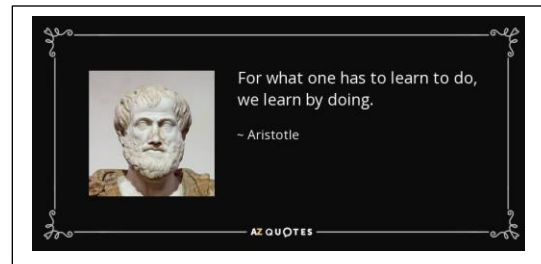


# Experiments in Ethics

Phil 1110: Introduction to Ethics

Dr. Mo Janzen, Fall 2023



## Project Description

This project is an investigation of the relationship between applied ethics and issues affecting the community in which we live. As we learn about ethics, you will explore various issues you feel passionate about and try to make changes in your own life and in the lives of those in your community. These experiments will take many forms and will be graded based on specific criteria for each experiment. However, the overarching goal of these experiments will be to find answers to this question: how can you make the world a more ethical place?

**\*\*Please note:** The Experiments in ethics assignment does ask for you to interact with your world and community. However, please do so only in a way that is SAFE and COMFORTABLE to YOU. You get to choose how you will complete each experiment.

## Project Objectives

- Make a difference.
- Engage the public in issues that are important to you.
- Connect ethical theories learned in class to your own life and the lives of other people.
- Learn some ways in which your own life and the lives of other people raise questions about the ethical theories learned in class.
- Learn more about the topics you are addressing, and be in a better position to have and defend your own views on these topics.
- Define, plan, and carry out social action and activities.
- Develop civic engagement and leadership skills.
- Practice your organizational skills and ability to delegate tasks.
- Attain experience and skills to act on social problems.
- Become inspired and motivated to act on social problems.

## Grading

1. Change Making Letter	7.5% of your final grade for the class
2. Change a habit/develop a virtue	7.5% of your final grade
3. Volunteer Activity	5% of your final grade
4. Charitable Giving Investigations	5% of your final grade
5. Organize an Activity	10% of your final grade
6. Presentation of Organize an Activity	2.5% of your final grade
7. Letter to Future Students	2.5% of your final grade

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Experiments in Ethics (Total) 40% of your final grade for the class

## What You Will Do

This project consists of a series of activities that you will complete individually throughout the semester. Each experiment has different guidelines, and sometimes you can choose one experiment rather than another. When you complete an experiment, it will be followed up with a reflection and, if appropriate, documentation

of what you did. I will give you specific assignment requirements as the due dates approach. However, here is an overview of what you can expect to do this semester:

## 1. Change Making Letter

Write a letter about an ethical issue you care about.

Very important: this letter should be an ethical issue that personally affected or affects you. Ideally, the letter would be addressed to someone you know. This letter would be about a small ethical issue that you care about, not a big national or international issue (it should NOT be about poverty in general, sex trafficking, a corporation's labor policies, or laws regarding abortion or drugs).

The letter should be about 700 words (Letters that are longer than 750 words will incur a large penalty).

How To: The letter should have following structure:

- Address the letter to a specific person who can do something about the problem you are addressing.
- Make it very clear in your first paragraph what you are asking them to do. This should be a realistic step the person you are writing to can actually take to address a problem.
- Explain what problem you are addressing.
- Explain your solution. Back up your solution with powerful arguments and evidence.
- Imagine that the person you are writing to objects or criticizes your situation. In a separate paragraph, bring up a possible criticism and your solution or ideas related to this. You want to explain why what you are asking and your ideas are reasonable, given the possible criticism.
- Very important requirement: Somewhere in your letter, you need to explicitly bring up 3 specific class concepts. For each class concept, you will:
  - o Define the concept and cite the class materials (notes or the book) where you found the definition
  - o Explain why this concept is cool/important/significant/something you thought of
  - o Apply/connect this concept to the ideas in your letter
- End with an effective conclusion.
- Include word count
- See the EXAMPLE provided for details about how to write this.

### The Grading Criteria

- 1) Appropriate topic (see guidelines above).
- 2) Persuasive arguments, counterarguments and responses.
- 3) Extremely polished writing (no grammar mistakes), and college level writing. If this is hard for you—GET HELP—FREE from Tutor center, Mo, or Tutor.com accessed through D2L
- 4) Used 3 specific course concepts and defined and cited them, explained their importance, and applied them in a way that enhanced your letter and do not feel tacked on.
- 5) Crystal clear organization.

### Some Tips

- Clear, well-organized, and straightforward writing is preferable when you are dealing with complex and controversial topics. Make sure your tone is respectful and constructive.

- You are writing to someone who may disagree with your position. Take a respectful and constructive tone. Also remember that s/he might know a lot about your issue; s/he might disagree with you, but s/he might have thought about this ethical issues for a very long time.
- Your letter should be very clear and well organized. Each paragraph should be clearly centered around 1 and only 1 idea. It's a good idea to state this idea clearly in the beginning (or at the end) of your paragraph and then organize your paragraph in such a way that it provides support for this idea.
- You should check your spelling and grammar before handing in your letter. There should be NO mistakes whatsoever. You should also read your letter aloud and you can also make Word read the letter aloud to you; this seems like a silly idea but reading your letter *slowly* and *loudly* will help you identify awkward and unclear sentences. You should also give your paper to a couple of friends to read and ask them for *detailed* and *honest* feedback. Ask them what they think about your tone, your writing style, and of course, your arguments.
  - The Academic Support Services at ARCC are FREE. Check them out!  
<http://www.anokaramsey.edu/resources/tutoring-services/>
- Getting Help: I am here to help you :-) Please let me know if you have any questions.

## 2. Change a Habit or Cultivate a Virtue

For this experiment, you will need to reflect about one aspect of your own character that you would like to change and that you can clearly and directly link to ethics (and the materials we've studied in this class in particular). For 7 days, you will try to cultivate a new habit (although—you should know—research shows you need 21 days to truly change a new habit). You will need to take pictures/video on at least 5 different days (for example, by showing the date by holding up your phone in the picture or taking a screenshot) to document what you did. If you want to change one of your virtues, we can think about creative ways in which you can document your project. Don't let documentation stop you from really making a substantial change for the better!

Is there a habit you would truly like to change? Think creatively!! This project can be an opportunity to make a change in your life.

### What to turn in:

- A) A log of hours done, when you did it (dates and times), where you did them, and what you did.
  - B) A short reflection that connects what you did to course concepts. Underline the course materials you used. This reflection should be 200-400 words (not longer), not including Part A. Put your word count at the bottom.  
Very important requirement for the reflection: You need to explicitly bring up 3 specific class concepts. For each class concept, you will:
    - i. Define the concept and cite the class materials (notes or the book) where you found the definition
    - ii. Explain why this concept is cool/important/significant/something you thought of
    - iii. Apply/connect this concept to the ideas in your letter
  - C) Documentation that shows what you did. See notes above about the documentation.
- Each of these three parts will be worth a third of your grade on this assignment.

### 3. Volunteer/Civic Action Activity

You must volunteer your time and energy to a group that makes change in our world (either by doing charity or seeking justice or working on an election related activity). Or, you can also complete some civic actions that will count as volunteer actions. You are asked to volunteer a minimum of 4 hours in total. You can choose 2-3 different volunteer or civic action opportunities or do one that takes 4 hours. What can you do? Some ideas: Write a letter to your elected official, attend an election related event, Feed My Starving Children, donate to Goodwill (this usually counts for 2 hours), donate your blood (this usually counts for 2 hours), help grocery shop or take care of someone sick, volunteer at your place of worship, anything! If you are currently volunteering somewhere, please speak to me about whether or not this would work for our class. Remember—YOUR safety is a priority! Please make sure you pick a way to volunteer that keeps you and others safe.

You can also do civic actions to count toward volunteering. See the handout about Civic Actions.

#### What to turn in for the volunteer activity:

- A) A log of hours done, when you did it (date and time), where you did them, and what you did.
- B) A short reflection that connects what you did to course concepts. Underline the course materials you used. This reflection should be 200-400 words (not longer), not including Part A. Put your word count at the bottom.  
Very important requirement for the reflection: You need to explicitly bring up 3 specific class concepts. For each class concept, you will:
  - i. Define the concept and cite the class materials (notes or the book) where you found the definition
  - ii. Explain why this concept is cool/important/significant/something you thought of
  - iii. Apply/connect this concept to the ideas in your letter
- C) Documentation that verifies you have completed your volunteer work. Do not forget to do this. This documentation can consist of: pictures, videos, and/or signed confirmation by the organizer as well as the organizer's contact info. Any documentation should make clear what you did. (E.g, if you volunteered with a lake clean up, don't just take a picture of your smiley face at the beach; take pictures of yourself gathering trash and a final picture to show what/how much you collected).

Each of these three parts will be worth a third of your grade on this assignment.

### 4. Charitable Giving Investigations

Compare one organization you are familiar with (for example, your place of worship if you have one) with one of the organizations on Singer's list (<http://www.thelifeyoucansave.org/Causes>). Be sure to indicate which organization you think people should donate to.

#### What to turn in:

- A) A few notes on the organization you are familiar with
- B) Some notes on the organization Singer recommends
- D) A short reflection (200-400 words) comparing these organizations making it clear which one you'd choose and why. Put your word count at the bottom.  
Very important requirement for the reflection: You need to explicitly bring up 3 specific class concepts. For each class concept, you will:

- i. Define the concept and cite the class materials (notes or the book) where you found the definition
  - ii. Explain why this concept is cool/important/significant/something you thought of
  - iii. Apply/connect this concept to the ideas in your letter
- C) Include word count.

Your research will have real consequences! It will determine the organization that your professor will donate to!

## 5. Organize an Activity

What would you like to do to make the world a more ethical place? This is your chance to organize an action to make a positive change in our world. Activities might include something educational (flyers, brochures, posters, panel discussion, a mini-class/workshop that teaches a practical skill, etc.), some sort of fund raising event (clothing drive, or other sort of collection event), getting a larger group together to do a volunteer project on a weekend (in a garden, with animals, building houses, cleaning up beaches, teaching underprivileged kids, etc.). For many more ideas, see the website: [www.engagedphilosophy.com/project](http://www.engagedphilosophy.com/project) Get creative! And take a leadership role. But, remember—your safety is a priority! Choose a project that works for you given the risks you may face.

This assignment is a large portion of your final grade. However, don't be intimidated. There are lots of small components; focus on each of these at a time, and you'll do well.

You will create a Power Point Presentation using a template that I provide for you. It will include:

- A. Provide documentation of your activity. Think about including pictures, videos, posters, emails, screenshots of posts to social media, etc. This is very important! Make sure your pictures/evidence clearly SHOWS what you did. Be sure you have permission to take pictures on location and that you respect the rights of others (especially children and vulnerable adults).
- B. Make a one-minute video that showcases your activity. Make this enticing (fun, engaging) and polished. The video can have multiple scenes. Consider using a free trial on animoto (<https://animoto.com>). Be sure you have permission to film on location and that you respect the rights of others (especially children and vulnerable adults).
- C. A log of hours done, when you did it (dates and times), where you did them, and what you did.
- D. A short reflection that connects what you did to course materials. Underline the course materials you used. This reflection should be 200-400 words (not longer), not including your log of hours and explanation of what you did. Put your word count at the bottom.  
Very important requirement for the reflection: You need to explicitly bring up 3 specific class concepts. For each class concept, you will:
  - iv. Define the concept and cite the class materials (notes or the book) where you found the definition
  - v. Explain why this concept is cool/important/significant/something you thought of
  - vi. Apply/connect this concept to the ideas in your letter
- E. Include a separate section with tips for future students. These must be very concrete tips that are specific to your projects not general tips about the class or about organizing activities in general. Imagine that someone wants to organize the same activity (e.g., a vegetarian cooking night or a Video thanking the cleaning staff). What would they need to know? Who should they contact? What mistakes should they

avoid? What could they do differently to build and improve on your success with this project? Your tips should be 200-400 words. Include word count.

If you need help, let me know.

## 7. Letter to Future Students

This letter should be about 200-400 words. You are welcome to bring up class concepts that are relevant as you think about answering the questions below. You are writing to future students about the Experiments in Ethics. You should discuss the parts of the Experiment in Ethics you liked (and why) and the parts you did not like (and why).

First, in two or three sentences, list the different things you did for your volunteer activities, organize an activity, and change a habit/cultivate a virtue. If there are other important experiments, please include what you did for these too. How much time you did you spend all together doing the experiments in ethics? Here's an example for you to follow:

*I spent about 20 hours total working on my experiments in ethics. I volunteered at feed my starving children and I knit 3 hats for those experiencing homelessness and donated them to another classmate's winter clothes drive. I organized a shoe drive at my gym, and for my personal change mini project I tried to cultivate an attitude of gratitude by writing thank you notes to people.*

\* Second, reflect on your experience with your experiments in ethics, answering the following questions (not necessarily in this order):

- Did you organize an activity accomplish what you hoped for? What would you do differently next time? What would you recommend to others if they wanted to organize something similar?
- Did your personal change mini-project accomplish what you hoped for? Did you stick with the changes you made? Explain.
- Was your volunteering experience meaningful? Did you learn anything new or gain a new perspective through this work? Did it help you realize something important about class materials? Please be honest.
- Reflect on your letter. What did it help you learn, if anything?
- What did you learn from the Research an Organization experiment? Did it make you think about your obligations to others differently?
- Should I assign experiments with ethics again?

\* Third, review the project objectives (see below). Which objectives did you reach or make progress toward? Which did you not reach or make progress toward? What should future students know or do? Carefully explain your answers.

### Project Objectives:

- Make a difference.
- Engage the public in an issue that is important to you.
- Learn some ways in which the ethical theories learned in class relate to your own life and the lives of other people.
- Learn some ways in which your own life and the lives of other people raise questions about the ethical theories learned in class.

- Learn more about the topic you are addressing, and be in a better position to have and defend your own views on this topic.
- Take a project from start to finish: Define, plan, and carry out social action and activities.
- Develop civic engagement and leadership skills.
- Practice your organizational skills and ability to delegate tasks.
- Attain experience and skills to act on social problems.

## Reflection Grading Rubric and Explanation

- Include a word count at the beginning of your reflection.
- Your answer should be a minimum of 200 words and no more than 400 words.
  - An “A” reflection will be between 200-400 words. It will not be full of filler/fluff. Your reflection will be concise but also in depth. It will also contain no grammar errors and be written clearly. Please use single spaced, double sided printing to help our environment.
- Draw from our text and reading, using quotes and showing your knowledge of the readings. You MUST give page numbers from the text, and if you use any additional sources (which is not required), you should give a full citation.
  - An “A” reflection will do more than just quote the text. It will create connections between course materials. It will provide clear analysis of course materials explaining in your own words what textual support means.

In short, “A” reflections exceed my basic expectations and are exceptional.

- The author’s own analysis and ideas are original, clear, relevant, well-organized, and substantial.
- The author correctly uses a number of relevant instances of textual support and includes page references.
- The author makes unique and sophisticated connections between the course materials and the assignment.
- The reflection is completed with exceptional insight with no noticeable lapses throughout.
- The reflection provides a clean read that is completely free of distracting errors.

A “B” reflection is strong with a few lapses.

- The author’s own analysis and ideas are clear, relevant, well-organized, and substantial with only minor lapses.
- The author correctly uses relevant instances of textual support and includes page references.
- The question is fully answered with great insight with only minor lapses for any single point.
- The reflection provides a clean read that is free of distracting errors.

A “C” reflection has as many strengths as weaknesses.

- The author’s own analysis and ideas are noticeable but not substantial.
- The author correctly uses the expected portion of textual support maybe without page references, and the assignment has the expected word count.
- The reflection attempts to address the assignment but the attempt is not entirely correct, clear, well-organized, or substantial.
- The reflection exhibits a few errors that are distracting.

A “D” reflection has weaknesses that begin to overwhelm strengths.

- The author’s own analysis and ideas are limited or not consistent.
- The author uses minimal textual support (although page numbers may be missing) or does not connect the textual support well to the assignment.
- The reflection attempts to address the assignment requirements but it is unconvincing, unclear, not well-organized or/and not substantial.
- The reflection has numerous distracting errors.

An “F” reflection does not offer enough to effectively evaluate, is off-topic, or is late

- The author's own ideas and analysis are not evident or insubstantial in quality or quantity.
- The author does not use any meaningful textual support or uses this incorrectly.
- The reflection does not address the assignment or does not do so in an adequate enough amount to assess.
- The reflection has numerous distracting errors.