

Important note about a possible work stoppage during the semester



The California Faculty Association (the union that represents all CSU faculty, including lecturers, tenure-line faculty, coaches, counselors, and librarians) is in the midst of a difficult contract dispute with the CSU system-wide administration. In response to the CSU management's stance, it is possible that the faculty union will call a strike or other work stoppage this semester. I promise to inform the class as soon as possible of any disruption to our class meeting schedule.

For further information about the issues involved in the strike, please visit the resources at: www.calfac.org and www.cfabargaining.org

Phil 2 ethics

CSU Sacramento, Fall 2026

instructor jonathan chen | www.jonsmyth.com

contact jonathan.chen@csus.edu

office hours Monday | 8:50 – 9:35pm (or by appt) | Mendocino Hall 3036

class meets 6:00 – 8:50pm | Douglass Hall 110

class section section 10, course #80956



the syllabus | short version

- **What book do I need to get?**

Steven M. Cahn, *Exploring Ethics: An Introductory Anthology*, 5th Edition (Oxford University Press, 2020)

- **What do I need bring to each class?**

Some lined paper or a blue book and a pen or pencil.

- **Where can I find the readings and assignments for each week?**

Find them under 'IMPORTANT: Course Schedule' in the 'Start Here / Orientation' Module on Canvas.

- **Can I use electronic devices in the class?**

No, unless you require accommodation. Put away your phones and laptops!

- **Can I submit late work?**

It's complicated and varies by assignment. Scroll down to the 'Late Assignments' section of the syllabus.

• What happens if I plagiarize or use GenAI to do my work?

I get that it's tempting to cheat because it's convenient, but my goal is to disincentivize you from doing so. If you cheat, I'll let you redo your assignment (under certain conditions), but it may weaken my trust in you. For more information, scroll down to 'Academic Honesty.'

the syllabus | long version

GENERAL INFORMATION

Catalog Description

Examination of the concepts of morality, obligation, human rights and the good life. Competing theories about the foundations of morality will be investigated. Units: 3.0

This course satisfies **GE Area C2**: Introduction to the Humanities.

Learning Objectives & Outcomes

1. Demonstrate knowledge of the conventions and methods of the study of the humanities.
 - ✓ You will engage in an array of ethical debates that stem from various thinkers and moral theories, and you will demonstrate your proficiency via quizzes, discussions, and a final paper.
2. Investigate, describe, and analyze the roles and effects of human culture and understanding in the development of human societies.
 - ✓ By sympathizing with both Western and Eastern thinkers and understanding their motivation for their projects, you will have a clearer view on how they contribute to the world we currently live in.
3. Compare and analyze various conceptions of humankind.
 - ✓ By exploring the various thinkers' ethical theories and suggestions on how society can flourish, you will learn and be able to participate to the discussion in novel ways.
4. Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the historical development of cultures and civilizations, including animating ideas and values.
 - ✓ During our exploration of several philosophical traditions that stem from Ancient Greek, Western, and Classical Chinese traditions, you will be tasked with essay-writing and exams to demonstrate your knowledge.

Required Textbook & Materials

Textbook

Steven M. Cahn, *Exploring Ethics: An Introductory Anthology*, 5th Edition (Oxford University Press, 2020)

Note #1: This is an older edition, so you should be able to find a used copy for around \$10. Check Alibris, AbeBooks, Valore Books, or BooksRun.

Note #2: An E-Book version should also be available to rent for cheaper.

Materials

For each class, you will need to bring either lined paper or a blue book, as well as a pen or pencil.

Accommodations

1. Services to Students with Disability (SSWD)
 "Sacramento State is committed to ensuring an accessible learning environment where course

or instructional content are usable by all students and faculty. If you believe that you require disability-related academic adjustments for this class, please immediately contact Services for Students with Disabilities (SSWD) to discuss eligibility. A current accommodation letter from SSWD is required before any modifications, above and beyond what is otherwise available for all other students in this class will be provided.” ([Link](#))

2. Student Health and Counseling Services

“Your physical and mental health are important to your success as a college student. Student Health and Counseling Services (SHCS) in The WELL offers medical, counseling, and wellness services to help you get and stay healthy during your time at Sac State. SHCS offers: Primary Care medical services, including sexual and reproductive healthcare, transgender care, and immunizations; urgent care for acute illness, injuries, and urgent counseling needs; pharmacy for prescriptions and over-the-counter products; mental health counseling, including individual sessions, group counseling, support groups, mindfulness training, and peer counseling; athletic training for sports injury rehabilitation; wellness services, including nutrition counseling, peer-led health education and wellness workshops, and free safer sex supplies; violence and sexual assault support services. Most services are covered by the Health Services fee and available at no additional cost.” ([Link](#))

3. Crisis Assistance & Resource Education Support (CARES)

“If you are experiencing challenges with food, housing, financial or other unique circumstances that are impacting your education, help is just a phone call or email away. The CARES office provides case management support for any enrolled student.” ([Link](#))

COURSE ASSIGNMENTS & REQUIREMENTS

Canvas & Announcements

We will be using *Canvas* as a means of communication and assessment. Log in through <https://my.csus.edu/>.

- ✓ Always check your CSUS e-mail for class announcements.
- ✓ I respond to all e-mails within 48 hours (except weekends). If I do not respond within that time, assume I did not receive your e-mail and resend it.

Readings

All of the assigned reading should be done *before* class. The readings will often be *very challenging*, though reading through them two or three more times will help to clarify the material.

“Who Is You?” Assignment

Who Is You?

You’ll complete a short assignment where you tell your classmates and me a little more about yourself!

Assessing Comprehension Assignments

Lecture Quizzes

There will be three In-Class Lecture Quizzes. The quizzes are closed-note and closed-book. You will first take the quiz by yourself, and then with your assigned team of 4-5 of your peers. You will receive your team score *if* you score above a threshold on your individual quiz.

Short Take-Home Exams

There will be three Short Take-Home Exams. These will require you to show how you arrived at your answers. To do this, you will need to identify passages from the assigned readings that helped you draw your conclusions, then explain why you chose those passages.

Deconstruction & Analysis Assignments

In-Class Reflections

You will have 12 In-Class Reflections during class time; they could be given at the beginning, in the middle, or near the end of class. These are short writing assignments that offer you an opportunity to share your thoughts about the topic at hand and tie back to the reading.

Analysis of an Event

You will be required to analyze a current event and connect it to the topic at hand. The current event must be in your own city, your community, or our university.

Reading Struggle Analysis

The goal for this assignment is not to prove that you understood the readings perfectly. Instead, it is to show me the difficulties you encountered along the way. You can choose from any of the readings that you found particularly challenging and walk me through your thought process. When writing, consider what those specific challenges were (e.g., the transition is confusing, the idea is hard to grasp, certain words are used in an unfamiliar way, the example doesn't seem to support the argument, etc.), how you interpreted the reading, and how you tried to overcome those challenges.

Paper Construction

You will be assigned a 3-4 page paper for this class. This will be broken down into multiple stages throughout the semester, and it will demonstrate some of the ways in which you approach moral problems. You must substantiate your viewpoint, but also be charitable and sincere to alternative viewpoints. Your grade for the paper is based on the reasoning behind your argument rather than the position you intend to argue for. With this, you will be given an opportunity to organize your thoughts clearly and coherently throughout the semester, and show that you have developed a proficiency in constructing arguments.

If you need additional help with writing and organizing their papers, I highly recommend visiting the Writing Center (<http://www.csus.edu/writingcenter/>) and/or PARC (<http://www.csus.edu/parc/index.html>) on campus.

Flexing Your Creative Muscles Assignments

Note: These assignments will be showcased to all students in the class so you can witness each other's creativity!

Diary Entry / Letter to a Friend / Internal Monologue

You will create a diary entry, a letter to a friend, or an internal monologue for either one of the thinkers we discuss or a fictional character who espouses their philosophy. You can craft your own fictional scenario for which your entry will reflect upon. It could involve, say, an incident or dilemma that forces the thinker to confront their own beliefs. The entry must reflect 2-3 concepts within the reading. Really immerse yourself in their world and embody the character!

Artwork / Comic / Poem / Short Play

You will take some philosophical idea and make someone *experience* it rather than offer an explanation of it. This can be done through various art forms (e.g., a painting, collage, digital art, sculpture, photography, etc.), a comic strip (either hand-drawn or digitally produced), a poem, or a short script for a play. Feel free to get as creative as you'd like and create absurd or bizarre scenarios to your heart's content! Your work must *not* include the name of any philosopher or specific philosophical concept. Your peers and I should be able to figure it out on our own!

Create a Boardgame

You will create a boardgame designed by a philosopher of your choosing. You will decide its mechanics, such as the goal(s) or how players win, how players interact during the game, how competition or cooperation works, the risks or rewards involved, why players' decisions matter, unpredictable events, and so on.

Peer Feedback

You will be giving peers feedback on the above three kinds of creative work that highlight what drew your attention to their work, what you appreciated about them, and what philosophical idea their work made you think about.

Extra Credit Assignment

The Philosophy Department will host a Fall Symposium discussing the ethics of sport on November 2nd in the University Union Redwood Room. I will give up to +15 extra credit to anyone who attends and writes a short summary of what they learned. More details to come.

Grading

Brief Introduction		
Who Is You?	20 pts	2%
Assessing Comprehension		
In-Class Lecture Quizzes (3)	180 pts	18%
Short Take-Home Exams (3)	90 pts	9%
Deconstruction & Analysis		
In-Class Reflections (best 10 of 12)	200 pts	20%
Analysis of an Event (1)	50 pts	5%
Reading Struggle Analysis (2)	90 pts	9%
Paper Construction (4)	160 pts	16%
Flexing Your Creative Muscles		
Diary Entry (1)	60 pts	6%
Artwork/ Comic / Poem / Short Play (1)	60 pts	6%
Create a Boardgame (1)	60 pts	6%
Peer Feedback (3)	30	3%
TOTAL	1000 pts	100%

A = 93 – 100%, **A-** = 90 – 92%, **B+** = 87 – 89%, **B** = 83 – 86%, **B-** = 80 – 82%, **C+** = 77 – 79%, **C** = 73 – 76%, **C-** = 70 – 72%
D+ = 67 – 69%, **D** = 63 – 66%, **D-** = 60 – 62.9%, **F** = 0 – 59%

Late Assignments Policy

You will be given a feasible amount of time to complete each assignment, and it is your responsibility to know when an assignment is due.

Should you need to make up an assignment, the following penalties will be enforced:

- ✓ If you are late for an **In-Class Lecture Quiz**, you will only be allowed to take the quiz by yourself and you will not get the team score. If you have to miss a lecture quiz on the day of, you can make it up (if documents* are provided) during my office hours or at another scheduled time.
- ✓ **Short-Take Home Exams** must be completed on time for full credit. Each 24-hour period it is submitted late will result in -4 points.
- ✓ **In-Class Reflections** are conducted at some point during the class. They cannot be made up without the relevant documents*. I only count 10 out of 12 of them (so you can miss two with no penalties).
- ✓ The **Analysis of an Event, Reading Struggle Analysis, Paper Construction, Diary Entry, Dialogue/Poem/Play, and Create a Board Game** assignments all have a soft deadline and a hard deadline. The soft deadline can be missed without penalty, but you will be awarded +2 extra points if completed by then. However, they cannot be completed for points after the hard deadline has passed.

*Relevant documents can excuse tardy work. These documents must describe an injury or illness, death in the family, military service, or athletic responsibilities.

Note: When submitting assignments on *Canvas*, please make sure that they have been submitted properly. If you are unsure, you can always send me an e-mail with the assignment attached and copied and pasted (don't just send me an e-mail asking if I received the assignment posted on *Canvas*).

Academic Honesty

"Plagiarism, as a form of cheating, is the use of distinctive ideas or works belonging to another person without providing adequate acknowledgement of that person's contribution. Regardless of the means of appropriation, incorporation of another's work into one's own requires adequate identification and acknowledgement. Plagiarism is doubly unethical because it deprives the author of rightful credit and gives credit to someone who has not earned it. Acknowledgement is not necessary when the material used is common knowledge."

Our goal for the course is to cultivate an ability to think independently and solve problems that arise. While stealing someone else's work or outsourcing that work to AI is wrong because it is an ethical violation (at the very least), what's really dangerous about plagiarizing is that you're stealing from your own education. I used to fail students for plagiarizing before I realized that it may be the fault of my curriculum that incentivizes a student to cheat. To that end, I will try my best to discourage cheating of any kind.

In this class, the ability to think critically is essential for philosophy. Using Generative AI tools, including those available to you through the university, are acceptable if the role of AI is to support your engagement in the learning process. GenAI tools are not substitutes for your intellectual effort or scholarly expression.

AI may be used as your writing tutor, helping you to proofread and even improve the conciseness and precision of your writing. However, your work must not start or end with AI. AI cannot be the original writer or researcher; it is simply another pair of eyes to check what you may have missed. You can always ask me if you're unsure!

Active engagement with course materials, critical thinking and judgment, and expression of original ideas should never be outsourced to technology. Any violation of this is subject to [CSUS's Academic Dishonesty policy](#).

If I believe you have plagiarized your assignment, you will receive a "0" on the assignment. While you will be given the opportunity to redo the assignment, you will also be given a verbal assessment to ensure you truly have a grasp of the material. If your response is inadequate, then you will keep the "0" for your assignment.

If you are still unsure of what constitutes as plagiarism, please speak with me or refer to Sacramento State's [Academic Honesty Policy](#).

Course Schedule

This is subject to change. You will be given at least a two-week notice if any changes are made.

All readings should be completed before coming to class.

The course schedule is available on Canvas or via www.jonsmyth.com/teaching.