



**JOHN FELICE
ROME CENTER**

PHIL 181: Ethics
John Felice Rome Center
Spring 2026
Tuesdays & Thursdays | 5:15-6:30 p.m.
Sala 1
Dr. Francesco Mariani (he/him/his)
Email: fmariani@luc.edu
Office Hours: Tues. 3:30-4:30 p.m.
(by appointment)

Course Description

The course aims to provide an overview of ethics in the history of Western philosophy from ancient Greece to the contemporary world. In this historical and ideal trajectory from the ancient world to the present day, in particular, the course aims to outline some of the most important and influential paradigms of ethics. By studying philosophers such as Socrates, Kant and Nietzsche, we will be able to appreciate the diversity of approach and interpretation of ethics, as well as the elements of continuity and discontinuity among them. In this way we will be in a position to re-examine the complexity of the different solutions to the fundamental questions of ethics, such as: how should we, as rational beings, treat others? What is the origin of our moral obligations? How is ethics determined by history and the society to which we belong? How do our ethical beliefs influence culture, politics, law, economics and vice versa? The course will examine the problem of equality, peace, different notions of justice and other concepts that are at the heart of ethics. The course is divided into two blocks. The first part of the semester is dedicated to three fundamental paradigms of ethics: ancient Greek ethics, Kantian ethics, and utilitarian ethics. The second part of the semester is divided into two thematic sections: the first thematic section focuses on the crisis of modern ethics through (I) Nietzsche's reconstruction of the origin of ethics and his criticism of Western culture and civilization; and (II) Freud's diagnosis of the crisis and discontents of human beings in society. The second thematic section is dedicated to two important proposals for renewing the ethical discourse on justice in the second half of the 20th century. The final part of the semester will also be an opportunity to re-examine some of the most pressing ethical, bioethical and ethical-political problems of today's society.

Learning Outcomes

This course enables the student to:

- (a) appreciate the profound issues involved in social relations, such as dignity and diversity
- (b) engage in dialogue with great philosophers, paying close attention to their meaning, their reasons, their concerns, their vision
- (c) examine the way different philosophically defended views challenge each other and see how they also challenge unexamined presuppositions in our own culture
- (d) include their own reflections into the dialogue
- (e) recognize reasons supporting a view, identify unexamined presuppositions, appreciate astute insights, expose vulnerabilities in established positions.
- (f) recognize the need for ethical judgment
- (g) distinguish alternative courses of action.
- (h) articulate the relevant ethical values, principles, rights, and virtues from the point of view of each stakeholder
- (i) formulate and support an ethical judgment
- (j) compare and contrast ethical theories and evaluate them in terms of strengths and weaknesses.



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Required Text / Materials

Sofocles, *Antigone* (available online)

Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals* (available online)

Immanuel Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals* (available online)

Assigned and supplementary readings posted on Sakai;

Attendance Policy

In accordance with the Rome Center mission to promote a higher level of academic rigor, and in compliance with full-time student visa status, all courses adhere to the following attendance policy.

Prompt attendance, preparation and active participation in course discussions are expected from every student and synonymous with academic success. Attendance is mandatory at every class meeting for each course. Lateness or leaving class early will impact the course grade at the professor's discretion. All absences, including medical absences, will be treated the same, unless they are documented long-term conditions or emergencies. Such situations will be evaluated case-by-case by the Academic Affairs office.

Twice-a-week classes:

- After 2 absences, a 2% final grade reduction will be applied for each missed class.
- Missing 6 classes or more will result in an automatic failure (F).

Assessment Components

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|--------------------------------|-----|
| • Midterm Exam (in-class test) | 35% |
| • Final Exam (take-home paper) | 35% |
| • Presentations | 15% |
| • Participation | 15% |

Grading

94-100: A

90-93: A-

87-89: B+

84-86: B

80-83: B-

77-79: C+

74-76: C

70-73: C-

67-69: D+

60-66: D

59 or lower: F



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Academic Integrity

Plagiarism and other forms of academic misconduct (use of AI included) are unacceptable at the Rome Center and will be dealt with in accordance with Loyola University Chicago's guidelines. . Students may not plagiarize; the use of AI is considered plagiarism too and treated as such. Any Turnitin submission flagged over 30% may be investigated as potential plagiarism. Please keep draft versions of your saved work to show your progress in case you are called for a discussion about academic integrity. The use of any grammar-checking app, in order to avoid false positives in the AI scan, must be agreed upon in advance with the instructor. Please familiarize yourself with Loyola's standards here: <https://catalog.luc.edu/academic-standards-regulations/undergraduate/>. You are responsible to comply with the LUC University Catalog.

Late or Missed Assignments & Exam Policy

Late or missed assignments will not be accepted for grading without the authorization of the instructor. ***As per the JFRC academic policies, students who miss any scheduled exam or quiz, including a final exam at the assigned hours will not be permitted to sit for a make-up examination without approval of the Associate Dean of Academic Affairs. Permission is given rarely and only for grave reason; travel is not considered a grave reason. Make-up exams will only be given for documented absences.***

Accessibility Accommodations

Students registered with the Student Accessibility Center (SAC) requiring academic accommodations should contact the Academic Affairs office at the John Felice Rome Center during the first week of classes.

Title IX

The Rome Center follows Loyola's [Comprehensive Policy and Procedures for Addressing Discrimination, Sexual Misconduct, Retaliation](#) and will comply with those as indicated and instructed.

DEI

In line with JFRC's commitment to diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging, students are expected to embrace and contribute to a learning environment that is open, welcoming, and aims for mutual understanding. As members of the JFRC community, we strive to create a safe and inclusive environment that encourages the expression of diverse opinions. Both students and faculty have a responsibility to convey respect when interacting with others and to honor the dignity of all community members.

Course Schedule

Date	Topic(s)	Text/Assignment	
Tue. 1/20	Introduction to the course		
Thur. 1/22	Ancient Ethics: Greek Tragedies	Sofocles, <i>Antigone</i> (full text)	
Tue. 1/27	Antigone	Nussbaum, <i>The Fragility of Goodness</i> (excerpts)	3
Thur. 1/29	Socrates: Parresia and Eudaimonia	Foucault, <i>Discourse and Truth</i> (excerpts), Plato, <i>The Apology of Socrates</i> (full text)	



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Tue. 2/3	Ethical intellectualism: Socrates and Plato	Plato, <i>The Republic</i> (excerpts)
Thur. 2/5	Practical wisdom	Aristotle, <i>Ethics</i> (excerpts)
Tue. 2/10	Student presentation I	Nussbaum, Hadot, et al. (excerpts)
Thur. 2/12	Kant I	<i>CPrR, Groundwork</i> (Chap. 1, first half)
Tue. 2/17	Kant II	<i>Groundwork</i> (Chap. 1, second half)
Thur. 2/19	Kant III	<i>Groundwork</i> (excerpts)
Tue. 2/24	Kant IV	<i>Groundwork</i> (excerpts)
Thur. 2/26	Kant and Utilitarianism I	Mill, <i>Utilitarianism</i> (excerpts)
Tue. 3/3	Kant and Utilitarianism II	Mill, <i>Utilitarianism</i> (excerpts)
Thur. 3/5	Midterm exam	
Tue. 3/17	Nietzsche I	<i>The Gay Science, Zarathustra</i> (excerpts)
Thur. 3/19	Nietzsche II	<i>On the Genealogy of Morals</i> (excerpts)
Tue. 3/24	Freud I	<i>Thoughts on War</i>
Thur. 3/26	Freud II	<i>Civilization and Its Discontents</i> (excerpts)
Tue. 3/31	Freud III	<i>Civilization and Its Discontents</i> (excerpts)
Thur. 4/2	John Rawls I	<i>A Theory of Justice</i> (§ 40)
Tue. 4/7	John Rawls II	<i>A Theory of Justice</i> (excerpts)
Thur. 4/9	Seminar I: M.L. King	<i>Letter from Birmingham Jail</i>
Tue. 4/14	Seminar II: J. Butler	"Can One Lead a Good Life in a Bad Life?"
Thur. 4/16	Seminar III: W. Brown	"Educating Human Capital"



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Tue. 4/21 Student presentations II

Thur. 4/23 Student presentations III

Thur. 4/30 **Final exam**