

Philosophy 240: Introduction to Ethics: Summer 2012

Instructor: Elizabeth Scarbrough

Class: M-F 10:50-11:50 a.m. in LOW 102

Office Hours: Tuesdays and Wednesdays 11:50-12:50 or by appointment

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Course Description:

This class is an introduction to moral theory. We will pair historical readings with contemporary insights into those readings. This is NOT an applied ethics class, so we will not spend time discussing hot button moral issues. Rather we will focus on what makes an action right or wrong, what makes a person virtuous or vicious, and what role ethics has in a good life. We will spend the majority of our time on Utilitarianism, Kantianism, and Virtue Ethics. Additional topics (briefly) discussed include Relativism, Egoism, Particularism, and Care Ethics.

Your skills in philosophical reasoning will be developed and tested in three ways:

- (1) Reading Comprehension: involves carefully, closely reading all the assigned texts
- (2) Philosophical Writing: involves completing a variety of written assignments designed to teach you how good philosophical writing differs from other familiar types of writing
- (3) Class Discussion: involves actively, respectfully engaging with your peers and instructor about philosophically complex, abstract theories that have implications for how we should make choices and live our lives

Success in this course requires you to prepare yourself for class discussion by reading critically, to defend your own views with reasons and arguments, and to give a good faith effort to develop your philosophical skills, both verbally and in writing.

Student Conduct & Academic Integrity:

I take academic honesty extremely seriously and will pursue sanctions against any student(s) caught engaging in any form of academic misconduct, in accordance with the University of Washington Student Conduct Code, which can be found at:

<http://www.washington.edu/students/handbook/conduct.html#020>

You can find additional information about what constitutes plagiarism/academic dishonesty at: <http://depts.washington.edu/grading/issue1/honesty.htm#plagiarism>

Ignorance of policies regarding academic misconduct does not constitute a legitimate excuse for inappropriate behavior.

Disability Accommodations:

Students with disabilities should contact Disabled Student Services at (206) 543-8924/V, (206) 543-8925/TTY, (206) 616-8379 (FAX), or e-mail at uwdss@u.washington.edu. If you have a letter from the Disability Services Office indicating you have a disability that requires academic accommodations, please present the letter to me so we can discuss the accommodations you might need for the class.

Assignments and Grading

Late work will not be given credit unless you have made prior arrangements with me. In cases of documented illness or emergency, contact me as soon as possible to make arrangements.

Participation (15%)

I expect students to be actively participating in class (which includes active listening). You can participate in a number of ways: asking good questions in class, participating in in-class assignments, coming to office hours, etc. The use of cell phones in class is strictly forbidden and laptop computers may only be used for academic purposes. Violating this “No surfing. No texting.” policy may result in a lowered participation grade.

In-Class Quizzes (10%)

There will be a total of 5 in-class quizzes, 10 points each – your lowest grade will be dropped. The quizzes will be composed of questions similar to those found on the final examination. The quizzes will not be announced in advance, and cannot be made-up.

GoPosts (10%)

Four times during the quarter I will ask you to complete a ‘homework’ assignment that will be posted on the class GoPost board. These assignments will serve as jumping off points for discussion and will be shared with your classmates.

Reflection Papers (40%)

There will be two reading response papers required for this class. Each paper should be roughly 2-3 double-spaced pages long. Topics will be handed out in class. I am more than willing to read paper drafts and paper outlines, but drafts must be turned in no later than one week before the paper assignment is due. The papers are due 7/16 and 8/10. They will be submitted electronically via Dropbox and are due no later than 5pm on the assigned days.

Final Exam (25%)

The final exam will be held on the final day of class and will consist of term-identification and short-answer essay questions. These questions will be similar to the questions you will have seen on your in-class quizzes.

Participation: 15% of final grade (60 points)

In-Class Quizzes: 10% of final grade (4 quizzes, 10 points each)

GoPosts: 10% of final grade (4 GoPosts, 10 points each)

Paper #1: 15% of final grade (60 points)

Paper #2: 25% of final grade (100 points)

Final Exam: 25% of final grade (100 points)

Books (required):

Moral Theory: An Introduction, ed. Mark Timmons (Rowman & Littlefield) ~\$26

The Classical Utilitarian: Bentham and Mill, ed. John Troyer (Hackett) ~\$10

Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals, Immanuel Kant (Hackett) ~\$9

The Practice of Virtue, ed. Jennifer Welchman (Hackett) ~\$16

Books (recommended):

Leviathan, Thomas Hobbes (Penguin Classics)

*Any other readings will be available electronically on electronic course reserve (ER).

The readings are listed by the class dates when we will begin discussing them; you should read the assigned reading **prior** to coming to class that day.

Schedule:

Week 1: Introduction / Arguments / Relativism

6/18: Introduction to the class

6/19: Introduction to Normative Ethics, Timmons Chapter 1, Appendix

6/20: Making Good Arguments, Day 1 (Handout)

6/21: Making Good Arguments, Day 2 (Handout)

6/22: Relativism, Timmons Chapter 3

(post argument assignment on GoPost)

Week 2: Relativism & Self-Interest (Feinberg, Hobbes, Hume)

6/25: Relativism (cont)

Suggested Reading: *"The Challenges of Cultural Relativism,"* James Rachels (ER)

6/26: Egoism, "Psychological Egoism" Joel Feinberg (ER)

6/27: Egoism (cont), *Leviathan*, Hobbes, Chapters XIII – XIV (pp. 183-201) (ER)

6/28: *Leviathan*, Hobbes, Chapters XV (pp. 201-217) (ER)

6/29: *An Inquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals*, Hume, Sec. III, Pt I, Sect IX, Pt. 11 (pp. 87-0-, 102-104 in Welchman).

Week 3: Utilitarianism: Bentham and Mill

7/2: Utilitarianism, Timmons Chapter 5, Sec. 1-3 (pp. 103-111 in Timmons), & Jeremy Bentham, *An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation*, Ch. 1 & Ch. 4 (pp. 8-12, 19-22, 92-94 in Troyer).

7/3: Utilitarianism, Timmons, Chapter 5, Sec. 4-5 (pp. 111-126 in Timmons)

(start diary assignment)

7/4 HOLIDAY: NO CLASS

7/5 John Stuart Mill, Utilitarianism, Chapters 1 & 2 (pp. 95-115 in Troyer)

7/6 John Stuart Mill, Utilitarianism, Chapter 4 (pp. 122-127 in Troyer)

Week 4: Utilitarianism: Applications and Criticisms

7/9: John Stuart Mill, Utilitarianism, Chapter 5 (pp. 127-145 in Troyer)

7/10: Utilitarianism Applied: Peter Singer, "Famine, Affluence and Morality" (ER)

(post diary assignment on GoPost)

7/11: Objections to Utilitarianism, Chapter 6 Sec. 1-3 (pp. 131-138 in Timmons)

7/12: Objections to Utilitarianism, Bernard Williams, "A Critique of Utilitarianism" (ER)

7/13: Continue: Bernard Williams, "A Critique of Utilitarianism" (ER)

(post follow up diary assignment on GoPost)

Week 5: Deontology: Ross and Kant

7/16: Moral Pluralism, Chapter 8 Sec. 1-10 (pp. 189-201 in Timmons)

***PAPER DUE 5 pm TODAY ON DROPBOX**

7/17: Kant, Chapter 7 Sec 1-3 (pp.151-156 in Timmons) AND

Immanuel Kant, *Grounding for the Metaphysic of Morals*, Section I (in Kant)

7/18: Kant, Chapter 7 Sec 4-7 (156-171)

7/19: Immanuel Kant, *Grounding for the Metaphysic of Morals*, Section II (in Kant)

7/20: Continue: Kant Sections I & II

Week 6: Kantianism: Applications and Criticisms

7/23: Onora O'Neill, "Between Consenting Adults" (ER)

(GoPost on Kant Due)

7/24: Continue O'Neill

7/25: Carol Hay "The Obligation to Resist Oppression" (ER)

7/26 Continue Hay, Start watching film *The Color Purple*

7/27 Finish video, discussion.

Week 7: Virtue Ethics

7/30: Introduction, *The Practice of Virtue* (Welchman, p. xi-xxiii)

7/31 Aristotle, Book I (pp.5-20 in Welchman)

8/1 Virtue Ethics, Chapter 9 Sec 1-3 (pp. 211-224 in Timmons)

8/2 Aristotle, Book II, (pp 20-34 in Welchman)

8/3 Martha Nussbaum "Non-Relative Virtues: An Aristotelian Approach" (ER)

Week 8: Virtue Ethics: Applications, Criticism, and Care Ethics

8/6 Rosalind Hursthouse, "Applying Virtue Ethics to Our Treatment of Animals" (pp. 136 -155 in Welchman)

8/7 John Doris, selections from *Lack of Character* (ER)

8/8 Virtue Ethics, Chapter 9 Section 5-7 (pp. 232-241 in Timmons)

(GoPost on Character Traits Due)

8/9 Ethics of Care, Chapter 9 Section 4 (pp. 224-232), Nussbaum Video

8/10 Nel Noddings, "Caring" from *Justice and Care: Essential Readings in Feminist Ethics* (ER)

(Second Paper Due Dropbox 5pm)

Week 9: Criticism of Traditional Ethical Theories

8/13 Continue with Care Ethics

8/14 Susan Wolf, "Moral Saints" (ER)

8/15 Continue Susan Wolf

8/16 Review for Final Exam

8/17 FINAL EXAM

Grading:

Late work will not be given credit unless you have made prior arrangements with me. In cases of documented illness or emergency, contact me as soon as possible to make arrangements.

A significant portion of your grade will be determined by how successfully you complete a number of small in-class assignments and overnight homework. You will only be able to complete these assignments if you turn them in on time, which requires that you be in class to receive (and sometimes to complete) those assignments. However, I recognize that *occasionally* one needs to miss class for a good reason. Therefore, I will arrange things such that there will be approximately 150 points available from this type of small assignment, even though you only need 125 points to get full credit for this portion of the class. Thus, if you miss one or two assignments, you can still do very well on the homework portion of the course. Everyone should plan to attend class every day and complete all the in-class and homework assignments; if you do a good job completing all of them, you will effectively receive a bonus.

I do not intend to curve the grades for this course, but I will, at my discretion, give a bonus of .1 to the final decimal grade of those students who show significant improvement over the course of the term.

Participation: 25 points

In class assignments and overnight homework: 125 points

First paper: 100 points (75 points for paper, 25 points for the revision)

Second paper: 100 points (75 points for paper, 25 points for the revision)

Final exam (comprehensive): 100 points

Total: 450 points