

## Ethical Practice

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PHIL 212, A and B

Ethical practice is the practice of living well. Often we operate as if on autopilot, unaware of the alternative possibilities that confront us at each moment. When we do actively choose, we don't make choices in a vacuum; instead our choices are shaped by complex social structures within which we act, and they have consequences that extend far beyond our selves. Ethical practice requires us to *wake up*, to pay attention to how and why we make the decisions that we do, how our choices fit in the larger world, and what sorts of lives we want to live. In this class we will focus on six areas of our lives: money, relationships, environment, wellness, food, and sex. Of course, many of the readings and activities we will do fall into more than one of these categories, and each of the categories is connected to every other category in lots of ways. We will explore these interconnections, too.

By the end of the semester, you should:

- have a basic grasp of some classical ethical theories and know what ethics is.
- recognize how different types of oppression intersect and shape our choices and ethical obligations, as well as who we take ourselves to be.
- be socially-conscious and aware of the impacts of your choices on others.
- view your self in relation to those impacted by your choices, including close friends and family, as well as strangers, non-human animals, and broader ecological systems; and take these relationships seriously.
- be self-aware and self-possessed.
- care about yourself, others and the larger world.
- have lots of practice making ethical choices that are responsive to the above.

**Required Text:** *Eating Animals*, by Jonathan Safran Foer. Additional readings will be distributed online.

**Readings and Objectives:** Please note that this schedule is subject to change!

### Introduction: August 27-September 5

#### Objectives:

- For students to feel safe, welcome, and included as members of a vibrant learning community that respects all aspects of their identities; for students to bring their "whole selves" to the class.
- For students to begin to understand the contexts in which we act and choose (including notions of intersectionality, oppression, and privilege), and how these shape our classroom discussions, what counts as ethical practice, and the ethical dilemmas we confront.
- For students to have some grasp of what ethics is, including classic normative theories; how ethics fits within philosophy and life more broadly; and what it means to live ethically.
- To introduce course content, structure, and expectations.
- To set a tone in the classroom of mutual respect, community, personal responsibility, fun, enthusiasm, student ownership, and self-driven learning.

#### Readings:

1. "A Culture of Power," by Paul Kivel:  
<http://www.paulkivel.com/component/jdownloads/finish/1/22/0?Itemid=31>
2. "Ethical Theories," by Anthony Weston, in *A Practical Companion to Ethics*.

**Money: September 8-September 19**

*Objectives:*

- For students to understand and take seriously the consequences of their spending choices.
- For students to think through some ethical issues related to their role as consumers, and begin to practice ethical spending.
- For students to become aware of class privilege, and the injustice embedded in current economic systems.
- For students to be critical of Americans' destructive, unsustainable spending habits.
- To connect course content to the outside world, by taking a field trip to Target.

*Readings:*

1. "Money Hungry" and "The Me-Me Class: The Young and the Ruthless," by bell hooks, in *Where We Stand: Class Matters*.
2. "The Singer Solution to World Poverty," by Peter Singer:  
<http://www.nytimes.com/1999/09/05/magazine/the-singer-solution-to-world-poverty.html>
3. "How to be More than a Mindful Consumer," by Annie Leonard:  
<http://www.yesmagazine.org/issues/the-human-cost-of-stuff/annie-leonard-more-than-a-mindful-consumer>

*In-class Video:*

"Wealth Inequality in America,"  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QPKKQnijnsM>

**Relationships: September 22-October 3**

*Objectives:*

- For students to think through the relationships in their lives, how and to what extent various relationships matter to them, and the ethical implications of these relationships.
- For students to understand the ways in which their choices shape their relationships, which in turn shape their ethical obligations.
- To introduce an ethics of care, and practice taking up an ethics of care in navigating our decisions and relationships.
- For students to view themselves as connected not only to their closest friends and family, but to all of humanity and nature, including past, present, and future generations, all of which shape and/or are shaped by their choices.

*Readings:*

1. "Storytelling" and "All or Nothing or Something Else," in *Eating Animals*.
2. Ethics of Care (TBA)
3. *I and Thou*, by Martin Buber
4. Friendship (TBA)

**Food: October 6-October 10**

*Objectives:*

- For students to understand the consequences of their food choices for themselves, others, and the environment.
- For students to learn about and practice making healthful, socially-conscious decisions about food.
- For students to realize the frequency, centrality and significance of their food choices.

*Readings:*

1. "Words / Meaning," and "Hiding / Seeking," in *Eating Animals*.
2. Food (TBA)

**Wellness: October 15-October 24**

*Objectives:*

- To understand ways in which current human practices, especially factory farming, are mentally, physically, and spiritually destructive.
- To familiarize students with a variety of philosophical conceptions of personal well-being and happiness.
- To explore the relationship between ethics and religion.

*Readings:*

1. "Influence / Speechlessness" in *Eating Animals*.
2. *Start Where You Are: a Guide to Compassionate Living*, by Pema Chodron.
3. "The Body in Flow," by Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, in *Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience*.

*In-class movie:*  
*Food Matters*

**Environment: October 27-November 7**

*Objectives:*

- For students to understand the catastrophic consequences of human activities on the environment.
- For students to understand the fragility of human-made systems, and the natural limits of human growth.
- For students to understand how scientific predictions about climate change are playing out, and what we can expect in the future.
- For students to appreciate, respect, and feel connected to the natural world.
- For students to understand the environmental impacts of their choices and practice making ethical decisions.

*Readings:*

1. "Slices of Paradise / Pieces of Shit" and "I Do" in *Eating Animals*
2. "People or Penguins: The Case for Optimal Pollution," William F. Baxter,
3. "Climate Change a Threat to Security, Food, and Humankind – IPCC Report":  
<http://www.theguardian.com/environment/2014/mar/31/climate-change-threat-food-security-humankind>
4. "The Land Ethic," by Aldo Leopold in *A Sand County Almanac*:  
<http://home.btconnect.com/tipiglen/landethic.html>

*In-class movie:*  
*A Crude Awakening*

**Sex: November 10-November 21**

*Objectives:*

1. For students to understand the relationship between gender and sexism.
2. For students to become conscious of and want to eliminate harmful norms for sexuality, including heteronormativity, in order that they can act more consciously and deliberately.
3. For students to be self-possessed and exercise ownership over their sexual choices.
4. For students to embrace their own sexuality as part of their whole selves, and to become comfortable learning about and openly discussing topics that are normally considered taboo.
5. For students to desire and take action to transform Elon's campus.

*Readings:*

1. "Sexism," by Marilyn Frye in *The Politics of Reality: Essays in Feminist Theory*.
2. "Fraternities and Rape on Campus," by Patricia Yancey Martin and Robert Hummer:  
<http://courses.ttu.edu/jkoch/intro/Readings/Frat%20Rape.pdf>
3. "This is What Sex-Positive Parenting Really Looks Like," by Lea Grover:  
[http://www.huffingtonpost.com/lea-grover/this-is-what-sex-positive-parenting-really-looks-like\\_b\\_5516707.html?&ncid=tweetlnkushpimg00000041](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/lea-grover/this-is-what-sex-positive-parenting-really-looks-like_b_5516707.html?&ncid=tweetlnkushpimg00000041)
4. *A Kid's First Book About Sex*, by Joani Blank.

## Conclusion: November 24–December 1

### Objectives:

- To review and tie together course material.
- To reinforce important aspects of the semester.
- To discuss the ethics of Thanksgiving.

### Readings:

1. “Storytelling,” in *Eating Animals*.

### Assignments and Grading:

All written assignments must be typed in a plain font, double-spaced, stapled (no paper clips!), and submitted as a hard copy. Please number your pages and include a title. All material derived from outside sources must be cited. Quotations or near quotations that are not cited will be considered plagiarism and a violation of the honor code. Any thorough and consistent citation format will be accepted. Assignments that are not turned in (in hard copy) at the beginning of class on the day they are due will be penalized 10 points for every day after that that they are late. Specific details about assignments will be distributed.

### Interview – 10%

Interview someone you consider a mentor. Ask them about their ethical views and values, what they think constitutes a good life, ethical challenges they’ve faced, how they practice living ethically, etc. Record the interview (audio or video), and submit the recording on a cd, as well as a list of questions you asked, and a 3-page summary of the interview itself. Your interview materials are due on September 5.

### Challenge Week – 10%

From October 15-22, you will take up a week-long challenge related to one of the main themes of the course. Examples: practice being vegan or vegetarian, meditate 20 minutes a day, abstain from television and Facebook, write (and snail-mail) a letter every day to someone you love, get 30 minutes of daily physical activity, etc. Your challenge should be *challenging*. You may choose anything that you will do daily, that represents a positive shift from your normal routine, and that constitutes what you’d consider *ethical practice*. In the week before fall break (10/3-10/10), you will begin keeping a daily log recording what you have eaten or purchased, significant exercise or physical movement you did that day, your use of technology, your interactions with others, how you feel overall, and any other information you think it is important to record. You are free to exclude anything you want to keep private. You will use this daily log to decide what challenge you want to take on. You will continue keeping daily logs throughout challenge week; after the week ends, on October 24, you will submit a challenge week folder, which includes your daily logs, as well as a write-up of the experience overall.

### Current Events Discussion – 15%

During this course, you will follow the news closely by reading approximately five news articles per week. Most Fridays, students will lead discussions about current events related to the course theme for that week. You will sign up for your Friday to lead. For example, if you sign up to lead a discussion on October 3, your discussion should be about something related to relationships, since that is the course theme for that day. The Monday of your discussion week, you will assign three articles to your classmates (one third of the class will read each article), and then lead a discussion that includes small group time, as well as time as a whole class together, where students share what they got from the article with their classmates. The Monday following your discussion, you will submit a discussion write-up.

### Paper (2 drafts) – 25%

You will submit a 5-7 page paper that explores the relationship between two course themes. For example, you might look at how relationships are related to wellness, or food to the environment. Your paper will have a concise thesis statement included in the first paragraph, and should be meticulously organized, clear, creative and insightful. You will submit two drafts of the paper. The first draft is due September 29. I will provide a preliminary grade, and feedback on the first draft. The second and final draft is due November 10. The grade you receive on the final draft is your actual grade on the assignment. You final grade will be penalized 20% if you fail to turn in a first draft.

## Participation and In-Class Exercises – 25%

This class is about *practice*, and much of our ethical practice will happen during class meeting times. Therefore, your active engagement in each class meeting is essential. You are allowed two unexcused absences; unexcused absences that exceed this limit will each count against your participation grade by 10%. If you are sick or cannot make it to class for another reason, let me know before that class period, in an email with the subject heading “REASON FOR ABSENCE”. We will frequently complete in-class exercises. Your lowest two grades on these exercises will be dropped. If you have an excused absence on the day we complete an in-class exercise, it is your responsibility to get details from a classmate and submit the completed exercise at the beginning of the next day you attend class. In-class exercises missed due to unexcused absences cannot be made up.

## Final Exercise – 15%

We will have a comprehensive evaluation exercise at the end of the semester, during our scheduled final exam period.

## Important Dates:

Discussion Fridays: 9/12, 9/19, 9/26, 10/3, 10/10, 10/24, 10/31, 11/7, 11/14, 11/21

9/5	Interviews Due
9/29	1 <sup>st</sup> Draft of Paper Due
10/10	Mid-Semester Grades Due
10/13	No Class, Fall Break
10/15-10/22	Challenge Week
10/24	Challenge Week Write-Up Due
11/10	Final Draft of Paper Due
11/26	No Class, Thanksgiving
11/28	No Class, Thanksgiving
A: 12/9 B: 12/8	Final Exam – 8:30-11:30

## Amy's Contact Info

amyglaser@gmail.com (I DO NOT check my elon.edu email. Please do not email me there!)

## Office Hours

My office hours are Monday and Wednesday from 11am-12pm, unless otherwise noted. I am also available by appointment. My office is in the philosophy suite in Spence Pavilion.

## Honor Code

Students are expected to comply with the Elon Academic Honor Code, which can be found in the Elon Student Handbook: <http://www.elon.edu/e-web/students/handbook/>. Suspected violations of the honor code will be reported to the Office of Judicial Affairs. Any violation may result in a failing grade for the course. Violations specifically covered by academic honor code policies include: plagiarism, cheating, lying, stealing and the facilitation of another's dishonesty. Multiple violations will normally result in a student's temporary suspension from the University.

## Writing Center

I strongly encourage you to visit the Writing Center this semester for assistance with your paper and other writing for this course. The Center's trained staff can assist you in every stage of the process, and your papers will almost certainly be stronger with their input. The main Writing Center is in Belk Library. For more info, visit <http://www.elon.edu/writingcenter>.

## Special Needs

Please speak to me (or email) if you have any special needs or concerns regarding your participation in this class. If you are a student with a documented disability, please register with Disabilities Services in the Duke Building, Room 108 (278-6500) for assistance in developing a plan to address your academic needs. I want to ensure that everyone in this course feels comfortable participating and has the support required to do well and to get the most out of the assignments and the material covered. [http://www.elon.edu/e-web/academics/support/disabilities\\_services.xhtml](http://www.elon.edu/e-web/academics/support/disabilities_services.xhtml)