

# TEACHING PORTFOLIO

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## I. STATEMENT OF TEACHING PHILOSOPHY

When I delivered my first course as an instructor seven years ago, I thought I knew how to teach. As a TA, I had advised students, led multiple discussion sections and review sessions, and I had given a lecture. I had graded hundreds of papers and exams, and I had written my own prompts. But upon reflection, I realize how much I had to learn about effective pedagogy. My first syllabus had no stated learning objectives. I had no clear intention of what, exactly, I wanted my students to learn, nor how my course was going to get them to learn it. Since that course ended, I have sought out and received significant pedagogical training, and I have gained much more classroom experience—teaching students at all levels and of varied abilities, in different disciplines and at multiple institutions.

Now I design my courses to realize my overarching pedagogical commitments. After taking one of my courses, I want my students to be able to think carefully, with depth and subtlety, about philosophical questions, texts, arguments, and ideas. I also want to help them become more effective communicators—to structure their own thoughts clearly, with proper nuance and justification. While teaching my students to read, write, and talk about philosophy, I also endeavor to help them become more curious about the world, more courageous in the expression of their ideas, and more charitable in their reception of the thoughts of others.

Students from my first course praised my ability to use power-point, but not much else. Now, students remark on my ability to explain material clearly, moderate discussion effectively, motivate their curiosity, and—most of all—challenge them intellectually. I still use technology in my classroom, but for a specific purpose beyond just organizing my lecture slides. For example, in my First Year Seminar on the ethics of emerging technologies, I used an online app which presents users with a version of the trolley problem involving self-driving cars. Together, the class faced fifteen scenarios where they had to decide collectively whether to save the passengers in the car, or the pedestrians on the street.

In the process of making their arguments, students spontaneously referenced the philosophical considerations we had been discussing previously. They also raised and responded to counter-arguments from dissenting classmates. These students engaged with the course content and practiced the skills I wanted them to, because they were motivated. Before we began, we learned that the app's developers would incorporate users' responses into the design of their autonomous vehicles' software. Students thus saw for themselves the vital importance of philosophical thinking.

In general, students are more engaged when the course feels relevant to their own interests. Therefore, no matter the course I teach, I learn my students' interests at the beginning of the semester. Then, throughout the course, I tie their interests into the course content through the examples I use to explain philosophical concepts. I also motivate student learning by explaining to students how the assignments are aligned with the course objectives, and how the course objectives will help students in their daily lives. The ability to clearly communicate original thinking is at an all-time premium in our increasingly disrupted world. A training in philosophy, which focuses on training these skills, is excellent preparation for any path. I take the time to explain these things because I have found that when students see clearly not only what they are to do, but *why*, they are much more likely to buy into the course—no matter their initial reason for being there.

The structure of a course, however, is not set in stone. As a course—or lesson plan—unfolds, I tailor my teaching to the particular students in the class, remaining nimble enough to change my plans if something else will achieve objectives more effectively. I also try to give students

some agency over the direction of the course. For example, I will allow students to choose their own topics or pursue their own research interests. When I can, I will leave time at the end of the semester for students to select the material they want me to cover.

When students are motivated, getting them to practice skills becomes much easier. One skill required for philosophical thinking is the ability to attend to someone else's argument. I often teach this skill by engaging students in the close reading of key texts. In an ancient philosophy course, for example, I will present quotations to students and ask questions designed to help them decipher and reconstruct a philosopher's argument for themselves. Students often remark on the effect this exercise has on their thinking. One former student writes, "It's been revelatory to see how intensely one can unpack a statement that isn't even five words long. I've learned to protrude the deeper levels of a statement beyond what I thought possible." Another describes its effect beyond the classroom: "this class allows me to think deeper in my day to day interactions because we have to dig so deep to get to the true meaning of everything that is being said."

Because skills are developed through practice, I also assign short weekly writing exercises where students summarize and critically engage with the day's material. These assignments allow me to see what students are picking up on, as well as where they are struggling. They also provide the foundation for scaffolding longer, more complicated writing assignments. They help me prepare relevant content for the day's lecture or seminar, and they allow students the chance to get regular, targeted feedback on their work.

Such critical engagement, however, often involves discomfort. Doing philosophy requires students to re-examine and possibly abandon their long-held assumptions and beliefs. It demands the honest expression of their inner thoughts and allowing them to be dissected and scrutinized by professors and peers. I have found that students are much more willing to engage in this kind of uncomfortable learning if they initially feel comfortable in the classroom. I therefore endeavor to help students feel brave enough to test new ideas and recognize that being challenged to think more deeply is actually beneficial.

First, I model the respect and intellectual humility I wish to see in my students. I welcome students to class and check in with them before the lecture or seminar begins. I make jokes, where and when I can, to help students relax and focus on the exploration of philosophical ideas. When I sense that they are ready, I will press students to clarify what they mean or consider a counter-argument. But I always follow up with some form of praise. This combination of respectful challenge and positive reinforcement demonstrates to students that class is a place where their ideas will be taken seriously and received charitably. With a baseline of trust established, students can be challenged to think more deeply not just by me, but also by their peers. In such a classroom culture, students can actually *experience* the value of including diverse perspectives in conversation.

It has been my experience that students are hungry for this kind of education—one which challenges them to think carefully and communicate effectively about philosophy. I attribute my success with teaching to the pedagogical training I've received and the amount of experience I've gained, but also to the many excellent teachers I've observed. The teachers that have captivated me the most are those who lead students to have their own philosophical insights by simultaneously encouraging and challenging them to push themselves intellectually beyond what they thought possible. Pulling off this kind of teaching requires commitment, but I have found that it is well worth the work. For me, one of the greatest joys of teaching is when my students and I become co-investigators of the truth. That is why, seven years after that first course, I continue to seek ways to improve my craft.

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## II. TEACHING AWARDS

- WCAS/TGS Teaching Fellowship (2018)

Recognizes two graduate students who display exceptional teaching skills at Northwestern.

- Joseph Clyde Murley Prize for Outstanding Performance by a Graduate TA, Classics (2016)

Received in recognition for outstanding work as a Graduate TA in courses taught by Classics faculty at Northwestern (including PHIL 210-1 History of Philosophy—Ancient).

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## III. PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

- Digital Humanities Pedagogy Graduate Workshop, Northwestern University, 2017.

Became acquainted with several online resources and digital platforms that could be incorporated into my teaching practice and course design, such as Voyant and Kialo.

- Teaching Certificate Program, Searle Center for Teaching and Learning, 2016-2017.

A year-long program in which I deepened my understanding and appreciation of student-centered pedagogy. Developed a teaching statement, built a course design project, and attended seminars on multiple topics, including: inclusive education, conducting research on teaching, and how to measure teaching effectiveness.

- AAPT Seminar on Teaching and Learning in Philosophy, Saginaw, MI, Summer 2016.

A four-day intensive seminar where I first encountered the scholarship and practices of experiential learning and student-centered teaching. Fundamentally transformed my understanding of good philosophical pedagogy.

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## IV. TEACHING AND MENTORING EXPERIENCE

### *As Sole Instructor*

- PHIL 109: Future Tense: The Ethics of What Will Be, NU, Spring 2018

A writing-intensive and discussion-based First-Year Seminar at Northwestern University. Course content focused on the ethics of emerging technologies, such as genetic engineering, artificial intelligence, and big data surveillance. Main assignments were regular short writing exercises, and one large independent research paper, portions of which were due at different times of the course of the quarter in order to scaffold their writing process.

- PHIL/CL 221: Aristotle and his Successors, UIC, Jan-May 2018

An intermediate-level course at the University of Illinois at Chicago—a large commuter school with a diverse student body in downtown Chicago. Course content focused on introducing students to the Aristotle's philosophical thought. Course assignments were two essays and one midterm exam. Each class was a mixture of lecture and discussion. I also met with individual students to help them understand the material and improve their essays.

- CLAS 1002: Introduction to Ancient Civilizations, SMU, Summer 2012

An introductory-level course, delivered during an intensive three-week period at Saint Mary's University (Halifax, NS) where students were introduced to the literature, history, and cultural artifacts of ancient Greece and Rome. Classes were a mixture of lecture and discussion. Students wrote two exams and completed an independent research project.

*As Co-Instructor*

- PHIL 373: The Civically Engaged Life, NU, Fall 2019 & Winter 2020 (Co-Instructor)
- PHIL 373: Philosophy and the City, NU, Fall 2017 & Winter 2018 (Co-Instructor)

Each version of PHIL 373 is two-quarter long seminar for students in their senior year in the Brady Scholars Program in Ethics and Civic Life. Scholars meet weekly to design and implement their capstone community service project. Early meetings involved providing the scholars with lots of structure to help them work together efficiently. Gradually, the students organized their own meetings and the fellows facilitated student discussion and planning.

*As Mentor*

- Brady Scholars Program in Ethics & Civic Life, 2019-2020

In the Fall of 2019, after other grad fellows had to leave the program unexpectedly, I was asked to rejoin the Brady Program to help guide the seniors through their project.

- Brady Scholars Program in Ethics & Civic Life, 2015-2018

My primary role as one of the Graduate Fellows in this program was to mentor a small group of undergraduate students from their sophomore to their senior year. I met with these students individually and as a group at least once per quarter to check in with them and to help them complete different program requirements. We usually had dinner at my house once per quarter. I also kept in touch with them as they completed the program's study abroad component, and I helped ease them back into campus life when they returned. I also developed, through trial and error, my approach to mentoring: a delicate balance between establishing high expectations and helping students meet them on their own through positive support.

*As Teaching Assistant*

- RELS 210 Introduction to Buddhism (Buckelew, NU) Spring 2020
- RELS 373/GLBH 390 Religion & Bioethics (Traina, NU) Fall 2019
- PHIL 260: Introduction to Moral Philosophy (Zimmer, NU) Spring 2017
- PHIL 262: Ethical Problems and Public Issues (Sheldon, NU) Winter 2017
- CLAS 211: Ancient Athens: Drama, Democracy, Civilization (Wallace, NU) Winter 2016
- PHIL 210-1: History of Philosophy – Ancient (Wynne, NU), Fall 2015
- CLAS 212 Rome: Culture and Empire (Wynne, NU), Spring 2015
- PHIL 210-1: History of Philosophy – Ancient (Ebrey, NU), Winter 2015
- HOST 1801: Technology & Engineering: Industrial to Cybernetic (Frappier, King's), W'12

- CLAS/HIST 2233: Roman Legions and the Barbarians (Mitchell, Dal) Winter 2012
- KINE 1106: Philosophy and Ethics for Kinesiologists (online, Dal) Winter 2012
- CLAS/RELS 2027: Magic, Religion, & Philosophy (Fournier, Dal) Winter 2011 & 12
- RELS 2003: Islam (Treiger, Dal) Fall 2011
- RELS 1001: Introduction to Eastern Religions (Austin, Dal) Winter 2011
- RELS 2012: Buddhism (Austin, Dal) Fall 2010
- CLAS/RELS 1100: Classical Mythology (O'Brien, Dal) AY 2009-2010

Through extensive TA experience in a wide array of subjects, I have honed my skills of leading discussion sections, grading exams and essays, and consulting with students one-on-one. I have also developed the ability to quickly learn and teach content in which I am not an expert. All of this teaching experience allows me to be comfortable leading discussions in front a classroom of students or in seminar-style discussions and has shaped my discussion-based approach to teaching.

*As Writing Coach*

- SUST 1000: Introduction to Environment, Sustainability, and Society, Fall 2011

Helped students in this large introductory class with their writing assignments on demand. Also designed and delivered two writing workshops for students with other writing coach.

## V. EVALUATIONS OF RECENT COURSES TAUGHT AS SOLE INSTRUCTOR

Cochran\_Anc Phil II:Aristotle&Successr\_30013\_31793\_Spring 2018

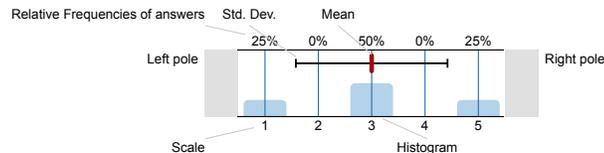


Semester = Spring 2018

No. of responses = 15/19

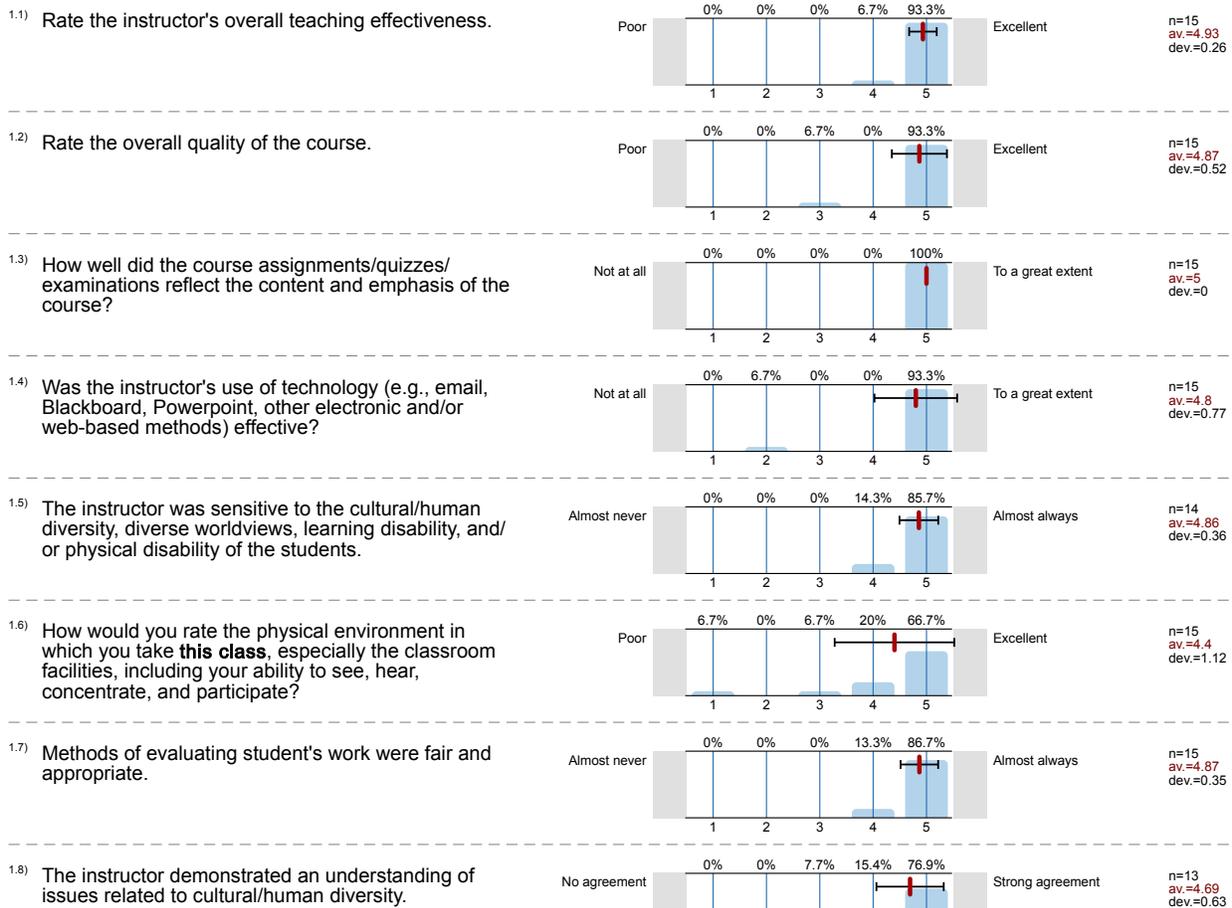
### Legend

Question text

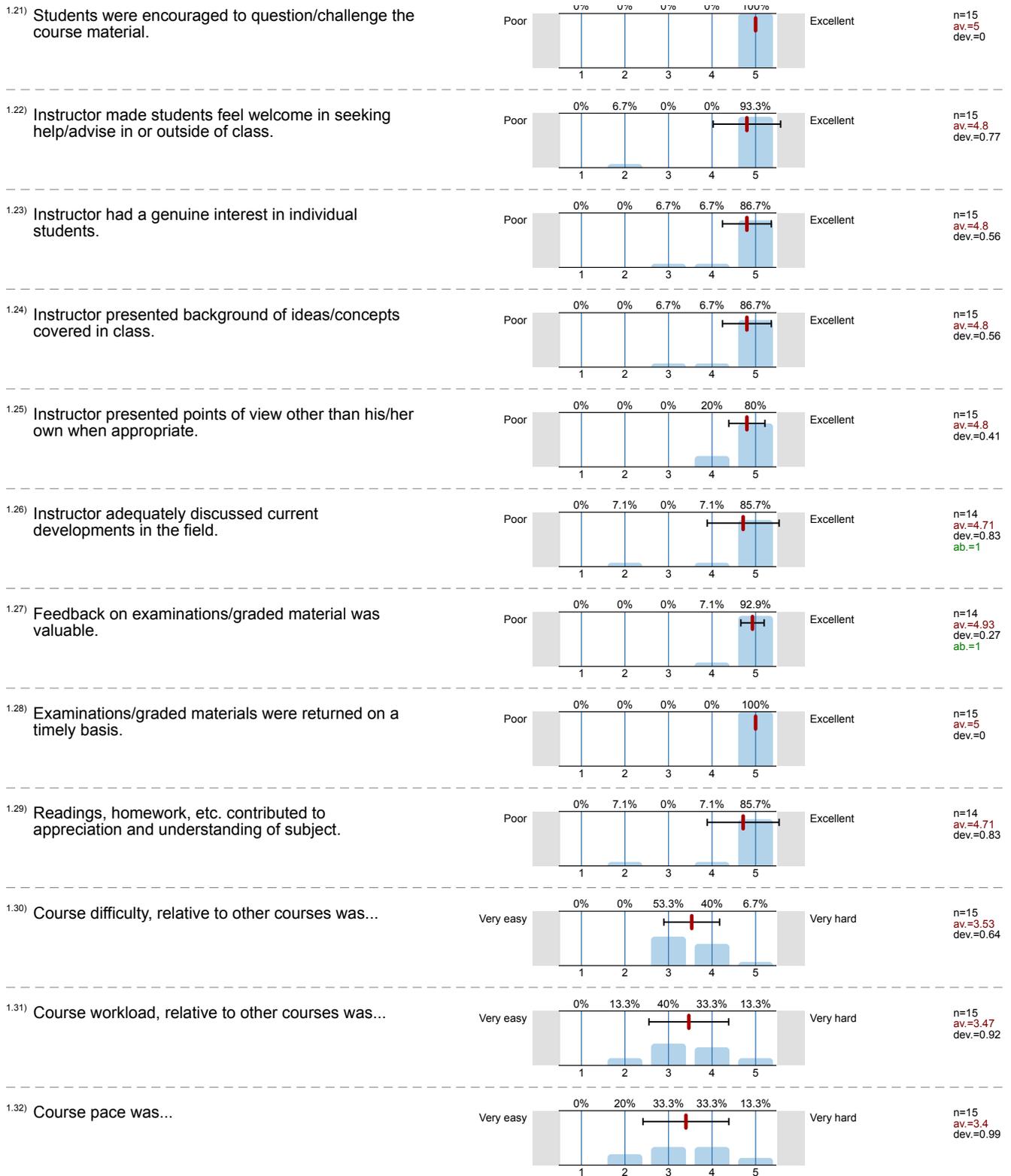


n=No. of responses  
av.=Mean  
dev.=Std. Dev.  
ab.=Abstention

### 1. INSTRUCTOR EVALUATIONS



1.9) You found the course intellectually challenging and stimulating.		n=15 av.=4.67 dev.=0.82
1.10) You have learned something you consider valuable.		n=14 av.=4.79 dev.=0.43
1.11) Your interest in the subject has increased as a result of this course.		n=15 av.=4.67 dev.=0.49
1.12) You have learned and understood the subject materials in this course.		n=15 av.=4.73 dev.=0.59
1.13) Instructor was enthusiastic about conducting the course.		n=15 av.=4.93 dev.=0.26
1.14) Instructor's style of presentation held your interest during the class.		n=15 av.=4.53 dev.=0.83
1.15) Instructor's explanations were clear.		n=15 av.=4.8 dev.=0.56
1.16) Course materials were well prepared.		n=15 av.=4.93 dev.=0.26
1.17) The course adequately followed stated course objectives (i.e., course syllabus).		n=15 av.=4.73 dev.=0.59
1.18) Instructor gave lectures that facilitated note taking.		n=15 av.=4.93 dev.=0.26
1.19) Students were invited to share their ideas and knowledge.		n=15 av.=5 dev.=0
1.20) Students were encouraged to ask questions and were given meaningful answers.		n=15 av.=4.93 dev.=0.26



## 2. OPEN ENDED QUESTIONS

2.1) Please comment on specific characteristics of the course that were most beneficial to you:

- - Cochran clearly prepared his materials well. His powerpoints were excellent, and his explanations were incredibly concise and helpful.
  - He has a genuine enthusiasm for the subject matter.
  - Great, in-depth feedback on essay assignments.
  - I'm incredibly glad that I took Cochran for Aristotle. Probably my best philosophy class so far at UIC.
- Having to learn more than known through discussions
- I absolutely loved the reading. Fantastic choice in literature. While you do wonderful with PowerPoints, I found myself taking notes and learning so much more once you abandoned the PowerPoints and just used your dry erase marker to visually explain Aristotle's philosophy. Please keep doing that and keep teaching.
- Nicomachean Ethics  
Metaphysics
- Prof. Cochran's style of teaching was extremely beneficial to the way I personally learn. He has an uncanny ability to break down the material in the texts, and help the student process and understand what the text is trying to communicate.
- Someone give this guy some tenure. I cannot say enough good things about this course/instructor. Truly the best instructor I've had in my now five-year college career.
- The lecture slides and discussion based lectures were very helpful
- The lectures/discussions were great. Always being forced to engage with the text were very helpful. The writing assignments also helped in my understanding of the text.
- The way in which we covered the assigned readings for the class together in class helped greatly. It made a lot of the more complex material easier to understand and digest. The pace for the readings was also very manageable and made learning everything much easier.
- the survey checkin mid semester and change from the second paper to a test was really helpful!

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2.2) Please comment on specific aspects of the course that need improvement:

- - The course pace was a bit slower, but I think it was because students needed it. It's very hard to push through material when students aren't doing the reading. Some specific students asked too many frivolous questions unrelated to the reading, which caused things to slow down.
- Everything pretty much ran well in this class. I think maybe more lectures where students work on critiquing Aristotle's work might be more beneficial.
- Everything was fantastic. Only thing I would say (and this could just be personal preference) is that I was kinda bummed we ditched the powerpoint slides. I felt they helped me understand the material better and organize it in my head.
- Hmmmmmm..... I think you're great. You're enthusiastic, you're welcoming to new ideas, you really care about your students, you love your job, you're constantly trying to improve, you present the material really well. You provide great criticism. You helped me get better at philosophy.
- Less lecture more interaction.
- Nothing immediate.
- grading felt a little hard, and it felt like a class on learning to side with aristotle, rather than a class on his views. Felt like rather than playing devils advocate we were being taught that aristotle was right
- n/a (2 Counts)

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2.3) If necessary, clarify any of your previous responses or make additional comments:

- He always challenged us to not assume Aristotle is right. We must critically evaluate what Aristotle was saying and not just take his word on things.
- Prof. Cochran is a natural teacher and clearly has a passion and immense understanding of the material that he teaches.

## Other Informally Collected Comments from UIC Students

FROM AN ANONYMOUS MID-SEMESTER CHECK-IN SURVEY:  
(through [surveymonkey.com](https://www.surveymonkey.com). Complete survey available upon request)

1. “Although I’m not shy by nature, I feel that you create a very comfortable atmosphere for students to speak, even if what they say might be incorrect or might not make too much sense. I admire the non-condescending and very respectful, encouraging attitude you have towards students.”
2. “I was so shocked and delighted by the quality of feedback I received and the obvious time you took to grade these papers that I’ve probably expressed it to at least five people. ‘Wait... Like, your instructor actually wrote comments?! In handwriting?! For everyone?!’ That’s probably the most (and most helpful) feedback I’ve ever received on a paper across the last four years of my undergrad. Deeply appreciated that effort on your part.”
3. “I generally find the exegesis (exegesese? plural?) assignments very helpful to my learning.”
4. “Though we are studying ancient philosophy, much of it seems to be very much applicable to our current day.”
5. “I’m learning slowly how to read and understand Aristotle.”
6. “My thinking before Aristotle had not pondered issues such as time, motion, energy, actuality, and many other related concepts.”
7. “I think this class allows me to think deeper in my day to day interactions because we have to dig so deep to get to the true meaning of everything that is being said in the [course textbook].”
8. “It’s been revelatory to see how intensely one can unpack a statement that isn’t even five words long. I’ve learned to protrude the deeper levels of a statement beyond what I thought possible.”
9. “This class makes me comfortable in my decision to make Philosophy my minor.”
10. “I would just like to express that you are by far the best instructor I have had for any college class thus far. I very much appreciate your organization in particular, such as the way you outline the goals for the class before starting, and how you checked in with the goals on the syllabus to see if the exam or the essay would help us achieve those. And even just the idea of doing this evaluation is great. I’ve just never had an instructor so organized and seemingly dedicated.”

EMAIL FROM A STUDENT AFTER THE COURSE ENDED:

“I wanted to thank you for the semester, you are a really great teacher, one of the greatest I’ve had (I’m not just saying that). You created a comfortable environment that encouraged participation and exploration through curiosity. Which, honestly I have learned is rare to come by. I didn’t feel forced to learn the material (even though it wasn’t a choice), the material was presented in a way that was friendly, though challenging, and it made me want to learn it. I talked about this class a lot with my friends, and I will miss it. I hope you have a wonderful summer.”

PHIL 109-6 FUTURE TENSE: THE ETHICS OF WHAT WILL BE  
(FIRST YEAR SEMINAR, NORTHWESTERN, SPRING 2018)

6-POINT SCALE

Provide an overall rating of the course:	5.46
Provide an overall rating of the instruction:	5.54
Rate the effectiveness of the instructor stimulating your interest in the subject:	5.62
Rate how well prepared the instructor was for the course:	5.77
Rate the effectiveness with which the instructor communicated course content and ideas:	5.77

*13/15 STUDENTS RESPONDING  
(1=VERY LOW; 6=VERY HIGH)*

**Sample Quotations from Student Evaluation of PHIL 109-6: Future Tense**

*(Complete Course Evaluation available upon request)*

1. “This has genuinely been the best class I have taken at Northwestern. I learned an incredible amount about AI and other emerging technologies, but more importantly, Prof. Cochran and my classmates pushed me to think deeply about where I stand on a number of extremely difficult ethical debates. This class forced me to legitimize my opinions and convictions past just ‘that’s what feels right’ or ‘it’s the way things should be.’ The seminar-style class was super helpful for everyone to hash out differing opinions and tackle tough problems from many sides. I appreciate how willing everyone was to talk about controversial topics and challenge each other on our arguments. By the end of the quarter I certainly changed my perspective on many aspects of life, human nature, and technology. To me, that is invaluable.”
2. “TAKE THIS CLASS!!! If you have even the slightest interest in ethics, philosophy, or technology, I cannot recommend this course enough. This has hands-down been my favorite class at Northwestern, and I learned so much about tackling problems from an ethical lens. The readings are manageable and interesting, and Cochran does an excellent job facilitating good discussion in class. The papers and presentation are honestly graded pretty harshly, but if you work hard it’s definitely a manageable workload. I will just say that 80-minute classes are the bane of my existence, but I genuinely was excited to come to this class every single day.”
3. “I loved this course! Super interesting, extremely relevant, and intellectually challenging. Professor Cochran is a really good Professor. The course was very well organized as well, and I not only gained a lot of knowledge, but also gained new critical thinking skills. It was also really great that the class was so interactive and that all my peers were so interested as well.”
4. “This course was excellent. It was my introduction to philosophy and I loved it. Professor Cochran made me think and challenged me intellectually in a way that has never happened to me before. This course is truly a 10.”
5. “[This course] got me to think in novel ways. I have never studied philosophy and this was a great way to introduce me to the field!”

6. "This was a really good class with the best use of a discussion platform that I've seen in a class in that it was legitimately class led and was very provoking discussions without interference and flowed very well."
7. "Enthusiastic, great at gauging class interest and steering the conversation to a productive place each class. Very flexible! Challenged our ideas and forced us to think deeply and address flaws in our reasoning."
8. "Fantastic at leading intellectually stimulating discussions, laying out class expectations in a clear manner, and selecting relevant, interesting course materials."
9. "Professor Cochran is able to set a discussion on track with one or two sentences."
10. "Prof. Cochran was excellent. He challenged all of us to think and made us defend and explore our ideas in a way that helped me learn and made me think. The topic of the course was interesting and good, but he is the one that made the course as great as it was."
11. "Professor Cochran is really really good at letting students speak their minds with him interjecting only when it is needed or it adds. It's awesome how it's class discussion with a goal and Professor Cochran encouraged and guided it very well."
12. "The most valuable thing I learned from this class was how relevant human nature (and resolving the question of what makes us human) is to practically every other ethical question. During the whole class, but particularly during our discussions of AI and genetic enhancement, I found myself continuously coming back to the question of what makes us human and how much these technologies threaten that... and is that even a bad thing?"
13. "I learned how to take the perspective of other people. After engaging discussion after engaging discussion every single class, it made it easy to understand where everyone comes from."
14. "The most valuable thing I learned is a new method of thinking critically and challenging my own thoughts rather than just accepting them."
15. "I learned about what it means to be human."

## VI. EVALUATIONS OF TA WORK AT NORTHWESTERN

(Complete reports available upon request)

Course	<i>History of Philosophy — Ancient</i> (Winter 2015)	<i>Rome: Culture and Empire</i> (Spring 2015)	<i>History of Philosophy — Ancient</i> (Fall 2015)	<i>Ancient Athens: Drama, Democracy, Civilization</i> (W 2016)	<i>Ethical Problems and Public Issues</i> (Winter 2017)	<i>Introduction to Moral Philosophy</i> (Spring 2017)	<i>Religion &amp; Bioethics</i> (Fall 2019)
Ability to answer student questions adequately	5.08	5	4.9	4.62	5.32	5.44	5.48
Well prepared for each session	5.23	5.38	5	5.08	5.42	5.48	5.70
Communicated ideas clearly	5.29	5	4.8	4.92	5.32	5.44	5.63
Showed strong interest in teaching the course	5.38	5	5	4.77	5.38	5.44	5.77

6-POINT SCALE (MEAN): 1=LOW, 6=HIGH

### Sample Comments from Student Evaluations

RELS 373 /GBLH 390 RELIGION & BIOETHICS (FALL 2019)

1. “William is a gifted lecturer in philosophy, and as a philosophy student, my classmates were very effective at discussing ethical groundwork because of his lecture in Kresge. I would love to take more classes he is involved with in the future. I wish he was able to be more involved in lecture, perhaps going back and forth with Professor Traina about certain topics.”
2. “William was a great TA and really cared about the subject and his students!”
3. “He questioned what we said, which encouraged us to think more deeply. His background in philosophy really aids learning, especially from a different perspective from a religious one.”
4. “Great lecturer. I really enjoyed the classes where he guest-lectured, and he always gave thoughtful feedback on papers.”
5. “The day he led lecture showed he knew his material well and could teach very well. He was also very helpful with the project and clarifying what we needed to do.”
6. “William was a great TA and lecturer when he had to guest lecture. He always provided answers and assistance in case we needed.”

7. "William was kind of a harsh grader. He gave interesting lectures though and definitely knew the material."
8. "Showed a lot of interest in the subject and was good at lecturing"
9. "Helpful and knowledgeable"
10. "extremely helpful and willing to invest time in students"
11. "Great TA! My favorite lecture was from him"

PHIL 260: INTRODUCTION TO MORAL PHILOSOPHY (SPRING 2017)

12. "Will was great! ... I definitely felt like he took an interest in me as a student and helped me develop as a philosophical thinker. He was also always willing to talk to me in office hours about philosophical topics that were only tangentially related to what we were doing in class, which definitely helped me."
13. "He cared about everyone understanding the material and was a good facilitator of class participation. He knew everyone's name by the second week of class which was impressive."

PHIL 262: ETHICAL PROBLEMS AND PUBLIC ISSUES (WINTER 2017)

14. "William is a great TA! He helped lead a super interesting and thought-provoking discussion session. Really pushed his students to contribute and challenged their ideas. He is also really willing to meet with students about papers. He's awesome and I looked forward to discussion section each week. Also gave super good feedback on essays."
15. "Will was great and made the class much better overall. He always came prepared to discussion sections with interesting activities (thought exercises). He also was helped me improve my general logic and reasoning, which was helpful for our written assignments and our classes as well."
16. "William is passionate about philosophy and wants to ignite a small flame of interest in you too."

CLAS 211: ANCIENT ATHENS: DRAMA, DEMOCRACY, AND CIVILIZATION (WINTER 2016)

17. "Will was an astute observer of logically consistent and faulty arguments in our texts, and he did a very good job explicating the themes of the works we read. He moderated the class discussions well by providing each student with opportunities to comment."
18. "His discussion of Plato was fascinating"
19. "Will did a good job leading and stimulating class discussion about the topics. I enjoyed the Jeopardy-style review game we played before the midterm."
20. "This TA was one of the best I've ever had at this school. He made section a discussion section where we all brought up our ideas and talked, something far too few TAs actually do."

21. "Will was great at inspiring discussions and helping students hone in on important points of the subject. Excellent TA."
22. "William's leading of discussion section was entertaining and informative, and it helped me understand a lot more about the literary works we read."

PHIL 210-1: HISTORY OF PHILOSOPHY — ANCIENT (FALL 2015)

23. "Will was a good TA, and allowed discussion sections to follow interesting directions"
24. "He is very clear and encourages us to bring out our own ideas on the readings"
25. "very resourceful, especially with paper help. Answered questions in a clear way and led interesting discussions"

CLAS 212: ROME: CULTURE AND EMPIRE (SPRING 2015)

26. "Will was a great TA! He was very helpful, and led a good discussion even though it was at 9am on Mondays. His handouts were very helpful, and having our last section be a jeopardy game was a great idea that was a lot of fun!"
27. "Will was awesome. He always gave us worksheets with the discussion questions on them for that week and split them up into smaller questions that he thought were important. It was a great way for us to talk about the questions that were going to be the essays on the midterm and the final."

PHIL 210-1: HISTORY OF PHILOSOPHY — ANCIENT (WINTER 2015)

28. "made the readings accessible to understand for those with less background in philosophy"
29. "Will seems to really enjoy teaching and did a good job of switching up the agenda for discussion"
30. "The teaching assistant was so helpful. From office hours to discussion section, the TA brought a new perspective and understanding to the course."

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## VII. SAMPLE SYLLABI

### SYLLABUS

#### PHIL/CL 221: ARISTOTLE AND HIS SUCCESSORS

3 Credit Hours

Prerequisites: one previous course in philosophy or instructor's permission  
Spring 2018

<u>Instructor:</u> William B. Cochran	<u>CRN:</u> 30013 (Phil) / 31793 (Clas)
<u>Office location:</u> UH 1404	<u>Class time:</u> TR 11-12:15
<u>Phone:</u> 847-630-6235	<u>Classroom location:</u> TH 207
<u>E-mail address:</u> wbc@uic.edu	<u>Office hours:</u> T 1-3

#### COURSE DESCRIPTION & GOALS

Aristotle discusses some of the most fundamental questions in nearly every area of philosophy: What is knowledge, and how does it differ from experience and wisdom? What is truth? What does it mean for something to have a nature? How does something change from one thing into something else? Does time exist? What really does exist? What is God? What is the purpose of human life? How do we become good people? How do we make a decision? For what are we morally responsible? How should we organize ourselves into a political community? Aristotle's particular mode of philosophical thinking cuts across his discussions of all of these questions.

Our aim in this course, therefore, is twofold: (1) come to an appreciation of Aristotle's way of thinking, and (2) understand and evaluate his answers to these and other questions. By engaging with Aristotle in these ways, we will hopefully develop our own philosophical thinking, too.

#### COURSE MATERIALS

##### **Required Text:**

Irwin, T. & Fine, G., eds. *Aristotle: Selections*, trans. with introduction, notes, and glossary. Cambridge, MA: Hackett, 1995.

##### **On Reserve at Library:**

Barnes, Johnathan, ed. *The Complete Works of Aristotle* vols. 1 & 2 The Revised Oxford Translation. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984.

Shields, Christopher, ed. *The Oxford Handbook of Aristotle*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012.

##### **Available Online through library:**

Carlo Natali. *Aristotle: His Life and School*, D. S. Hutchinson, ed. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2013.

## GRADING SCHEME

Semi-weekly Short Written Exercises: 25%

In-class participation: 15%

Unit 1 Essay: 15%

Unit 2 Exam: 20%

Unit 3 Essay : 25%

Semi-Weekly Short Written Exercises [SWEs] (25%):

Assignment	Percent	Due
Exercises	25%	semi-weekly
Participation	15%	every class
Unit 1 Essay	15%	Feb. 23rd, 2018
Unit 2 Exam	20%	Mar. 22nd, 2018
Unit 3 Essay	25%	May 4th, 2018

## Percent-Grade Scale

	UIC's metric	%	SWEs [x12] (25%)	Participation (15%)	Unit 2 Exam (20%)	Essays for Units 1 & 3 (40% total)
<b>A</b>	Excellent	90-100	22-24	13.5-15	90-100	18-20
<b>B</b>	Good	80-89	20-21	12-13.4	80-89	16-17.9
<b>C</b>	Average	70-79	17-19	10.5-11.9	70-79	14-15.9
<b>D</b>	Poor but passing	60-69	15-16	9-10.4	60-69	12-13.9
<b>F</b>	Failure	0-60	0-14	0-8.9	0-60	0-11.9

Each week, students will complete a written exercise which is intended to improve their engagement with Aristotle's philosophical texts. Depending on the week, students will complete one of two forms of short written assignment:

*Reflection: Before reading Aristotle*, students will reflect on a prompt and write down their reflections in no fewer than 6 sentences. Reflections will demonstrate thoughtful, independent engagement with the question(s).

*Exegesis: After reading Aristotle*, students will do two things in writing: 1) summarize—in their own words—some aspect of the reading for that day's class (this could be a general summary of the reading assignment as a whole, or it could be a summary of a particular argument within the reading, or it could be a brief summary of a particular part of the reading that the student found interesting); 2) offer some evaluative/critical scrutiny of the summarized content: e.g., answering: Is Aristotle missing something here? Is he right/wrong? Why? (N.B. Sometimes students will be prompted with questions about the reading to answer in their exegesis.)

Semi-Weekly Short Written Exercises are due by 8am the morning before class on which they are scheduled. They will be graded along the following scale:

- 2 - Satisfactory
- 1 - Needs revision / complete but late
- 0 - Unsubmitted / late and unsatisfactory / submitted after next SWE is due

- \* A satisfactory exercise is the requisite length, is on topic, and demonstrates engagement with the questions (for a reflection) / material (for an exegesis). If your exercises receive a grade of 2, assume that you are doing well. You will have the chance to re-write your first on-time exercise that receives a 1. You will receive notes about what you need to improve. Re-writes will be due before the next short written assignment's due date.
- \* Written exercises that are submitted late (after the 8am cut-off time), but still handed-in before the next short written exercise is due and are satisfactory, will receive a 1. Exercises handed in after the next one is due will receive a 0. Short written exercises that are handed in late and are not satisfactory will receive a 0.
- \* No exercise will be assigned in weeks where an Essay is due.

### In-Class Participation (15%):

Research indicates that students who attend class are more likely to be successful. This is partly because students who attend class have the benefit of engaging with each other and with the instructor as well as the material, and this sort of engagement enhances learning. Therefore, so as to give you extra incentive to participate in this class, your participation in the course will be graded.

In general, I will evaluate your class participation along two criteria: *the value* and of *the frequency* of your contributions. A valuable contribution can take many different forms. In general, valuable contributions move the discussion along an interesting path by, e.g., asking an intriguing question, providing an insightful response, clarifying something that was confusing, making a useful connection between two things, etc.

#### *A rough participation rubric:*

- Excellent: Makes one or more valuable contributions roughly each meeting.
- Good: Makes several valuable contributions spread out across the semester.
- Average: Makes a few good comments during each unit.
- Poor: Seldom makes comments or participates in class discussion.
- Failure: Makes no effort to participate, and/or does not attend class.

Obviously, you need to be present, in class, and prepared in order to participate.

#### *Some Notes about uncomfortable learning:*

- \* I'm quite happy to do what I can to help you feel more comfortable speaking and participating in class discussion. If you tend to feel uncomfortable speaking in class, send me an email and we can meet outside of class to try and arrange something to help improve your ability to participate.
- \* It isn't easy to express your own thoughts and beliefs about complicated, philosophical matters in front of others, especially when your ideas will be subject to challenge and scrutiny. Having your ideas subjected to scrutiny is likely to be uncomfortable. Such discomfort is, however, good and necessary for philosophical education. By subjecting our ideas to rational scrutiny, we can see which ones we should hold on to, and which should be let go. But remember: we are here to investigate the truth, not to win an argument. Scrutinize *ideas*, not one another. *Disrespectful treatment of another student will not be tolerated. The decision as to how to handle such disrespect is left to the instructor's discretion.*

- \* Note that some of the topics we discuss may be controversial; it is possible that some of our topics of discussion, or things that come up in discussion, may make you or others in the class feel uncomfortable. Be aware of this possibility and feel free to contact me if you are having any trouble.

### Essays for Units 1 & 3 (15% & 25%)

Essays will be spread throughout the semester and will be designed in such a way to help you improve your philosophical writing. The deadline for Essays will correspond roughly with the completion of each course unit (see course schedule below). The first essay will be broken down into several sections. Subsequent essays will task you with combining these sections in order to complete a final essay (3) which amalgamates all of the individual components you practiced in previous Essays.

You will receive further instructions about each essay as well as evaluation criteria closer to each essay's due date. Generally, however, Essays will ask you to develop and extend the skills of reflection, summary, and analysis/evaluation that you will practice on your semi-weekly short writing exercises. You will be graded primarily on your grasp of the material as well as your ability to communicate clearly and think critically.

#### *Essay Rubric*

<b>Evaluation Criteria</b>	<b>Objectives</b>	<b>Points earned</b>	<b>Points possible</b>
<b>Clear Communication</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* good writing mechanics: accurate spelling, grammar, punctuation, and sentence structure.</li> <li>* awkward phrases and poor word choices do not significantly impede the clarity of your writing.</li> <li>* uses correct citation (and does not use outside sources).</li> <li>* uses connecting transitions to show logical structure of argumentation (e.g., "because", "since", "therefore", etc.)</li> <li>* has a generally cohesive, logical structure.</li> </ul>		/5
<b>Reading Comprehension</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* accurately represents Aristotle's thought in own words.</li> <li>* displays a grasp of key terms and phrases.</li> <li>* can explain A's thought in sufficient depth and detail.</li> <li>* can explain A's thought without gaps in understanding.</li> </ul>		/7
<b>Critical Evaluation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* takes a clear, critical, and forthright stance (either positive or negative) to some aspect of Aristotle's thought.</li> <li>* provides a substantial <i>argument</i> to support this stance.</li> </ul>		/5
<b>Originality/ Creativity</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* demonstrates original and creative engagement with the material (either in comprehension or evaluation or both), by, doing at least one of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* clarifying something about Aristotle that is especially difficult to understand,</li> <li>* using a unique and fitting example to explain something,</li> <li>* coming up with a criticism of Aristotle's thinking that is a genuine problem for him, <i>et. al.</i></li> </ul> </li> </ul>		/3
<b>Comments + Total Points</b>		0	/20

### *Late Essay Policy*

Essays that are late will be *docked 1 point per 12hr period past the deadline*. For example: if an essay is due at 5pm on a Friday, an essay handed in any time up to 4:59am on Saturday will be docked 1 point. So, what would have been a 18/20 if handed in on time would become a 17/20 if handed in by 4:59am Saturday, a 16/20 if handed in by 4:59pm on Saturday, etc.

### Unit 2 Exam (20%)

In order to cover the material for Unit 2 (see below), students will write an exam *during class time* on March 22nd, 2018. The exam will consist of a combination of multiple choice, short answer, and long answer questions. The exam time is 75 minutes. The aim of the exam will be to help you solidify the concepts and terms you will have seen during this unit. A portion of the exam will ask you to explain and critically engage with some part of Aristotle's writing and thought. The material for the exam will only be taken from those texts we will have read in Aristotle's *Physics*, *Categories*, *Metaphysics* (V, VII-IX, XII), and *De Anima*. The material will be exclusively focused on those key terms, concepts, and parts of the texts which we have discussed in class.

### **COURSE SCHEDULE OUTLINE** (subject to development/revision)

#### INTRODUCTION

Aristotle's life, writings, & thought  
Aristotle's predecessors  
Aristotle's conception of philosophy  
*Metaphysics I*

#### UNIT ONE: Method

*Metaphysics II-III, VII.4*  
*Posterior Analytics*  
*Topics I*

(Unit 1 Essay Due: Friday, February 23rd @ 5pm)

#### UNIT TWO: Natural & Theoretical Science

*Physics*  
*Categories & Metaphysics V, VII-IX, XII*  
*De Anima*

(Unit 2 Exam: Thursday, March 22nd, during class)

#### UNIT THREE: "Philosophy of Human Affairs"

*Nicomachean Ethics*  
*Politics* (time permitting)

(Unit 3 Essay Due: Friday, May 4th @ 5pm)

#### CONCLUSION

Student Choice / Review  
Aristotle's successors

## **COURSE POLICIES**

### **On Electronic Communication**

The best way to get in contact with me is via email ([wbc@uic.edu](mailto:wbc@uic.edu)). I will do my best to get a response to you within 24 hours. My response time may be longer, however, on the weekends. All student work should be uploaded to the course's blackboard site, and *not* emailed directly to me. Exception: if there is a technical problem with blackboard and there is a concern about a deadline, then you may email me an electronic version of your assignment. The exact same copy of the assignment must be uploaded to blackboard once the problem has been fixed.

### **On The Use of Electronic Devices in the Classroom**

I generally prefer a device-free room. But if you feel you learn best while typing on a computer, then you may do so. But if your computer use proves to be a distraction to yourself or others *at all*, you will be asked to find an alternative way of taking notes in this class. Certainly *no cell phones* are permitted to be used during class time.

### **On Attendance**

I will generally not take attendance each class, but you must be in class in order to participate. You should notify me any time you will be unable to attend class. Only those absences with a legitimate excuse (e.g., doctor's note) will be excused and will not detract from a student's overall participation grade. Note that this policy is subject to change, if necessary.

### **On Missed or Late Work**

See the policies outline under the description of each assignment.

### **On Collaboration**

Students are free to discuss their work for this course outside of class, but must complete their own assignments individually. Students must submit *their own* work. Failure to do so will be addressed according to the policies governing academic integrity (see below)

### **On Academic Integrity**

As an academic community, UIC is committed to providing an environment in which research, learning, and scholarship can flourish and in which all endeavors are guided by academic and professional integrity. All members of the campus community—students, staff, faculty, and administrators—share the responsibility of insuring that these standards are upheld so that such an environment exists. Instances of academic misconduct by students will be handled pursuant to the Student Disciplinary Policy: <http://dos.uic.edu/docs/Student%20Disciplinary%20Policy.pdf>

*Student work submitted to blackboard may be checked against SafeAssign. All student Essays will be checked against SafeAssign.*

### **On Student Courtesy**

Students will be respectful of each other and the instructor at all times. Any deviation from this policy will not be tolerated, and how to handle instances of disrespect is left to the instructor's determination.

## RELIGIOUS HOLIDAYS

Students who wish to observe their religious holidays shall notify the faculty member by the tenth day of the semester of the date when they will be absent unless the religious holiday is observed on or before the tenth day of the semester. In such cases, the student shall notify the faculty member at least five days in advance of the date when he/she will be absent. The faculty member shall make every reasonable effort to honor the request, not penalize the student for missing the class, and if an examination or project is due during the absence, give the student an exam or assignment equivalent to the one completed by those students in attendance. If the student feels aggrieved, he/she may request remedy through the campus grievance procedure.

<http://oae.uic.edu/docs/ReligiousHolidaysFY20152017.pdf>

## ACADEMIC DEADLINES

from <http://grad.uic.edu/academic-calendar-0#Sp18>

Jan 16, T	Instruction Begins
Jan 26, F	Last day to: complete late registration; add or drop a class w/o W; withdraw from term and receive 100% \$
Feb 2, F	Last day to file for graduation this term
Feb 11, Su	CampusCare deadline to change coverage or submit waiver coverage form
March 23, F	Last day to submit approved thesis/dissertation
March 26-30	Spring Vacation. No Classes.
May 4, F	Instruction Ends
May 7-11	Final Exams
May 12, Sa	Semester Ends

## DISABILITY ACCOMMODATION

The University of Illinois at Chicago is committed to maintaining a barrier-free environment so that students with disabilities can fully access programs, courses, services, and activities at UIC. Students with disabilities who require accommodations for access to and/or participation in this course are welcome, but must be registered with the Disability Resource Center (DRC). You may contact DRC at 312-413-2183 (v) or 773-649-4535 (VP/Relay) and consult the following:

<http://drc.uic.edu/guide-to-accommodations>.

## COURSE REQUIREMENTS, METHODS OF EVALUATION, & GRADING POLICIES

### Evaluation Criteria

See the evaluation criteria for individual assignments above.

### Midterm Grades

There is no specific midterm grade for this course. A student's average performance on Unit 1 Essay and Unit 2 Exam may, if necessary, provide an indication of a student's midterm performance.

## **Final Exams**

There is no final exam for this course. Essay 3 shall serve as the final assignment.

## **GRIEVANCE PROCEDURES**

UIC is committed to the most fundamental principles of academic freedom, equality of opportunity, and human dignity involving students and employees. Freedom from discrimination is a foundation for all decision making at UIC. Students are encouraged to study the University's "[Nondiscrimination Statement](#)". Students are also urged to read the document "[Public Formal Grievance Procedures](#)". Information on these policies and procedures is available on the University web pages of the Office of Access and Equity: <http://oae.uic.edu/>.

## **UIC RESOURCES**

If you find yourself having difficulty with the course material or any other difficulties in your student life, don't hesitate to ask for help! You may come to me, or if it is about an issue beyond this class, please contact your college advisors, or get help from any number of other support services on campus. You can get a referral to the right place, or help on the spot, from concerned advisor in the Undergraduate Success Center (USC) at [usc@uic.edu](mailto:usc@uic.edu). Note that if you do come to me, in many cases I am mandated to report instances of misconduct and in such cases I legally cannot maintain your confidentiality.

**The Writing Center**, located in Grant Hall 105, offers one-on-one consultation with student writers who need help developing ideas, or need advice, guidance or additional instruction on any aspects of writing in any class. Tutors are prepared to spend fifty minutes per appointment, and there is no limit to the number of tutoring sessions you can have each semester. Make an appointment and be on time! Bring the paper on which you're working, as well as any related drafts or notes, and information about the assignment. For an appointment, call the Writing Center at (312) 413-2206, or stop by room 105 of Grant Hall. Visit the Writing Center website at [www.uic.edu/depts/engl/writing](http://www.uic.edu/depts/engl/writing) for more information.

**The Science and Learning Center**, located in the Science and Engineering South Building (SES) 201B, is a meeting place for students in Biological Sciences, Chemistry, Earth and Environmental Sciences, and Physics. At the SLC, students can meet with graduate teaching assistants for tutoring in 100-level courses, arrange informal group study sessions with other students, or meet up with friends to attend one of the workshops, seminars, or other activities sponsored by the SLC during the semester. Visit the website at [http://www.uic.edu/depts/bios/facilities/science\\_learning\\_center.shtml](http://www.uic.edu/depts/bios/facilities/science_learning_center.shtml)

## **The UIC Library**

The library is located both on east and west campus, provides access to resources, study rooms, and research support both online via chat and in person. At Daley Library on the east side of campus, stop by the reference desk in the IDEA Commons, or make an appointment for research help on either side of campus. Learn more about library policies at <http://library.uic.edu/>. To find research materials in specific subject areas view the Research Guides at <http://researchguides.uic.edu/>.

## **Public Computer Labs**

These labs are available throughout campus where you may write and/or print out your work. For a list of labs and the hours they're open, go to [www.accc.uic.edu/pclabs](http://www.accc.uic.edu/pclabs).

**The Academic Center for Excellence** can help if you need more individualized instruction in reading, writing, study skills, time management, etc. (312) 413-0031.

**Counseling Services** are available for all UIC students. You may seek free and confidential services from the Counseling Center [www.counseling.uic.edu](http://www.counseling.uic.edu). The Counseling Center is located in the Student Services Building; you may contact them at (312) 996-3490. In addition to offering counseling services, the Counseling Center also operates the InTouch Crisis Hotline from 6:00 p.m.-10:30 p.m. They offer support and referrals to callers, as well as telephone crisis interventions; please call (312) 996-5535.

**Campus Advocacy Network** Under the Title IX law you have the right to an education that is free from any form of gender-based violence and discrimination. Crimes of sexual assault, domestic violence, sexual harassment, and stalking are against the law and can be prevented. For more information or for confidential victim-services and advocacy contact UIC's Campus Advocacy Network at 312-413-1025 or visit <http://can.uic.edu>. To make a report to UIC's Title IX office, contact Rebecca Gordon, at [TitleIX@uic.edu](mailto:TitleIX@uic.edu) or (312) 996-5657.

## **CAMPUS SECURITY**

As a UIC student, you've chosen to live in one of the nation's largest cities. But, as at any university, crime is a reality. At UIC, we are strongly committed to our public safety programs, and we encourage students to be proactive in learning what programs and services are available in case of an emergency. You are **DISCOURAGED** from staying in university buildings alone, including lab rooms, after hours and are **ENCOURAGED** to use the POLICE/STUDENT patrol escort if you are uncomfortable traveling anywhere on campus. You may request an escort to accompany you to your campus destination on foot by calling 312-996-2830, and between 11:00 pm and 7:00 am you can dial the Red Car service (312-996-6800) if you are alone and need to leave the building. Through Red Car, the university has established a safe evening transportation service for university employees, students, visitors, and other authorized individuals. The car travels between university facilities within the following general boundaries: Clinton Street on the east; Western Avenue on the west; Jackson Boulevard on the north; and, 16th on the south. This service is available only to individuals possessing a valid UIC i-card. The i-card is required to ensure the safety of the driver and other passengers. Consult the following for more information: <http://www.uic.edu/uic/studentlife/campus/safety.shtml> Also you can subscribe your cell phone to receive text message alerts. An immediate SMS text alert will be sent in case of a serious crime in progress, a weather emergency, or other urgent situation. (<http://sms.accc.uic.edu>). Finally, by dialing 5-5555 from a campus phone, you can summon Police or Fire for any on-campus emergency. You may also set up the complete number, 1-312-355-5555, on speed-dial on your cell phone. For more information contact: <http://www.uic.edu/uic/studentlife/campus/emergency-information.shtml>

## **Emergency Response Recommendations**

The emergency response guide can be found at the following website: [https://www.ready.uic.edu/emergency\\_guide](https://www.ready.uic.edu/emergency_guide) It is encouraged that you to review this website and guide as well as the campus building floor plans website within the first 10 days of class. <https://fimweb.fim.uic.edu/Home.aspx>.

**\*N.B.\*** *Course policies, schedule, due dates, etc. are subject to revision at the instructor's discretion, but will only be revised with due notice being given to students.*

## SYLLABUS

### FUTURE TENSE: THE ETHICS OF WHAT WILL BE

#### PHIL 109 - 6 - 22

First-Year Seminar

<u>Instructor:</u> William B. Cochran	<u>Classroom:</u> University Hall 418
<u>Email:</u> william.cochran@u.northwestern.edu	<u>Class Time:</u> MW 11-12:20
<u>Office hours:</u> M 1-3pm; by appt.	<u>Phone:</u> 847-630-6235
<u>Location:</u> Café Bergson (University Library)	<u>CRN:</u> 37365

### COURSE DESCRIPTION

It seems there is some new technological advancement everyday. Self-driving cars are hitting the road. AlphaGo (a Go-playing AI) recently devised a new strategy to defeat the world's best (human) Go player. Using CRISPR, scientists have begun to edit the DNA of human embryos. China's government recently created a "Social Credit System" which will track a citizen's "trustworthiness" and broadcast their score to other citizens. In light of these developments, now is the right time to ask two questions: (1) What are the ethical implications of such technological developments? (2) If left unchecked, what kind of future will they produce? In order to address (1), we will turn to philosophers of the past and present. For at the heart of a question like, "can a machine be human?" is "what does it mean to be human in the first place?" Philosophers have come up with several responses to this question, and we can use their past answers to address questions about the future. In order to address (2), we will compose codes of ethics for the technologies we discuss.

### COURSE OBJECTIVES

1. Analyze potential technological developments for the ethical problems they pose.
2. Interpret philosophical theories of the past and present in order to apply them to the ethical problems we face in the future.
3. Collaborate in order to compose codes of ethics for the areas of technological development we discuss.
4. Build a final paper on a topic of your choice in this field.

## COURSE MATERIALS

### **Required:**

Boddington, Paula. *Towards a Code of Ethics for Artificial Intelligence*. Springer, 2017.

Electronic version available [here](#)<sup>1</sup> (for free). Net ID login required.  
Also available the NU Bookstore and on Amazon.

Other reading materials to be available online through Canvas. Many readings/viewings are accessible through hyperlinks (see Course Schedule, below).

## GRADING SCHEME

Assignment	Percent	Due
Attendance & Participation	10%	Every class
Short Writing Exercises	25%	8am before each class
Draft Paper Portions	25%	April 29th & May 20th
Presentation	10%	May 31st (or June 4th)
Final Paper	30%	Monday, June 11th

A	94-100
A-	90-93
B+	87-89
B	84-86
B-	80-83
C+	77-79
C	74-76
C-	70-73
D	60-69
F	0-59

## ASSIGNMENT DESCRIPTIONS

### PARTICIPATION (10%)

Research indicates that students who attend class are more likely to be successful. This is partly because students who attend class have the benefit of engaging with each other and with the instructor as well as the material, and this sort of active engagement enhances learning. Therefore, so as to give you extra incentive to participate in this class, your participation in the course will be graded.

In general, I will evaluate your class participation along two criteria: *the value* and of *the frequency* of your contributions. A valuable contribution can take many different forms. In general, valuable contributions help construct the class discussion by furthering it along an interesting path. Some examples of ways to do this include: asking an intriguing question, providing an insightful response, clarifying something that was confusing, making a useful connection between two things, bringing up a

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<sup>1</sup> <https://link-springer-com.turing.library.northwestern.edu/book/10.1007%2F978-3-319-60648-4>

useful point from the readings, extending or expanding on or responding to what someone else has just said, etc.

A rough participation rubric:

*Excellent:* Makes many valuable contributions throughout the quarter.

*Good:* Makes several valuable contributions spread out across the quarter.

*Average:* Makes a few good comments during each unit.

*Poor:* Seldom makes comments or participates in class discussion.

*Failure:* Makes no effort to participate, and/or does not attend class.

Obviously, you need to be present, in class, and prepared in order to participate. Missing class without prior excused absence is considered grounds for a reduced participation grade.

*Some Notes about uncomfortable learning:*

- \* I'm quite happy to do what I can to help you feel more comfortable speaking and participating in class discussion. If you tend to feel uncomfortable speaking in class, send me an email and we can meet to try and arrange something to help improve your ability to participate.
- \* It isn't easy to express your own thoughts and beliefs about complicated, philosophical matters in front of others, especially when your ideas will likely be subject to (respectful) challenge and scrutiny. Having your ideas subjected to scrutiny is likely to be uncomfortable. Such discomfort is, however, good and necessary for your philosophical education. By subjecting our ideas to rational scrutiny, we can see which we should hold on to, and which we should let go. But remember: we are here to investigate the truth, not to win an argument. Scrutinize *ideas*, not one another, and *help each other build towards a better grasp of the truth*. Disrespectful treatment of another student will not be tolerated. How to handle such disrespect is left to the instructor's discretion.
- \* Also note that some of the topics we discuss may be controversial. We will be discussing serious, fundamental, philosophical issues about what it means to be a human being. It is possible—indeed likely—that some of our topics of discussion, or things that come up in discussion, may make you or others in the class feel uncomfortable. Be aware of this possibility, be respectful of one another's sensitivities, and always feel free to contact me if you are having trouble.

## SHORT WRITING EXERCISES (25%)

Writing is a skill and skills are developed by frequent practice. So, before each class you will submit a short writing exercise (SWE). Ordinarily, you will be required to write a response to that day's reading/viewing material. These responses will need to do two things: (1) summarize the content of the reading/viewing & (2) reflect in some way on the content of the reading/viewing. Your summary can be about the whole reading/viewing, or just a part of it that you found intriguing and wanted to think about more deeply. Your reflection can either be critical, or it can just ask a question that you had in response to the reading/viewing's content. Some days, however, instead of completing one of these responses, you will be given more specific instructions for that day's SWE. Days with special SWE's are marked with an asterisk(\*) on the Course Schedule (below).

Short Writing Exercises (SWEs) are due by 8am the morning before class on which the reading/viewing that is to be discussed that day is scheduled. Make sure to indicate which reading/viewing you are writing about. SWEs should be approximately 1-2 paragraphs in length. SWEs will be graded on the following scale:

2 - Satisfactory

1 - Needs revision / complete but late

0 - Unsubmitted / late and unsatisfactory / submitted after next SWE is due

\* A satisfactory exercise is the requisite length, is on topic, and demonstrates engagement with the material. If your exercises receive a grade of 2, assume that you are doing well. You will have the chance to re-write your first on-time exercise that receives a 1. You will receive notes about what you need to improve. Re-writes will be due before the next SWE's due date.

\* SWEs that are submitted late (after the 8am cut-off time), but still handed-in before the next short written exercise is due and are satisfactory, will receive a 1. SWEs handed in after the next SWE is due will receive a 0. SWEs that are handed in late and are not satisfactory will receive a 0.

## DRAFT PAPER PORTIONS (25%)

Twice during the quarter you will hand in portions of your final paper. These will be drafts of parts of your paper that will make up different portions of the final paper turned in at the end of the quarter. Students are allowed and encouraged to talk to the instructor about developing their ideas in these draft paper portions.

*The first draft paper portion will be approximately 3-4 pages in length and is due on Sunday, April 29th.* For this portion, students will describe the specific

technology they intend to discuss in their final paper and they will draw out the ethical implications/problems that this emerging technology is likely to create. This draft paper portion should cite and/or discuss a piece of philosophical research that will inform this section of your paper.

*The second draft paper portion will be approximately 5 pages in length and is due on Sunday, May 20th.* This second draft paper portion will ask you to create your own code of ethics in order to address the ethical problem(s) you described in the first draft paper portion. It will also ask you to give a discussion of the underlying values of your code of ethics and show how these codes seek to address the problem as you outlined it in your first draft paper portion.

#### PRESENTATION (10%)

Towards the end of the quarter, each student will present their work on their individual topic to the rest of the class. This will be a short (~5 min.) presentation of what students have worked on in their first and second draft paper portions. Presentations should reflect an incorporation of the feedback received on their two previous draft paper portions. Students are expected to give thoughtful, constructive feedback to one another's presentations.

#### FINAL PAPER (30%)

Students will complete a final paper (~10-12 pages) on a topic of their choice related to the ethics of future technologies. Building on the work they have done and the feedback they have received, students will put together a final paper with the following parts:

- I. An introduction which [summarizes the content of the paper &]<sup>2</sup> describes the emerging technology that the paper will discuss. (~1 page)
- II. A discussion of the ethical problem(s) that are likely to arise from this emerging technological development in the future. (~2-3 pages)
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- III. An original code of ethics which seeks to address the problem(s) as laid out in §II. (~1 page)
- IV. A discussion of the underlying values expressed in the code of ethics given in §III. (~2 pages)
- V. A treatment of the way in which this code of ethics will address the ethical problem(s) as they are laid out in §II. (~2 pages)
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<sup>2</sup> summary of the content of the paper will not be part of Draft Paper Portion 1, but will be part of the Final Paper.

- VI. A section addressing any potential counter-example(s) or opposing argument(s) or a critique of an alternative code of ethics that has been proposed for the same technology.<sup>3</sup> (~1-2 pages)
- VII. A short conclusion which recapitulates §§I-V. (~0.5-1 page)

In addition to being well-written, final papers should draw on some aspect of the reading/viewing that students will have done in the course of the quarter. Ways to fulfill this requirement include: drawing on or critiquing a pre-existing code of ethics on your topic in § VI; drawing on or engaging with a philosopher we have read in §§II; *et al.* Using reading/viewing material from outside the materials we have used in the course is fine, but should be OK'd by the instructor first. More instructions on the Final Paper will be handed out as the quarter unfolds. Students are able and encouraged to work closely with the instructor and the library resources available to them (see below and Canvas for more details) during the research and writing stages of their work.

## **COURSE POLICIES**

### On Electronic Communication

The best way contact me is via email (william.cochran@u.northwestern.edu). I will do my best to get a response to you within 24 hours. My response time may be longer, however, on the weekends. All student work should be uploaded to the course's Canvas site, and *not* emailed directly to me. Exception: if there is a technical problem with Canvas and there is a concern about a deadline, then you may email me an electronic version of your assignment. The exact same copy of the assignment must be uploaded to Canvas once the problem has been fixed.

### On The Use of Electronic Devices in the Classroom

I generally prefer a device-free room. But, because of the nature of our work in this class, if you feel you learn best while typing on a computer, then you may do so. But if your computer use proves to be a distraction to yourself or others *at all*, you will be asked to find an alternative way of taking notes in this class. Certainly, *no cell phones* are permitted to be used during class time.

### On Attendance

I will generally not take attendance each class, but you must be in class in order to participate. You should notify me any time you will be unable to attend class. Only those absences with a legitimate excuse (e.g., doctor's note) will be excused and will not detract from a student's overall participation grade. Note that this policy is subject to change, if necessary.

### On Work Submitted Late

The policy governing late SWEs can be found in the relevant section above. For other assignments (draft paper portions and final paper), work submitted late without a

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<sup>3</sup> Feedback from your peers on your presentation is a good place to develop a counter-argument.

legitimate excuse will be grounds for a loss of points on that assignment – *ordinarily* a third of a letter grade per 2 days (48hrs) late (e.g., if your original grade would have been an A-, a paper handed in up to 48 hours late would get a B+, and so on). If you think you will need to submit your work late for some reason, make sure to contact me *before* the assignment is due.

#### On Academic Integrity

Students are free to discuss their work for this course outside of class, but must complete their own assignments individually. Students must submit *their own* work. Failure to do so will be addressed according to the policies governing academic integrity (see below). All Northwestern's standards on academic integrity apply to all aspects of the class. Suspected violations of academic integrity will be reported to the WCAS Assistant Dean for Academic Integrity. For more information, see: <http://www.northwestern.edu/provost/policies/academic-integrity/index.html>. Student work submitted to Canvas may be checked against Turnitin. For more information on how to cite work properly, consult [this guide from NU](#).

#### On Student Classroom Conduct

Students will be respectful of each other and the instructor at all times. Any deviation from this policy will not be tolerated, and how to handle instances of disrespect is left to the instructor's determination.

#### Students Requesting Accommodation

Any student requesting accommodations related to a disability or other condition is required to register with AccessibleNU ([accessiblenu@northwestern.edu](mailto:accessiblenu@northwestern.edu); 847-467-5530) and provide professors with an accommodation notification from AccessibleNU, preferably within the first two weeks of class. All information will remain confidential.

### **SOME INITIAL RESOURCES FOR RESEARCH**

Use and peruse these online resources to familiarize yourselves with the many different topics we will cover in this course.

ENCYCLOPEDIAE OF PHILOSOPHY

[The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy](#)

[The Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy](#)

CODES OF PROFESSIONAL ETHICS

[Illinois Institute of Technology's Database](#)

PLACES CURRENTLY THINKING ABOUT AI

[Oxford's Future of Life Institute](#)

[OpenAI](#)

DATABASE OF THINKING ABOUT ENHANCEMENT

[President's Council on Bioethics](#)

ON CAMPUS

[Bill McHugh](#), Subject Librarian at NU for Classics & Philosophy

[Master of Science in Artificial Intelligence Program](#) (NU's McCormick School of Engineering)

## COURSE SCHEDULE<sup>4</sup>

### INTRODUCTION + METHOD

DAY 0 - Tues., April 3rd: *NO CLASS. Instead...*<sup>\*</sup>

Read:

- Course Syllabus
- [“Authoring a Code”](#) (IIT)
- Boddington, Ch. 1

Do:

- 1) \*SWE 0 (see instructions on Canvas)  
[Due: April 3 at 11:59pm]
- 2) Familiarize yourself with [IIT's Ethics Code Collection](#)

DAY 1 - Wed., April 4th: *Introduction to each other & the course.*<sup>\*</sup>

Who is here (& why)?

What are some of the emerging technologies we are going to discuss?

How should we approach ethical questions about an uncertain future?

How is this class going to proceed?

- [“Moral Dilemmas of the Fourth Industrial Revolution”](#)
- Selection from Plato's *Phaedrus* (274ff)<sup>^</sup>

\*SWE: Research an emerging technology discussed in “Moral Dilemmas” reading (or another technology you’ve come across elsewhere) that seems intriguing to you & write about what you find + what ethical issues you see potentially arising from its development.

DAY 2 - Mon., April 9: *Introduction to ethics & codes of ethics*

What is ethics? What is a code of ethics? Why do we need them?

- Boddington, Chs. 2 (& 4) [*focus on Ch. 2*]

DAY 3 - Wed., April 11: *Ethics & codes of ethics, continued*<sup>\*</sup>

What do you need to create a code of ethics?

What makes for a *good* code of ethics?

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<sup>4</sup> subject to revision. Readings marked with an (^) will be available on Canvas.

\*SWE: Pick a code from [IIT's Ethics code collection](#) and write about it: Does this seem like a *good* code of ethics to you? Why or why not?

## HUMAN ENHANCEMENT

DAY 4 - Mon., April 16: *Introduction to Human Enhancement*

What counts as "human"?

What counts as "enhancement"?

What are the questions/issues surrounding human enhancement?

- ["Genetic Engineering Will Change Everything Forever"](#) (YouTube)
- Kass, "Ageless Bodies, Happy Souls"<sup>^</sup>
- Buchanan, "Breathless Optimism, Hysterical Loathing"<sup>^</sup>
- Nozick, "The Experience Machine"<sup>^</sup>
- Bostrom, "Dignity and Enhancement"<sup>^5</sup>

DAY 5 - Wed., April 18: *Human Enhancement & Appeals to Human Nature*

Is there such a thing as human nature? If so, what is it?

Can we appeal to human nature when arguing for/against the moral permissibility of enhancements?

- Selection from Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* I.7 ("the function argument")<sup>^</sup>
- Buchanan, "Changing Human Nature?"<sup>^</sup>
- Boddington, Ch. 6.3
- Buchanan, "Why Evolution Isn't Good Enough"
- Ryuichi Ida, "Should We Improve Human Nature? An Interrogation from an Asian Perspective"<sup>^</sup>

DAY 6 - Mon., April 23: *Genetic Engineering & The Family*

What happens to the family when we can enhance our children?

What is the purpose of the family?

Do we have a duty to perfect our children?

- Sandel, "the Case Against Perfection: What's Wrong With Designer Children, Bionic Athletes, and Genetic Engineering"<sup>^</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> readings tinted grey are not required, but recommended. They are included as possible places to look for developing your papers.

- Harris, "Enhancements Are a Moral Obligation" ^
- Buchanon, "Will The Biologically Rich Get Richer?" ^

DAY 7 - Wed., April 25: *Critique of code(s) of ethics for human enhancement\**

Based on what we have read so far, how can revise the codes currently on offer to make them better?

- Boddington, Ch. 8.5

Some possible codes for critique:

- <https://www.ashg.org/about/ethics.shtml>
- <http://www.kurzweilai.net/code-of-ethics-on-human-augmentation-the-three-laws>
- <https://diybio.org/codes/>

\*SWE: *during/after class*, write up a short critique of the code you examined in class and submit to Canvas.

[Sun., April 29: *First Draft Portion Due*]

### **AUTOMATION + ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE**

DAY 8 - Mon., April 30: *Introduction to AI*

What is artificial intelligence?

Can a robot be human? Do robots have rights?

- Boddington, Chs. 3 & 7
- Kamm, "Moral Status" ^
- Bostrom & Yudkowsky, "The ethics of artificial intelligence" ^

DAY 9 - Wed., May 2: *Artificial Intelligence and Its Threat to Humanity*

Is AI a threat to humanity? If so, how?

Is it possible to create a moral AI?

- ["Teaching Robots Right from Wrong"](#)
- ["Benefits and Risks of Artificial Intelligence"](#) (Future of Life Institute)
- ["Three Principles for creating safer AI"](#) (TED talk)
- Peterson, S. "Superintelligence as Superethical" ^

DAY 10 - Mon., May 7: *Self-driving cars and moral responsibility*

If an autonomous vehicle kills a pedestrian, who is morally responsible?  
Which moral theory should we teach AI to have?

- [“Whose Life Should Your Car Save?”](#) article in NYT
- Sandel, “The Runaway Trolley”^
- Scanlon, “Responsibility”
- Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* III.1-5^

DAY 11 - Wed., May 9: *The Rise of Robots and the End of Work*

How important is it to have a job?  
Which jobs (if any) should be preserved for humans, and why?  
Are some jobs more valuable than others?  
What do we do with ourselves when everything is done for us?  
Is a universal basic income a good idea?

- [TBD]
- Martin Ford, “Towards a New Economic Paradigm”^
- Boddington, Ch. 6.2

DAY 12 - Mon., May 14: *Code Writing Day on AI\**

What AI technology are you going to focus on?  
How will you design a code of ethics for it?  
What underlying values will inform it?  
What justifications will you use to write the specific principles?

- Browse: [“Executive Summary: The IEEE Global Initiative for Ethical Considerations in Artificial Intelligence and Autonomous Systems”](#) (IEEE).
- Browse: [European Parliament Committee on Legal Affairs Draft Report with recommendations to the Commission on Civil Law Rules on Robotics](#)

\*SWE: *during/after class*, write up the code of ethics you created in class and offer a short discussion of *its underlying values* & how it will address the problem you focused on.

## BIG DATA + SURVEILLANCE

DAY 13 - Wed., May 16: *Convenience vs. surveillance*

What are the risks and benefits of big data?

What, exactly, is the value of privacy?

How much privacy are we willing to give up for the convenience of certain apps?

- Charles Fried, "Privacy" ^
- *Wired* article, "[Big Data Meets Big Brother](#)"
- Article on [digital pill approved by US FDA](#)
- "[A murder case tests Alexa's devotion to your privacy](#)"

*[Sunday, May 20th: Second Draft Portion Due]*

DAY 14 - Mon., May 21: *The value of data vs. the value of privacy*

What is *good* data? To whom is it useful?

How can we convince companies to treat our data responsibly?

- Selection from Plato's *Republic*, "The Ring of Gyges" ^
- "[The Cambridge Analytica Scandal, in 3 Paragraphs](#)"
- "[Why it Feels Like FaceBook is Listening Through Your Mic](#)"

DAY 15 - Wed., May 23: *Code Writing Day for Big Data & Surveillance Technologies*

## PRESENTATIONS + CONCLUSION

DAY XX - Mon., May 28: [Memorial Day. No class.]

DAY 16 - Wed., May 30: *Presentations*

DAY 17 - Mon., June 4: *Presentations cont'd*  
& *Conclusion* [Day 18 - Wed., June 6th, if necessary]

What have you learned?

Where will we go from here?

Are you hopeful or fearful about the future?

What impact do you think thinking about ethics will have on how the future unfolds?

***[Monday, June 11th: Final Paper Due]***