

SECOND ETHICS PAPER PROMPT

DEADLINE: OCTOBER 25

This is a slightly unusual assignment, so please, read the prompt carefully. There are two parts of this assignment: the “live” part and the written part.

- (1) **The “live” part:** Choose one day, when you consciously make your ethical choices — all choices of your everyday life — according to deontology.
 - Decide the day early, and mark it on your calendar. Living like a deontologist will make life seem pretty complicated at times, but please make an effort. You can let your friends know in advance if you wish, so that they aren’t surprised you act strangely.
 - Please do not do anything that can put you in jail.
 - Make at least one major ethical choice in the day, which possibly has effects later.
 - Make your choices according to deontology even if you think that the deontological choice is not the right one. You only need to do this a day, so don’t be afraid that it will corrupt you.
 - **Important:** keep a journal, a small notebook with you (possibly on your phone) all the time to record every single choice you make. These include: getting up, breakfast, what to say to your friends, etc. It might happen that there is a case when you just really can’t do what deontology would command, or it just seems that deontology does not tell anything about the case; record that too. At this point, the journal should be very personal; you can record things that you would not necessarily share.
- (2) **The written part:** After all this, you will need to write a paper. A *philosophical paper*, not a personal essay. Here is how.
 - Start by going over your journal. After reading it carefully, you will need to select **two** things in it: your most significant ethical choice that you made based on deontology during those two days (the “significant deontological choice”); and a situation where you either just could not do what the deontological choice would have been, or you did it but knew it was wrong, or deontology was silent on the issue even though it was clearly an ethical choice (the “problematic situation”).
 - In the first part of your paper, describe the *significant deontological choice*. Describe the situation in detail, and state the two alternatives between which the agent (in this case, you) must choose. Show how the deontologist arrives at the choice: would any alternative violate the categorical imperative? Which formulation is it easiest to see? What would be the right reason to act in the circumstances? If you think the deontological reasoning gave the right result, you should explain why. If you think that it did not, you should also explain why, and why you rather would have done the other alternative.
 - In the second part of your paper, describe the *problematic situation* in a similar way. Again, describe the situation in detail, and state the two alternatives between which the agent (you) must choose. State which alternative deontology seems to favor and

why; or if it is silent on the case, explain why. If the deontological result goes against commonsense morality, state the commonsense moral principle with which deontology appears to conflict, and show which option commonsense favors.

- Be as clear in your paper as you can. Assume that your reader does not even know what deontology is; start with explaining that. The expected length of the paper is 2–3 pages maximum (Times font, 12pt, double spaced, Letter paper, 1” margins). Remember to have a thesis and a title in your paper; the thesis should be stated in the first paragraph. (The best way to think about a thesis: what would someone who has never thought about deontology, learn about it by reading your paper? – that’s your thesis.)

- (3) Finally, type in your journal and, if you wish, edit it. If you think some things in it are too personal, you can leave them out (mark it with ellipses in square brackets, like this: [...]). Otherwise, leave it relatively untouched. I will read the journals, but will not grade them; the grade is exclusively the grade of the paper.

Please bring your paper and journal in hard copy to class on the day of the due date. Late assignments will not be considered.

Do NOT write your name on your paper or on your journal. Submit them with your Fordham ID#, on both.