**Ethics and Engineering**

**ECE/Philosophy 316**

**Fall Semester**

**2025**

**Course Guidelines**

“Ethics and Engineering” is a broad-ranging course in *moral theory and practice*, open to all disciplines and all majors. The principles studied throughout the semester are applicable to all career paths, and all who are interested are welcome to be members of the class. The course will be structured in three interrelated parts — (1) an *introduction* to the central themes of the course, (2) a focused study of *normative ethics*, and (3) an exploration of *ethical issues in the practice of a profession*, applied in the vocational context of the discipline of engineering (including safety and liability, professional responsibility to clients and employers, legal obligations, codes of ethics, and career choice). As a course in *philosophy*, one of the primary objectives of our journey together will be to explore the fundamental structure of human personhood, the grounding of moral action, and the development of moral character as a precondition of integral work in a profession — and the essential foundation necessary for our life together in society.

The course fulfills credit as an upper-division class in *advanced composition*, for which the University of Illinois requires twenty to thirty pages of *revised writing* as a minimum standard. In order to fulfill this requirement, each member of the class will *write and revise* a personal *mission statement* reflecting on your life work and career path (three pages), followed by two *position papers* — an article analysis (three pages) and a substantive paper on normative ethical perspectives (five pages) — plus a final *research paper* of your own choosing(nine pages or more in length). All members will give a five-minute presentation on their research project at the end of the semester, concluding with questions from the class. The research paper and class presentation function together as the final examination for the course.

**Instructor**

Professor Philip Hillmer

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**Course Home Page**

The course home page can be accessed at the following URL [Uniform Resource Locator]: [http://publish.illinois.edu/ecephil316/](https://webmail.illinois.edu/owa/redir.aspx?C=-ZkV4KLDA0qHmzrtcyAQ9smHhZqak9EITJ5vlx3FwwTJEUR0MYpeTFpE66Qvvm88gmcN33M5GIc.&URL=http%3a%2f%2fpublish.illinois.edu%2fecephil316%2f).

**Classes**

Section E1: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 11:00 – 12:20, Gregory Hall 329

Section E2: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 2:00 – 3:20, Gregory Hall 329

**Prerequisites**

Junior standing and Rhetoric 105. The term “junior standing” — in this context — means that the course will be taught at the level of an upper-division class in Philosophy and in Advanced Composition, and that every enrolled member of the course is willing and able to work at the level necessary to fulfill these University requirements.

**Credit**

3 hours. ECE/Philosophy 316, “Ethics and Engineering,” satisfies University General Education requirements for Advanced Composition and Humanities and the Arts (Historical and Philosophical Perspectives).

**Course Objectives**

* To read and think critically
* To develop moral reasoning skills
* To improve writing skills in an engineering context
* To understand multiple perspectives and respect others of diverse persuasions
* To study the fundamental structure of human personhood (what it means to be a human being), the grounding of moral action, and the development of moral character as a precondition of integral work in a profession — and the essential foundation necessary for our life together in society

**Required Texts**

* A three-volume integrated set of course readings — *Volume 1: Introduction, Volume 2:* *Normative Ethical Perspectives, and Volume 3: Windows into Applied Ethics* — is available in digital form to all enrolled members through weekly modules constructed on the University canvas course site. Full bibliographic citation is given with each reading. The use of three sequential periods (…) or brackets [ ] within a given reading indicates that a portion of the original text has been removed or rephrased for clarity.
* *The Chicago Manual of Style*, 18th ed. (University of Chicago Press, 2024) — is available online through the University Library home page at [www.library.illinois.edu](http://www.library.illinois.edu). See the direct link through the course home page under “Important Tools” at <http://publish.illinois.edu/ecephil316/>
* William Strunk, Jr., *The Elements of Style* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1920) — is available online through “Project Gutenberg.” See the link on the University course site under “Important Tools” at <http://publish.illinois.edu/ecephil316/>

**Important Reference Works**

A good dictionary will assist you greatly in your use of the English Language. *Webster’s New World Dictionary* is an excellent reference work that provides clear definitions and an etymological history of each word. As a member of the University community, the *Oxford English Dictionary* can be viewed online through the University of Illinois Library home page (www.library.illinois.edu). From this site, you can also consult the *Oxford American Thesaurus of Current English*.

**Source Citation**

The proper use of source citations is an important skill in formal writing. All writing assignments must use appropriate citations. Sources must be cited in “Notes and Bibliography” citation format, as outlined in the *Chicago Manual of Style,* 18th edition (University of Chicago Press, 2024). See Chapter 13, “Source Citations: Overview” (and Chapter 14 for examples).

**Thesis and Supporting Arguments**

All papers for the course are to be written as “position papers” — not simply thematic summaries of the readings or topics at hand. Take a position, state your thesis, and then provide a coherent set of well-articulated and substantive reasons in support of your thesis. A clear thesis and strong arguments are what make good writing. Attention to these foundational skills of effective writing will have a significant effect on the grade for each assignment.

**Assigned Readings**

The assigned readings are an essential component of the course (and will constitute 10 % of the course grade). All required readings are listed on the course schedule. Seek to understand the central thesis and the supporting arguments of the authors to the best of your ability, within the time allotted to you (see “Time Investment” below). Using an honors system, you will indicate each week (on the canvas course site “Reading Assessment”) the readings that you were able to complete. We encourage you to make digital notations on the readings, which will facilitate your engagement and reflection upon the assigned texts (see the canvas document entitled “Digital Readings Notation Instructions”).

**Reflection Papers**

A series of eight reflection papers over the assigned readings will be an integral part of the course. These papers will help you crystallize your understanding of the readings and our discussions together in class — they will also help you learn the art of clear and concise writing, which is developed through consistent and regular practice. The reflection papers are only one page (or more) in length, but the goal of each paper is to develop the skill of substantive philosophical reflection. View your reflection papers as a progressive series of cumulative home-work assignments, designed to engage the substance of the required readings in an upper-division course in philosophy.

To allow time for reflection, your papers will be due at the end of the week, submitted electronically through the canvas course site on Friday by 11:00 p.m. [CST] — except for the first week of the semester. No reflection papers will be assigned for weeks three, four, nine, and ten (i.e., classes #5 and #6, #7 and #8, #17 and #18, #19 and #20, when major writing projects will be due). There will be a total of eight reflection papers during the semester. Your reflection papers will be read and evaluated using a check/check-minus scale, and your score on each reflection paper will be factored into your final course grade. As with all of your papers that will be submitted during the semester, type your reflection papers in twelve-point, Times New Roman font, double-spaced, with one-inch margins. Cite all sources clearly and accurately, using *Chicago Manual of Style* “Notes and Bibliography” citation format. Footnotes should be in ten-point font. Place your name and submission date on the first line of your paper, and then begin your work on the next line. All papers must be visually at least one full page of text in length (excluding source citations). You may write papers of greater length, if you choose.

You are responsible for all of the assigned readings, but use your reflection papers to focus on a portion of the readings that you found to be significant. Briefly summarize the substance of the *author’s position* and then reflect upon the reading, developing *your own position* with well-reasoned argumentation in dialogue with the author. Formulate your own position on the readings (rather than simply summarizing the readings). There is no mid-term or final examination for the course. The reflection papers (15 %) — together with the completion of the assigned readings (10 %) and your attendance in class (10 %) — will count toward a significant portion (i.e., 35 %) of your final course grade.

*Sequential Due Dates for Reflection Papers:*

Reflection Paper #1: August 31 (reflecting on the readings for class #2)

Reflection Paper #2: September 5 (reflecting on the readings for class #3 and #4)

Reflection Paper #3: September 26 (reflecting on the readings for class #9 and #10)

Reflection Paper #4: October 3 (reflecting on the readings for class #11 and #12)

Reflection Paper #5: October 10 (reflecting on the readings for class #13 and #14)

Reflection Paper #6: October 17 (reflecting on the readings for class #15 and #16)

Reflection Paper #7: November 7 (reflecting on the readings for class #21 and #22)

Reflection Paper #8: November 14 (reflecting on the readings for class #23 and #24)

**Mission Statement**

Your first major writing project of the course will be to draft a three-page mission statement, due at the beginning of the third week of the semester. The mission statement addresses the question: “Who are you? Where are you going? And how will your arrive at your destination?” During the course of the semester, you will revise and rewrite the draft of your mission statement. The final version of your work will be due at the end of the semester. Guidelines for the mission statement (and for all subsequent writing projects) will be provided — and posted on canvas course site.

*Due Dates for the Mission Statement:*

Draft Due: September 7

Final Version: December 1

**Writing Skills Assessment**

The “Writing Skills Assessment” (5% of the course grade) is a take-home assignment in which you demonstrate a working knowledge of accurate *source citation* (using *Chicago Manual of Style* “Notes and Bibliography” format) and *principles of effective writing* (drawing upon the readings and discussion from classes #7 and #8 — which focus on language, communication skills, and guidelines for good writing). The assignment will be due on September 21.

**Peer Review**

The peer-review process is an important skill to learn and is an integral component of a course in advanced composition. The task of reading another person’s work — and then providing constructive comments and suggested revisions — makes us all better writers, it develops critical thinking skills, and it helps us see even our own writing in a new light. A written peer-review evaluation of the draft of a class member’s paper will be required for both position paper two and the research paper. Follow the instructions carefully as stated on the course schedule, using Microsoft “Track Changes” (select “Review and then select “Track Changes”). Provide constructive comments and suggested changes for your neighbor, and read the evaluative comments of your paper that your neighbor will in turn send to you.

*Due Dates*:

Position Paper Two Peer Review: October 31

Research Paper Peer Review: November 12

**Position Papers**

The mission statement will be followed by two position papers. Each paper will be submitted through the compass course site first as a complete draft and then in a final version. The drafts of your papers will be evaluated with substantive comments and suggestions for revision (using Microsoft “Track Changes” format), but only the final version will be graded. A grading rubric will accompany each assignment.

*Due Dates for Position Papers*

Position Paper One

“*Article*” *Analysis* (3 pages)

Complete Draft: September 14

Final Version: September 28

Position Paper Two

*Normative Ethical Perspectives* (5 pages)

Thesis and Outline: October 21

Complete Draft: October 26

Written Peer Review: October 31

Final Version: November 9

**Research Paper**

As the compositional apex of the course, you will complete a research paper of nine pages or more in length — in which you carefully explore the ethical implications of a topic of your choice. The research paper will follow the same procedural steps (as the position papers) of a complete draft, a peer-review, and revision. At the end of the semester, you will also give a five-minute slide presentation of your research project, followed by your response to questions from the class. The research paper and in-class presentation function together as the final examination for the course.

*Due Dates for Research Paper:*

Research Topic September 21

Bibliography, Thesis, Outline October 12

Complete Draft of Research Paper November 2

Written Peer Review Evaluation November 12

Final Version November 16

Project Presentations November 18, 20, December 2, 4

**Course Grading**

Attendance and Class Participation 10%

Assigned Readings 10%

Reflection Papers 15%

Writing Skills Assessment 5%

Mission Statement 5%

Position Papers 25%

Research Paper 25%

Research Project Presentation 5%

**Plus and Minus Scale**

98 – 100 % A+

93 – 97.9 % A

90 – 92.9 % A-

87 – 89.9 % B+

83 – 86.9 % B

80 – 82.9 % B–

77 – 79.9 % C+

73 – 76.9 % C

70 – 72.9 % C-

67 – 69.9 % D+

63 – 66.9 % D

60 – 62.9 % D-

 0 – 59.9 % F

**Attendance and**

**Class Participation**

As an upper-division University course, every member is expected to be present in class every day. Attendance is required and recorded for each class. You are allowed three absences for the semester. In the event of an absence, attendance credit will be granted by writing an additional reflection paper on the assigned readings for the day you were absent. Only three “absence papers” will be accepted, and must be written and submitted within seven days of your absence.

All “absence papers” must be submitted directly to the course aide with whom you are working. The assigned readings completed for the day you were absent must also be indicated on the canvas course site weekly reading assessment and to your course aide.

Attendance and participation in class will be an important factor in determining your final grade. The synergy of the course hinges upon your active engagement with your colleagues in exploring the fundamental ideas that we will be studying throughout the semester.

**Classroom Guidelines**

* Class will start promptly at the beginning of the University scheduled time for each class session. Attendance will be taken (through an attendance “sign-in” document).
* As class begins, have ready at hand the course schedule and the texts of the assigned readings for the day. Careful textual reading will be essential to the internal dynamics of the course. The importance of this requirement cannot be overemphasized.

**Review of Paper Submission and Evaluation Guidelines**

* The guidelines and grading criteria for all papers and projects will be located and found sequentially during the semester on the ECE/PHIL 316 University canvas course site.
* All papers must be submitted electronically through the canvas course site by 11:00 p.m. [CST] on the specified due date. Papers submitted after 11:00 p.m. are considered late, and will be subject to the appropriate grade reduction. Extensions of due dates cannot be granted, except in emergency cases with appropriate documentation.
* All writing assignments (reflection papers, position papers, research paper, and the mission statement) must use correct *Chicago Manual of Style* citation format, following the “Notes and Bibliography” guidelines.
* All papers — including drafts — must be the complete number of pages.
* All papers must be submitted on time.
* All reflection papers, drafts, and the beginning steps of the research project (the topic, and the working bibliography, thesis, and outline) will be graded on a check/check-minus scale. If they are late, they will be given a check-minus [.5/1]. For all of the major writing assignments, late papers will receive a ten percent [10 %] reduction in the assigned grade. An additional five percent [5%] reduction in grade (per calendar day) will continue for each day the paper is late — for a total of seven days. If the paper is not submitted within seven days, it will no longer be accepted. Note that a type of late penalty applies to the draft as well as the final version (both of which are necessary to meet the University requirements of a course in advanced composition).
* All of the major writing projects have been scheduled to allow sufficient time for revision between the complete draft and the final version due dates. It is your responsibility to plan for these target dates. You will receive detailed comments on the draft of each major paper. It is incumbent upon you to read these comments carefully and to incorporate them into your final version. Based upon your revision and improvement of the paper, a final grade will then be assigned.
* All assignments must include your name and submission date. The submission dates (indicated on the title page) will be different for the draft and the final version of your major writing projects.
* All documents must be written and submitted in Microsoft Word format. Assignments that are submitted in any other format (such as PDF, Pages, or Google Docs) will result in significant complications and cannot be accepted. If you write an assignment in PDF, the file will not be properly formatted when your assigned course aide opens it in Microsoft Word. If you do not have Microsoft Word, you may obtain a copy (free of charge for both PC and Mac computers) from the University Webstore.
* All evaluative comments on all of your papers are to be read with care. All documents returned to you must be downloaded with Microsoft Word interface in order to read the evaluative comments. You are then responsible for implementing the grammatical and substantive changes suggested in each paper. Comments on reflection papers should be applied in subsequent reflection papers, and those on the drafts of the position papers and the sequential steps of the research paper should be implemented in the final version.

**Member Correspondence and Communication**

Early in the semester, each member will be assigned a course aide, who will be responsible for grading all of your written assignments. Send all questions and communications regarding all facets of the course (including issues related to illness and emergency complications) directly to the course aide with whom you will be working. The names and addresses of the course aides working with us this semester are given below.

**Section E1**

Masha Polupan — mpolup2@illinois.edu

Kilton Rauman — krauman2@illinois.edu

**Section E2**

Matt Garrison — mpg7@illinois.edu

Alexis Cline — alcline2@illinois.edu

**Academic Integrity**

Read carefully the University of Illinois “Student Code,” Article 1, Part 4 “Academic Integrity Policy and Procedure,” focusing on section #1-402 “Academic Integrity Infractions,” subsection “b. Plagiarism” 1–4 (<https://studentcode.illinois.edu/article1/part4/1-402/>).

What is “plagiarism” and how can the careful use of source citations guard and protect you from committing plagiarism? To “plagiarize” means to “take and pass off as one’s own (the ideas, writings, etc. of another)” — *Webster’s New World Dictionary* (New York: World Publishing, 1953), 1116. As stated in the University of Illinois code of conduct, no member of the University community “shall represent the words, work, or ideas of another as his or her own in any academic endeavor” (Article 1, Part 4, section #1-402, subsection “b” on plagiarism). The art of writing involves the development of a worldview and corresponding mode of conduct in which the author is in dialogue with the wider intellectual community — listening to each person, honoring each person, and taking one’s own position in the context of this interchange of ideas. Source citation is functionally the *modus operandi* (i.e., the “manner of working” or accepted “procedure”) of this dialogue.

All submitted writing documents for the course must be your own work. Appropriate citation must be given for all sources. Violations of the standards of academic integrity will result in appropriate disciplinary action (as required by the University).

The goal of a University education is to learn to think for yourself. The use of AI in composing and submitting a document under your name jeopardizes this goal — and is an example of an academic integrity infraction (as outlined in the University of Illinois “Student Code,” Article I, Part 4 — see the link above).

**Time Investment**

Steward your time well. University guidelines suggest that all members allocate two hours of work per week for every hour in class. Hence, for a three-hour course, the expected work load required to complete all assignments is approximately six hours of work per week.

**Course Member Responsibilities**

In order to form a team together, all of us must understand and hold to the basic guidelines and core procedural principles of the course. See the “Course Member Responsibilities” document on the University course site URL [http://publish.illinois.edu/ecephil316/](https://webmail.illinois.edu/owa/redir.aspx?C=-ZkV4KLDA0qHmzrtcyAQ9smHhZqak9EITJ5vlx3FwwTJEUR0MYpeTFpE66Qvvm88gmcN33M5GIc.&URL=http%3a%2f%2fpublish.illinois.edu%2fecephil316%2f) (under course documents) for a verification statement of having read and understood the above course guidelines. All enrolled members must submit a signed copy of this document to the canvas course site by the end of the third week of the semester — September 12.