

[↪ Get Started](#)[📖 Syllabus](#)

## Welcome to PHIL 1320: Ethics and Society

### New to the course?

Be sure to familiarize yourself with the [Syllabus](#) and *review the information carefully*.

To succeed in this course, please fill out your [Course Pacing Guide](#) and take no more than **7 days** from when you enroll to submit it via Modules.

- Click [Get Started](#) to begin your course.

**Returning to the course?** Click **Modules** to the left and resume where you left off.

**Important reminders:**

- This is a **9-month, online, correspondence self-paced course**.
- **All submissions must be completed by the course expiration date.** When you registered for the course, you were sent an email to your Texas State account indicating registration and expiration dates.
- You may not submit an assignment before previously submitted assignments have been graded and returned.
- You may not submit more than 2 assignments per week.

**At the end of the course, you will be asked  
to complete a brief course evaluation.  
Your input will help improve the course.**

# Meet Your Instructor

**Instructor:** Dr. Bob Fischer

Email: [fischer@txstate.edu](mailto:fischer@txstate.edu) (<mailto:fischer@txstate.edu>)

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I've spent a lot of time crafting the course you're about to take. I've tried to create something that will complicate your understanding of ethics, and not because I want to change the clear into the confusing. As you'll see, the complexity is real, and it's very tempting to ignore it.



I didn't always care about ethics, or, more accurately, I didn't always care about how philosophers approach ethics. I was raised in Upstate New York and eventually went to college close to home. My first class was in philosophy, and the professor was determined to make us think. I'll never forget being asked to explain why adultery is wrong and struggling to articulate a reason that he couldn't undermine. It was frustrating, fascinating, and exhilarating all at once. I was working at the limit of my cognitive capacities, and I liked it. But my next experience with ethics—at least as a formal field of study—was hugely negative. In my second year, I took a course with a professor who managed to make the subject profoundly dull. By the end, I wanted nothing to do with moral theory. I went off to study other areas of philosophy: theories of knowledge and science and language and religion. I didn't look back.

When I finished college, I went to Chicago for my grad work. I earned a few M.A. degrees and a Ph.D. I wrote my dissertation about a topic at the intersection of epistemology (the theory of knowledge) and the philosophy of science. Those were good years: I made wonderful friends, learned a great deal, and came to enjoy city life. I didn't miss ethics.

But after I moved to Texas to begin my career, I couldn't avoid it any longer: the Philosophy Department needed me to teach PHIL 1320: Ethics and Society, the very course on which you're about to embark. Frankly, I wasn't pleased; I still had a bad taste in my mouth from college. However, you can't say "no" when you're the new guy, so I had to get a handle on the field.

I loved it.

I discovered a whole world of thoughtful, insightful commentary on the most pressing issues of the day. I discovered powerful tools for understanding and systematizing my own moral views. And I discovered exciting empirical theories about the nature of ethics, informed by the work of

psychologists, anthropologists, evolutionary biologists, and others. I'd been missing out. This was good stuff.

So over the last few years, I've largely scrapped my old research program, and I've invested almost all my energies here. It's been an exciting time for me. And I want to share this excitement with you.

To that end, I've tried to create a course that lets you see what I missed all those years ago. I want you to engage in a serious way with this captivating material. So, I've chosen the readings, videos, and assignments to foster your curiosity and thereby help you see why I'm so enamored with the questions of ethics. At the same time, I've chosen material that should challenge you, and push you to think harder and more deeply about morality than you've had to before. I hope you enjoy the ride.

RWF

San Marcos, TX

P.S. I should mention that I've developed carpal tunnel syndrome over the last few years, and I can no longer type at all: I now do everything through voice recognition software. All things considered, the software is pretty good. However, it certainly isn't perfect, and that means that there are many more mistakes in my writing than there used to be. I do my best to catch them, but please be forgiving if there happen to be a few typos in my comments about your assignments.

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[Click Next to proceed to Correspondence Course Information.](#)

# Course Syllabus

## Instructor Information

Instructor: Dr. Bob Fischer

Email: [fischer@txstate.edu](mailto:fischer@txstate.edu)

Office: Comal 207F

Phone: 512.245.2403

Phone "Office Hours": By appointment, 7 a.m. to 9 p.m., Monday to Thursday; 7 a.m. to 5 p.m., Fridays.

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## Communicating With Me

For issues that don't require much discussion, I prefer email. But for anything involved, I prefer to talk on the phone. Please don't hesitate to send a message to arrange a time to talk; I'll work with your schedule.

Generally, I will respond to emails within 24 hours of receiving them. If circumstances are going to make this difficult (e.g., I'm traveling), then I'll post an announcement in Canvas.

*Please include "1320-Correspondence" in the subject line of your email; that will let me know that I should make it a priority.*

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## Course Description

From the Catalog: "Study of ethics, its recent focus on social problems, and new fields of inquiry, including environmental ethics, ethics in business, professions, technology and sport. Also such global issues as poverty, minority rights, and stem cell research. Emphasis on development and application of principles of critical thinking and moral reasoning."

More straightforwardly: Is it OK for a doctor to help a person die? Is there anything wrong with the way we treat farm animals? Are there good reasons to execute criminals who commit heinous acts? These are ethical questions, and they're the subject of this course. We're going to spend the course wrestling through the philosophical issues that these sorts of questions raise. Along the way, I hope that you'll learn how to read, think, and write more carefully and critically.


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## Required Materials

You'll need to purchase one book:

Shafer-Landau, Russ. *The Fundamentals of Ethics*. 3rd ed. New York: Oxford University Press, USA, 2014. ISBN: 978-0199997237

I'll link to the remaining readings.

You'll also be required to watch multiple videos. Some of these can be accessed free of charge and are linked to in the course content. Others will require either rental through Amazon or Netflix. (If you have never tried Netflix, you can [sign up for a free one-month trial](https://signup.netflix.com/) (<https://signup.netflix.com/>).

Furthermore, you'll need the hardware and software required to:

- access Canvas;
- watch videos on YouTube/ Amazon.com/ Netflix; and
- produce documents in some format other than .pages. (Acceptable formats include .odf, .doc, .docx, .rtf, .txt, .pdf, etc. Really, just about anything other than .pages.)

You're expected to be proficient with the hardware and software you use to accomplish these tasks. Should you need technical support to do so, please refer to the technical support information later in this syllabus.

### **Ordering Textbooks**

The textbook can be ordered through the Texas State Bookstore [as described here](#) or from an online vendor of the student's choice, such as Amazon.com, BarnesandNoble.com, or Half.com, or from a brick-and-mortar bookstore.

When purchasing required materials for a course, be sure to purchase the correct edition of the material and to verify that the material's International Standard Book Number (ISBN) matches that listed on the course website.

Should you require any assistance in locating course materials, please contact the Office of Distance and Extended Learning at [corrstudy@txstate.edu](mailto:corrstudy@txstate.edu).

Please keep in mind that all materials should be purchased within 30 days of enrollment; after 30 days, materials may no longer be available for your course.

When ordering from the online bookstore:

- Allow plenty of time for textbooks to arrive before class.
- Order early! You will need your textbook early in the course.
- NOTE: Please be aware international versions of the text may differ from the domestic (North American) version required for your course.

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## **Learning Outcomes**

After completion of PHIL 1320, students will demonstrate (a) basic knowledge of the nature of moral inquiry and (b) their critical thinking skills.

### ***How to be successful in this course***

Completing this course successfully will require time and effort on your part. Accordingly, I've compiled the following list of study practices that I believe will help you to be successful in this course:

- **Realize that you cannot *cram* this material.** Slow and steady wins the race. Please do not try to complete this course in an unreasonably short period of time. One of your first tasks should be to prepare a schedule and stick to it. (The [Course Pacing Guide](#) will help you do this.) I suggest you plan to cover no more than one chapter per week. Be careful about stepping away from the course material for an extended period of time.

**Fully utilize your textbook's online resources.** Recognize that learning is not a spectator sport. Would you expect to watch someone play a sport and then go and perform at the same level? No.

- It's the same with online courses. Think of your brain as a muscle; you've got to build it up and get it in shape by practicing.

**Make a plan.** Self-motivation is necessary for successful completion of this course; no one will be pushing you but you. Use the [Course Pacing Guide](#) to help you identify target dates and chart a

- path for progressing through the course, including when you'll complete each homework, project, chapter test, and exam. You will benefit the most by completing the assignments in the sequence shown on the pacing guide schedule. Also, as you plan your submission dates, remember that I have five business days from the date of receipt to grade your projects, midcourse exam, and final exam. Life happens; update your schedule as needed.

**You are not alone.** Though correspondence self-paced courses offer tremendous convenience for students, they also leave some students feeling isolated. Remember that I am here to help. If you have questions about the course content or structure, please contact me. You can also visit the links to reference materials, interactive activities, and videos provided in Modules. If you're on campus,

- you can utilize [SLAC](#) for free tutoring. Those of you distant from campus have access to free online tutoring via [Smarthinking](#). See more in Modules regarding free

tutoring resources.

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## **Course Procedure**

The course is organized into modules of instruction as outlined in the Course Schedule below. Each module is listed by its main topic and contains required readings, videos, quizzes, and writing

assignments.

Unless indicated otherwise, you will submit your written assignments via Modules. Detailed submission instructions are provided for each assignment.

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## How To Demonstrate That You've Achieved Course Aims: Assignments & Quizzes

Your grade for this class will be based on six quizzes and six short writing assignments.

- Each quiz is worth 10 points for a total of 60 points.
- Each assignment is worth 20 points for a total of 120 points.
- Total possible points: 180.

To get your course grade, take your total number of points and divide by 180. (Where, as is customary, A: 90-100; B: 80-89; C: 70-79; D: 60-69; F: below 60.)

- *You must wait to receive feedback and a grade on submitted assignments before you can submit subsequent assignments.*
- *You may not submit more than two lessons per week.*
- *You may not resubmit an assignment after it has been graded without the explicit permission of the instructor.*

Per the Office of Distance and Extended Learning, I have 10 business days to return an assignment to you, but I usually turn things around within three days.

- I encourage you to use the [Course Pacing Guide](#) to plan your assignment submissions and ensure that you finish the course on time.

When you submit a writing assignment, name your file according to this format:

LastnameFirstname-ModuleNumber

So, for example, if I were to submit the writing assignment for Module #3, I would name my file

FischerBob-3

You are responsible for keeping copies of whatever work you submit.

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## Various Important Tips and Policies




**Reading and Rereading.** In the grand scheme of things, you don't have to read that many pages for this course; however, the numbers are deceptive: you won't be able to get through these texts quickly, and you won't understand much after a single reading. Don't be discouraged by this; it's the nature of the discipline. I have three master's degrees and a Ph.D. and *still* don't understand what I read the first time through. (I'm often reminded of the wise words of Gene Stelzig, a professor of mine, who said that **the only good reading is rereading.**) So be prepared to go through the material slowly and repeatedly. I promise that I do my best to choose texts that are worth the investment.

**Scheduling Your Time.** To some extent, you can set your own pace in a correspondence course, but it is important to schedule your time effectively. You should be able to complete each module, along with the quiz and assignment therein, within two weeks. So completing the course in four to five months is quite possible if you carefully budget your time. Online courses are just as time intensive as traditional courses. In fact, many students claim that online courses require more time and commitment. As you begin this course, you would be wise to schedule eight or more hours per week for studying materials and completing assignments. Remember, you have a maximum of nine months to complete this course. Use the [Course Pacing Guide](#) to proceed through the course effectively.



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## Canvas Technical Support

The [Technical Requirements](#)  page identifies the browsers, operating systems, and plugins that work best with Canvas. If you are new to Canvas check out the [Texas State ITAC Canvas Support](#) page.

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## Using Wikipedia

As a tool for scholarly research, Wikipedia can be either a grade-killer or a valuable friend, depending on who you ask and what you hope to accomplish using it. What is fairly certain is that your professor won't let you cite it in a scholarly research paper.

There are a few common reasons why you can't cite Wikipedia:

- Wikipedia is a general encyclopedia. At the collegiate or university level, your professors are looking for more than general rudimentary material. General encyclopedias usually give baseline information, the type of common knowledge that isn't usually cited. Academic subject-specific encyclopedias will often provide more scholarly and citeable information.
- There is often no way to know who is editing the entries in Wikipedia or what his or her level of expertise is.

- You cannot be sure that the content is “permanent” (although you can look at the revision history on the History page).
- You cannot be sure that the content meets standards of academic rigor. One of Wikipedia’s main principles is that it strives for a neutral point of view (which it abbreviates to NPOV). This standard states that all articles should strive to “represent...all significant views on each topic fairly, proportionately, and without bias.” The problem is that in any knowledge endeavor, much less a collaborative and ad hoc venture like Wikipedia, deciding what's neutral and having something reviewed for NPOV can be controversial undertakings and too uncertain to meet standards of academic rigor. However, having such a debate take place publicly on Wikipedia makes for interesting talk-page reading and for a good pros-and-cons debate.

Two other Wikipedia policies relevant to academic rigor are its verifiability and “no original research” policies.

### **Tips for Using Wikipedia Effectively**

Use Wikipedia to get a general overview, and follow the references it provides as far as they can take you.

Look at the Other Projects tab to see if the article you’re reading is part of a WikiProject, meaning that a group of people who care about the subject area are working in concert on its content. They may not be experts on the subject, but signing onto a WikiProject implies a writer has more than a casual interest in it.

If it is part of a WikiProject, see if it has been rated. Articles in WikiProjects go through a type of peer review. This is not the same type of peer review your professor talks about regarding scholarly research, but even such a limited review does at least imply that someone from the WikiProject has looked at the article at some point and assigned a quality rating to it. In any case, to be fairly sure that a Wikipedia article expresses what laypeople might need to know to consider themselves reasonably informed, look for a rating of B/A or above.

The Recent Changes tab will indicate recent edits to the Wikipedia article you are using.

### **Additional Resources**

You may wish to consult any or all of the following for additional help in finding and evaluating sources:

[Wikipedia assignments](#)

Wikipedia’s [Neutral Point of View guideline](#)

Wikipedia on [verifiability](#)

Wikipedia on [original research](#)

Wikipedia: [Peer review](#)

[The Seven Steps of the Research Process](#)

A resource designed to answer

questions about evaluating sources of information.

**Critically Analyzing Information Sources.** This resource lists some of the critical questions you should ask when you consider the appropriateness of a particular book, article, media resource, or Web site for your research.

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## Students Requiring Accommodations

The Office of Distance and Extended Learning is committed to helping students with disabilities achieve their educational goals.

A disability is not a barrier to correspondence study, and we provide reasonable accommodations to individuals in coursework and test taking.

Students who require special accommodations need to provide verification of their disability to the [Office of Disability Services](#), Suite 5-5.1 LBJ Student Center, 512.245.3451 (voice/TTY).

Students should then notify the [Office of Distance and Extended Learning](#) (<http://www.correspondence.txstate.edu/>) of any disability-related accommodation needs as soon as possible to avoid a delay in accommodations.

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## Academic Integrity

The [Texas State Academic Honor Code](#) applies to all Texas State students, including correspondence students. The [Honor Code](#) serves as an affirmation that the University demands the highest standard of integrity in all actions related to the academic community. As stated in the [Texas State Student Handbook](#), [Violation of the Honor Code](#) includes, but is not limited to, cheating on an examination or other academic work, plagiarism, collusion, and the abuse of resource materials.

Academic work signifies outcomes and products such as essays, theses, reports, exams, tests, quizzes, problems, assignments, or other projects submitted for purposes of achieving learning outcomes.

Cheating in general means, but is not limited to, engaging or attempting to engage in any of the following activities:

- Copying from another student's test paper, laboratory report, other report, computer files, data listing, programs, or from any electronic device or equipment;
- Using, during a test, materials not authorized by the person giving the test;
- Collaborating, without authorization, with another person during an examination or in preparing academic work;
- Knowingly, and without authorization, using, buying, selling, stealing, transporting, soliciting, copying, or possessing, in whole or in part, the content of an unadministered test;
- Substituting for another student—or permitting another person to substitute for oneself—in taking an exam or preparing academic work;
- Bribing another person to obtain an unadministered test or information about an unadministered test;
- Purchasing, or otherwise acquiring and submitting as one's own work, any research paper or other writing assignment prepared by an individual or firm. This section does not apply to the typing of the rough or final versions of an assignment by a professional typist;
- Submitting the same essay, thesis, report, or another project, without substantial revision or expansion of the work, in an attempt to obtain credit for work submitted in a previous course;
- Falsifying data.

**Plagiarism** in general means, but is not limited to, the appropriation of another's work and the inadequately or inappropriately acknowledged incorporation of that work in one's own written, oral, visual or the performance of an original act or routine that is offered for credit.

**Collusion** in general means, but is not limited to, the unauthorized collaboration with another person in preparing any work offered for credit.

**Abuse of resource materials** in general means, but is not limited to, the mutilation, destruction, concealment, theft or alteration of materials provided to assist students in the mastery of course content.

Please cite all unoriginal material through the use of **standard bibliographical practice** as explained on the **Alkek Library site**.

## FREE TUTORING RESOURCES

A variety of free tutoring resources are available for students enrolled in correspondence courses. You may access tutoring through Tutor.com by clicking on Tutor.com: 24/7 Online Tutoring in the left menu of this course. Then just respond to the questions to start tutoring. If you need help with writing specifically, then choose Writing as your topic.

Free online tutoring for writing-related assignments is also available from the University Writing Center. For information on accessing these resources, please visit the Office of Distance and Extended Learning's **Free Tutoring** page.

Currently-enrolled, degree-seeking students able to visit the Texas State campus are eligible for free in-person tutoring from the [Student Learning Assistance Center \(SLAC\)](#) on the fourth floor of Alkek Library

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## Counseling Center

Philosophers like to talk about topics that many people find awkward, upsetting, or just plain painful. If I say something that reopens an old wound—or creates a new one—please know that that was not my intention. Moreover, **please remember that the folks at the [Counseling Center](#) are always available.**

The Counseling Center is in LBJ 5-4.1; you can reach them at 512.245.2208.

# Submission 1: Course Pacing Guide

Start Assignment

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**Due** No Due Date    **Points** 0    **Submitting** a file upload

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Download and add target dates to this [Course Pacing Guide](#).

Then click Submit Assignment and attach and submit your completed document.

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After you upload your document, click Next to proceed with the course.

63

**You are currently logged into Student View**

*Resetting the test student will clear all history for this student, allowing you to view the course as a brand new student.*

**Reset Student**

**Leave Student View**

# L1: Objectives and Assignments

## Objectives

Upon completion of this lesson, students will be able to:

- describe the contents of the syllabus;
- reflect on the assumptions that they bring to the course, as well as the challenges they face in engaging the course material.

## Activities

To complete this lesson, a student must:

read the Introduction to Ethics lesson content;

read Introduction in Shafer-Landau's *The Fundamentals of Ethics*;

read [Appiah's "What Will Future Generations Condemn Us For"](#);

view at least one of the following four documentaries: [Solitary Nation: Prison State](#)  
[Life and Death in Assisted Living](#), [Chasing Ice](#)

complete Quiz 1;

complete Assignment 1.

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Click Next to proceed to Lesson Content: Introduction to Ethics.

# L1: Introduction to Ethics

This course is called “Ethics and Society.” The name tells you less than you might think; there are plenty of subjects that I could cover under that heading. So what exactly did you sign up for?

First, you’re in for a quick introduction to *critical thinking*. Critical thinking is really a skill, one that takes a lot of practice to develop; however, you can also think of it as the study of arguments: how to identify them, how they work, how to evaluate them, and so on.

Second, we’re going to have a look at *moral theory*. Here are some things I believe: (a) you shouldn’t steal things from the grocery store just because it would be nice not to pay for them; (b) you shouldn’t pressure someone into having sex with you; (c) if you borrow money from a friend, you should pay her back. My guess is that you believe these things too. A moral theory would explain *why* these things are true, similar to how chemistry explains why water boils at 212°F. In other words, a moral theory tries to identify what makes it the case that we should do certain things and shouldn’t do others. As you’ll see, it’s hard to figure out which moral theory is correct. So, in addition to making you aware of the options, I’ll try to help you think about how to use them—whether or not you can decide between them.

Third, we’re going to think about a few topics in *applied ethics*. Some people think that you should always be honest with your friends, even if it hurts them. Others think you usually shouldn’t rock the boat. Some people think that poking around on Facebook during work isn’t a big deal. Others think that it amounts to stealing from the company. Some people think that the death penalty is a good thing, people getting exactly what they deserve. Others think that it’s a cruel, barbaric practice. In each case, who’s right? Answering these questions—or, at the very least, trying to—is the business of applied ethics. Surprise, surprise—this is pretty difficult. However, since the answers matter, we’ll have a look at a few topics, and learn what we can about wise ways to proceed.

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Before we dive too far into the content, I want to give you some perspective on the course as a whole.

This course is designed to help you think more clearly about moral matters; however, there are some real hurdles to thinking clearly. Perhaps the biggest one is that *things just seem true to us*. In other words, it’s incredibly hard to look at our own values and see them as objects of dispassionate study—one set of values among others. Instead, we see them as the *right* values, and we can’t even imagine being mistaken.

In many contexts, that’s fine. Frankly, I don’t want my doctor wondering whether he’s *really* got an obligation not to do any harm. But when we’re trying to engage in serious debate about moral



matters, this psychological tendency usually leads us into shouting matches rather than careful exchanges.

In part, this is because *our intuitions drive our ethical judgments*. In everyday life, we tend to trust our gut. We go with what feels right. But should we? Are our intuitions that reliable?

Well, there are plenty of non-moral cases in which our intuitions can't be *that* far off—if they were, we wouldn't survive for long. (Driving, for example, would go pretty poorly; it's kind of important that we be good at judging when to brake.) But there are many other cases in which our intuitions lead us astray—consistently, systematically, and without any hint of what's happening. (That, in essence, is the lesson of [Daniel Kahneman's \*Thinking, Fast and Slow\*](#) . While it is not a required purchase for this course, it's a great book. For a quick overview, check out this video: [Brain Tricks - This is How Your Brain Works](#)

For example: we like to infer causes when there aren't any; (we can't accept that some things just happen); our stereotypes make us bad at assessing probabilities; (we find it hard to accept that there are lots of truck drivers who love ballet, even though it's statistically certain); we tend to answer questions differently depending on the order in which they're asked (i.e., we're subject to [framing effects](#)); familiar ideas seem more true to us than unfamiliar ones, regardless of whether we have any evidence for or against them (i.e., we use [the familiarity heuristic](#)

As a result, there are plenty of cases in which *what seems true*—or our intuitive reaction—is just wildly wrong. This doesn't feel like good news. Nevertheless, it is. We can learn more about how our minds work; we can become better at noticing when we're likely to go wrong; we can foster the discipline of slowing down, thinking hard, and double-checking our conclusions. Of course, these things take a lot of effort, and we're not going to achieve perfection. Still, we can make progress. We can do better.

The same applies in ethics. [The evidence suggests](#) that our intuitions are especially powerful tools for building and maintaining social groups. (Reason *can* be useful to these ends, but it's a resource-intensive method—not evolution's first choice.) Because we're moved by each other's needs, we're willing to sacrifice to satisfy them, and—for most people, most of the time—it doesn't matter whether they can justify these sacrifices philosophically. In many respects, our intuitions are fast and reliable tools for bettering our group. And that means that our moral intuitions tend to say: “What you're already doing is awesome! And what those other people are doing is probably wrong!”

Unfortunately, this leads to some of our worst traits: racism, sexism, xenophobia (the fear of things that are strange or foreign—including, of course, strangers and foreigners), and blind nationalism (as seen all too vividly in Nazi Germany). Our intuitions are great at building and maintaining social groups, but that means that they're also really good at *excluding* outsiders from the very groups they

build. Reason needs to step in and help us sort the good intuitions from the bad ones. The problem, though, is that each of us is too biased to trust his or her own conclusions. As Jonathan Haidt puts it in *The Righteous Mind*

...each individual reasoner is really good at one thing: finding evidence to support the position he or she already holds, usually for intuitive reasons. We should not expect individuals to produce good, open-minded, truth-seeking reasoning, particularly when self-interest or reputational concerns are in play. But if you put individuals together in the right way, such that some individuals can use their reasoning powers to disconfirm the claims of others, and all individuals feel some common bond or shared fate that allows them to interact civilly, you can create a group that ends up producing good reasoning as an emergent property of the social system. This is why it's so important to have intellectual and ideological diversity within any group or institution whose goal is to find truth (such as an intelligence agency or a community of scientists) or to produce good public policy (such as a legislature or advisory board).

Clearly, Haidt thinks that we can make some progress in ethics: we just need to reason *together*, in *diverse groups*, rather than working on these issues independently or in homogeneous groups. We can go beyond what any particular culture says; we can look for new and better ways to think about living together in this wild, wonderful world.

Of course, *thinking* better is a long way from *acting* better. As Haidt says, “[n]obody is ever going to invent an ethics class that makes people behave ethically after they step out of the classroom.” That’s certainly true. Nevertheless, ethics courses have their place. Our goal here is to learn enough about the challenges to good reasoning so that we can detect them and correct them. That improves the quality of the discussion about moral matters, and it’s a step toward helping us know when—and when not—to trust our intuitions. At the same time, you’re going to become familiar with the tools that ethicists use—namely, moral theories—and get some practice putting them to work. By the end of the course, I hope you’ll be a bit better at thinking carefully and critically about ethics.

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You have five things ahead of you in this module. First, you’re going to read the introduction to Russ Shafer-Landau’s *Fundamentals of Ethics* (3e). Second, you’re going to read Kwame Appiah’s excellent essay, **“What Will Future Generations Condemn Us For.”** Then, you’re going to watch at least one documentary. After that, you’ll take a quiz, and you’ll close things out by writing a reflective paper.

Welcome to the course! I hope you find it engaging.

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Click Next to proceed to What Will Future Generations Condemn Us For?

# L1: Prescribed Viewing

## Prescribed Viewing

As part of the writing assignment for this lesson, you'll be required to reflect on the content of one or more of the following documentaries:

**Solitary Nation: Prison State** (available for free online)

**Food Inc.** (available to stream on Netflix; if you do not have a subscription, you can obtain a 1-month free trial from [netflix.com](https://www.netflix.com))

**Life and Death in Assisted Living** (available for free online)

**Chasing Ice** (available as a digital rental through Amazon

Prime)

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Click Next to proceed to Introduction Quiz.