take a paper you wrote for one class and reuse it for another class, I do not allow it. All papers must be written by you, and written for this class.

*Citation conventions* have developed over the centuries to assist authors in explaining the source of their ideas to readers. Citations serve many purposes. They give credit where credit is due, provide support for your claim by appeal to legitimate authority, give the reader a chance to do a spot evaluation of your sources, and give the reader a chance to gather more information. There is a lot of minutia involved in citation conventions, and sometimes it can seem intimidating, but the basics of it are simple enough, and that is really all you need to follow.

There are two parts to a citation, the *in-text citation* and the *works cited list*. The in-text citation is a mark in the body of your essay—typically a footnote number or a work’s author and date of publication—which announces that an idea is derived from another source and points the reader to a place for more information. The works cited list then is the place with that additional information. Figures 1and 2 give a simple example.

The most straightforward reason transgenic crops will not improve production in the developing world is that they aren’t being marketed there. In 2000, three countries accounted for 99% of the GM crops grown by acreage: the US (69%), Argentina (23%) and Canada (7%) (Paarlburg 2001, 2). In 2002, a fourth country entered the picture, China, with 4% of the world market (James 2002). Both critics and supporters of agricultural biotechnology agree that this is in part because biotech companies simply aren’t interested in other markets. They are interested in wealthy farmers “with an ability to pay for the extensive infrastructure needed to support transgenetic crops” (Lappé and Bailey 1998, 88, see also Paarlburg 2001, 3). Note the contrast with the Green

In text citations offer basic information and instructions for getting more.

Examples of citations to support facts.

Example of a citation to give a direct quote. Note the quotation marks. They would not be there if I were only paraphrasing or summarizing.

**Fig. 1: Example from paper body**

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**Fig. 2: Example from Works Cited List**

Lappé, Marc. 1991. Ethical Issues in Manipulating the Human Germ Line. *Journal of Medicine and Philosophy* 16:621-39.

Lappé, Marc, and Britt Bailey. 1998. *Against the Grain: Biotechnology and the Corporate Takeover of Your Food*. Monroe, Maine: Common Courage Press.

MacKenzie, Donald J. 2000. *International Comparison of Regulatory Frameworks for Food Products of Biotechnology*. Ottawa: Canadian Biotechnology Advisory Committee. <http://cbac-cccb.ca/> Accessed June 20, 2002

Works cited entry contains basic facts about the book and how to find a copy yourself

Works cited entry for a web cite includes (1) Author or organization sponsoring the site (2) a shortened URL, because the full URL is likely to change, and (3) The date you saw it with the contents you saw.

**Fig. 2: Example from Works Cited List**

You don’t need to get every detail of the citation conventions right. The point is simply that you make a good faith effort to accurately list your sources. You need to give a citation every time you assert an idea that isn’t your own or use a phrase you took from someone else. The only exceptions are ideas, which can be considered “common knowledge”. Certain things are considered widely enough known that you do not need to explain the origin of the idea. You do not need to footnote Copernicus if you assert that the Earth goes around the sun. Now what counts as common knowledge is dependent on context. There are things I can assume an audience of philosophy professors knows which I cannot assume you know. In general, I would use the “news to me” standard. If it was news to you, credit the guy who told you.

There are two kinds of mistakes regarding citations. The first is outright plagiarism. This occurs when extensive passages from your paper match a text that is available elsewhere and no attempt is made to mark it as unoriginal. If you plagiarize outright, you will fail. Figure 3 is an example of outright plagiarism, taken from a real student, who was taken before a disciplinary board at another school and failed the course.

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| **Fig. 3: An example of outright plagiarism.** | |
| The paragraph below is a sample of an essay submitted by a student at another institution. The student found an essay online and changed about half of it, mostly at the beginning and end. This is a straightforward attempt to pass off someone else’s ideas as his own. The student failed the course. | |
| Red solid underline = verbatim match, Green dotted underline = close paraphrase.  44% of the text is a verbatim match; an additional 11% is a close paraphrase. | |
| *From a paper submitted to Philosophy 1020, Introduction to Ethics*  Legalization means three things: First is to make drugs such as marijuana, cocaine, and heroin legal under restricted conditions. Second is a policy that will be tougher than the policy we currently have on alcohol and tobacco. Such measures would be making drugs less available and less attractive while relying far less on criminal sanctions. The third factor is to manage our resources. This means stop putting billions of dollars we spend on law enforcement approaches and put them into drug treatment and drug prevention instead. | *From Ethan Nadalman “Should some illegal drugs be legalized”*  Personally, when I talk about legalization, I mean three things: The first is to make drugs such as marijuana, cocaine, and heroin legal--under fairly restricted conditions, but not as restricted as today. Second is a convergence in our substance abuse policy. We need a policy that is tougher on alcohol and especially tougher on tobacco--not with criminal laws so much as with other measures that would make them less available and less attractive. And at the same time be tough on marijuana, cocaine, and heroin as well, but while relying far less on criminal sanctions.  And third is to more intelligently manage our resources--to stop pouring the billions of dollars that we are now spending on law enforcement approaches down the drain and put them into drug treatment and drug abuse prevention instead. |

The second kind of mistake you can make is a citation error. Citation errors occur when text marked as a paraphrase is actually a direct quote, when the text marked in an ambiguous fashion, so you can’t tell what is original and what is not, or when the author believes something to be common knowledge when it is not. Papers with citations errors will be graded down. Figure 4 is an example of a citation error.

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| **Fig. 4: An example of a citation error** | |
| These two paragraphs match verbatim. If the student wanted to use this long passage from another source in its entirety, should have put quotation marks around it to indicate that the whole is a direct quote, and then followed the quote with an in-text citation. Instead, he simply used an in text citation at the end of the last sentence. This gives the misleading impression that the last sentence is a paraphrase, when in fact the whole paragraph is a direct quote. This student was graded down. | |
| *From a student paper*  Third, liberal society is resilient; it can withstand many burdens and continue to flourish; but it is not infinitely resilient. Those who claim to believe in liberal principles but advocate more and more confiscation of the wealth created by productive people, more and more restrictions on voluntary interaction, more and more exceptions to property rights and the rule of law, more and more transfer of power from society to state, are unwittingly engaged in the ultimately deadly undermining of civilization (Boaz, David). | *From David Boaz “Key Concepts in Libertarianism”*  Third, liberal society is resilient; it can withstand many burdens and continue to flourish; but it is not infinitely resilient. Those who claim to believe in liberal principles but advocate more and more confiscation of the wealth created by productive people, more and more restrictions on voluntary interaction, more and more exceptions to property rights and the rule of law, more and more transfer of power from society to state, are unwittingly engaged in the ultimately deadly undermining of civilization. |

# Policies

## Make-Up Tests

If you miss a test for any reason, you can take an alternate version of that test at the Testing and Assessment Center, in College Center 233. I will send a test over with your name on it, and you can take the test any time the test center is open, as long as you present an ID. If you miss a test and want it sent over to the Testing and Assessment Center, please contact me as soon as you can.

## Attendance

Attendance is five percent of your grade. The system for grading attendance is described on page 6, in the grading and assignments overview section. As I say in that section, absences can be excused if you are sick, a child or other dependent is sick, a family member or loved one passes away or is close to passing away, you or a loved one gives birth to a child, or you have unexpected transportation problems. If you know you will be absent far in advance, please let me know far in advance. I do not require documentation for the first absence if you contact me in advance. After the first time, I will need to start seeing documentation, because this class only meets in person 15 times, and it is important for everyone to attend.

## Plagiarism

Because your work must contain original thought, it is very important to be clear about which ideas are yours and which come from other sources. Attempting to pass someone else’s ideas off as your own is plagiarism. This is true not only in paper assignments, but in tests, short exercises, and dialogues. Details on how to avoid this in the paper project can be found on page 23 of this syllabus, in the description of the paper assignment. More concretely, the student code of conduct defines plagiarism this way: “to steal or pass off as one's own ideas, words, writings, sources of another without giving direct and complete credit; to commit literary theft; to present as new and original ideas, phrases, photos, sentences or products of any length derived from an existing source without citing the quotation as such and listing the complete source” (sec. 3A).[[2]](#footnote-2) People who plagiarize will be reported to the director of enrollment services, who can expel you from the school. Details on disciplinary procedures are available in the Student Code of Conduct. Cheating in an ethics course will also blacken your soul, and could lead to you spending eternity in Hell or being reincarnated as a worm.

Although it is not plagiarism to take a paper you wrote for one class and reuse it for another class, I do not allow it. All papers must be written by you, and written for this class. More detailed information about citation conventions and how to distinguish your ideas from ideas you have read elsewhere will be given later in the course.

## Respectful Conversation and Instructor Neutrality

Philosophy classes inevitably touch on controversial issues—contemporary political issues, religious issues, issues of personal ethics. We talk about these things because they are important; we talk about them specifically in philosophy classes because philosophy provides some of the best tools for getting at the truth of these issues. People always tell you not to talk about religion or politics in polite company, but it is hard to talk philosophically about the weather, thus we must risk impoliteness.

There are no belief requirements for this class: you are free to express any idea you choose. This may at times create uncomfortable situations. Remind yourself at such times of how to hold a respectful discussion with someone you disagree with: assume you can learn something from everyone you talk to; try to find at least one way you agree with whomever you talk to; criticize the view, not the person; if you expect someone else to change their views, you have to be willing to change your own; and above all else *listen*.

To avoid making anyone feel unwelcome, I will not be stating my own views on any controversial political or ethical issues in the classroom. I have convictions like anyone else, and will be happy to discuss them, but not in this venue. In the case of empirical issues, I will present the best scientific theories available, along with the evidence for those theories. I will take for granted the truth of any scientific consensus, such as the theory of evolution or the idea that disease is caused by germs. I promise that students will be graded on the quality of their work—their knowledge of the subject, the quality of their arguments, and the felicity of their presentation—and not the stances they hold. I also promise that the syllabus has been balanced to include all the major viewpoints in any debate as much as possible in the time available. Do not assume that because I have assigned a book, I endorse a word of its contents. I will, during the course of the class, ask people to justify their beliefs. I do this to get you to strengthen your arguments, not to challenge your right to your opinions.

## My Rights Regarding Your Written Work

For the sake of improving my teaching and the teaching of others, I reserve the right to save copies of your written work to use as examples for other classes or examples in scholarly articles about teaching philosophy. When your work is used as an example of student work, it will be printed anonymously. If your work contributes to the substance of something I write, I will cite your work following the usual academic conventions. I’ll also probably spend time thanking you and saying you are brilliant. If you do not wish me to keep copies of your work, you must give me a written and signed statement to that effect.

## Document Retention Policy

All submitted work is kept for at least one year. The course itself also remains available on Angel for one year. The gradebook is converted to XL and kept by the instructor for a minimum of three years. (Actually, I’ve never had any reason to delete the gradebooks, and currently have gradebooks on my hard drive going back to 1999.)

## LCCC Policy on Students with Special Needs

Under the Americans with Disabilities Act, the college is required to provide “reasonable accommodation” for “qualified handicapped individual.” Handicapped individuals include people who have “physical or mental impairment which substantially limits one or more of such person's major life activities” or individuals who have a record of such impairment or are regarded as having such impairments.

Help for the disabled is available through the Office for Special Needs Services (OSNS) in College Center Room 234. Available help includes accessibility arrangements, note-taking assistance, accommodated testing, readers, adaptive equipment, sign interpreters, referrals, advocacy, and advising. Free tutoring is actually available for all students, regardless of disability, though the Academic Support Center, up to two hours a week. Disabled students may be entitled to more free tutoring, and should contact the OSNS. Further information on the campus disability policy is available online at <http://catalog.lorainccc.edu/Campus+Policies/ADA.htm>

# LCCC Withdrawal Guidelines

Students have the right to withdraw from this course for any reason prior to November 12. After the deadline, students seeking course withdrawal must formally request an Administrative Withdrawal. Your request must 1) be a compelling reason (something major, beyond their control), 2) supported by official documentation, 3) something that occurred after the deadline (or with a compelling reason why the deadline was not met).

Further information on withdrawals can be found at

[https://catalog.lorainccc.edu/Enrollment/Withdrawals.htm](https://mymail.lorainccc.edu/exchweb/bin/redir.asp?URL=https://catalog.lorainccc.edu/Enrollment/Withdrawals.htm)

or by clicking on “2010-11 Annual Catalog” on LCCC Homepage, then “Admissions and Enrollment” in left-hand menu on 2010-11 Annual Catalog page, then clicking “Withdrawals” in left-hand menu on Admissions and Enrollment page.

# Online Resources

## Textbook homepage

Liszka has an extensive collection of electronic resources to accompany his textbook, including practice tests, online tutorials, a glossary, and heaps of links. I encourage you all to download the complete CD of material. Check it out: <http://hosting.uaa.alaska.edu/moralcompetence/>.

## Online reference

TheStanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (<http://plato.stanford.edu/>) and the Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy (http://www.iep.utm.edu/) are both very well done and completely free. Episteme Links (<http://www.epistemelinks.com/>) is a wonderful gateway page to all sorts of philosophical material.

1. http://www.lorainccc.edu/Current+Students/Campus+Policies/StudentConduct.htm [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. http://www.lorainccc.edu/Current+Students/Campus+Policies/StudentConduct.htm [↑](#footnote-ref-2)