

**PHIL 541/581: Modern Ethical Theories, Fall 2005**  
**Tentative Syllabus**  
**© 2005 Robert Streiffer**

**A. Administrative Information**

Instructor: Professor Robert Streiffer  
Class Time: 2:25 – 4:55, Wednesday, 2111 Humanities  
Office Hours: Monday 2:00-4:00 in my bioethics office, and also by appointment  
Philosophy Office: 5123 Helen C. White Hall; 263-9479  
Bioethics Office: 1411 Medical Sciences Center; 262-7490  
E-Mail: [rstreiffer@wisc.edu](mailto:rstreiffer@wisc.edu); Home page: <http://philosophy.wisc.edu/streiffer/>  
Prerequisites: Junior standing, 3 philosophy credits

**B. Course Description**

This course is for upper-level undergraduates. It is an in-depth study of modern ethical theory, with a focus on the following specific topics: (1) value theory; (2) moral standing; (3) consequentialism; (4) deontology; (5) contractualism; (6) virtue ethics; and (7) moral particularism.

**C. Materials:**

The readings are available in a packet for purchase at the L & S Copy Center, and electronic copies are on e-reserve through College Library. Please purchase the packet even if you also use the e-reserves since it will always be important to bring a hard copy of the readings with you to class.

**D. Requirements:**

- (1) Read all of the assignments, read them carefully, and read them critically. Come to class ready to discuss the material. The contribution that each person makes to the discussion is important.
- (2) Attend all the classes. In addition to being expected to show familiarity with the class discussion in your papers, class attendance will count as 10% of your grade and class participation will count for another 10% of your grade. You are entitled to 1 unexcused absence without any penalty. Any excused absences for reasons other than an emergency must be cleared in advance of the class missed. For all excused absences, you must send me an e-mail stating the date and the reason so that I will have a record of it when it comes time to calculate your final grade. Any unexcused absences over the 1 to which you are entitled will affect your attendance grade as follows:

1 absence	B
2 absences	C
3 absences	D
4 absences	Fail the class

- (3) Write three argumentative papers, per the schedule below. You must hand in three complete papers in order to pass this course. You may not elect to opt out of a paper and receive an F on it. Papers are due at the beginning of class on the due date. Papers handed in during class but after the beginning of class will be bumped to the next letter grade or half-letter grade down (e.g., from an A to an AB, from a C to a D.) After that, the penalty is one full letter grade per 24 hours. Any non-emergency extensions must be requested prior to the due date, and will be granted only in rare circumstances. Although you are encouraged to discuss your papers with friends and classmates, no group work is allowed.

	Assigned	Due	Paper Length	Time	Grade
1	Oct. 5	Oct 19	1150-1250 words (4 pages)	2 weeks	20%
2	Nov. 2	Nov 16	1150-1250 words (4 pages)	2 weeks	20%
3	Nov. 30	Dec. 14	1750-1850 words (6 pages)	2 weeks	40%

### **E. Additional Class Policies**

Academic misconduct: Please note that the imposition of any penalty for any kind of academic misconduct (e.g., plagiarism, trying to get credit for a class you didn't attend, cheating on an exam, etc.) results in a permanent note that goes into your academic file, and that UW will disclose the fact that you were penalized for academic misconduct to interested parties who request that information. I will fail any papers not in compliance with the UW rules governing plagiarism, which you can find at <http://www.wisc.edu/students/conduct.htm>. The UW Writing Center also has helpful guidelines at <http://www.wisc.edu/students/Plagiarism.pdf>. Ignorance of what counts as plagiarism is not an acceptable defense. Other penalties may also be used, if appropriate.

Exceptions to the rules: I will not grant anyone an exception to the rules outlined in this syllabus unless that exception is granted to everyone. This means, for example, that since I can't allow everyone the option of rewriting their paper (since doing so would require my TA to work more hours than required by his contract), I can't allow anyone the option of rewriting their paper.

Classroom Etiquette: You are expected to behave in ways that are appropriate and respectful to the professor, the TA, and the other students. This includes, but is not limited to

1. Arriving on time. Students who walk into the classroom late create a distraction.
2. Refraining from private conversations with classmates during lecture or discussion.
3. Being patient and courteous to other students when they ask a question or make a comment.
4. Expressing disagreement with the comments of others in a respectful manner.
5. Removing sunglasses and hats.
6. Staying awake.
7. Refraining from reading any non-course-related material.
8. Refraining from packing up until class is completely over.
9. Turn any beepers or cell phones off when entering class.

Students are encouraged to discuss problems concerning the teaching of this course with me. If you wish to pursue a complaint with someone else, you should contact James Anderson, Assistant to the Chairperson, Philosophy Department, 5185 H.C. White Hall, 263-5162.

### **F. Outside Resources for Help**

The Writing Center has several classes and numerous handouts on academic writing. They will also do provide individual writing instruction. Appointments can be made by stopping in at 6171 Helen C. White or calling 263-1992. Their web site is [www.wisc.edu/writing](http://www.wisc.edu/writing). They can be much more effective if you approach them early in the writing process.

Study Skills: UW, as well as many other universities, have on-line materials available on how to improve your study skills as an undergraduate, and I encourage you to take a look at the URLs below and try to benefit from them.

<http://guts.studentorg.wisc.edu/SS/sshome.htm>

[http://www.stanford.edu/dept/undergrad/uac/resources/study\\_skills.html](http://www.stanford.edu/dept/undergrad/uac/resources/study_skills.html).

## G. Course Schedule

### 1. September 7: Introduction (22 pages)

- Shelley Kagan, "Preliminaries" from *Normative Ethics* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1998), pp. 1-22 (22 pages)

### 2. September 14: Value Theory (24 pages)

- John Stuart Mill, "Hedonism" excerpt from *Utilitarianism* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1979), pp. 7-11 (5 pages)
- Robert Nozick, "The Experience Machine" excerpt from *Anarchy, State, and Utopia* (Basic Books, 1974), pp. 42-45 (3 pages)
- David Griffin, "An Informed Desire Account" excerpt from *Well Being* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), pp. 12-17, 21-31 (16 pages)

### 3. September 21: Value Theory (54 pages)

- Connie Rosati, "Persons, Perspectives, and Full Information Accounts of the Good," *Ethics* 105 (January 1995), pp. 296-325 (30 pages)
- David Brink, "Objectivism about Value" excerpt from *Moral Realism and the Foundations of Ethics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), pp. 217-234 (18 pages)
- W.D. Ross, "What Things Are Good?" from *The Right and the Good* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1930), pp. 134-141 (6 pages)
- Recommended: Fred Feldman, "The Good Life: A Defense of Attitudinal Hedonism" *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 115(3), November 2002, pp. 605-627 (23 pages)

### 4. September 28: Moral Standing (49 pages)

- Immanuel Kant, "We Have No Duties to Animals," from *Lecture on Ethics*, trans. Louis Infield (Methuen & Co., 1963), pp. 239-240 (2 pages).
- Peter Singer, "All Animals Are Equal," excerpt from *Animal Liberation*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., 1990 (Ecco, New York: New York Review of Books), pp. 1-21 (21 pages)
- Joel Feinberg, "The Rights of Animals and Unborn Generations," in *Philosophy and Environmental Crisis*, edited by William T. Blackstone (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1974), pp. 43-68 (26 pages)

### 5. October 5: Moral Standing (48 pages)

#### 1<sup>st</sup> Paper Topics Handed Out

- Goodpaster, Kenneth, "On Being Morally Considerable," *The Journal of Philosophy* 75 (June 1978), pp. 308-325 (18 pages)
- Michael Tooley, "Abortion and Infanticide," *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 2 (1972), pp. 37-65 (29 pages)
- Don Marquis, "An Argument that Abortion Is Wrong," in *Reason and Responsibility*, 12<sup>th</sup> ed. Edited by Joel Feinberg and Russ Shafer-Landau (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 2005) pp. 677-687 (11 pages).
- Recommended: Robert Streiffer, "Human Stem Cells, Chimeras, and Moral Status", forthcoming, *Kennedy Institute of Ethics Journal* (28 pages)

### 6. October 12: Consequentialism (48 pages)

- John Stuart Mill, excerpt from *Utilitarianism* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1979), pp. 11-12, 16-25, 34-40 (17 pages)
- William Shaw, "The Consequentialist Perspective," forthcoming in *Contemporary Debates in Moral Theory*, ed. James Dreier, Blackwell Publishing (20 pages)).
- J. J. C. Smart, "Extreme and Restricted Utilitarianism," *Philosophical Quarterly* 6 (1956), pp. 341-354 (11 pages)

**7. October 19: Consequentialism (55 pages)****1<sup>st</sup> Paper Topics Due**

- Brad Hooker, "Rule Consequentialism," in *The Blackwell Guide to Ethical Theory*, ed. Hugh La Follette, 1998, pp. 183-204. (22 pages)
- R. M. Hare, "What is Wrong with Slavery," *Philosophy and Public Affairs* Vol. 8 No. 2 (Winter, 1979), pp. 103-121 (18 pages)
- Peter Singer, "Famine, Affluence, and Morality," *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, Vol. 1, No. 3 (Spring, 1972), pp. 229-243. (15 pages)
- Recommended: John Harris, "The Survival Lottery," *Philosophy*, 1975, pp. 81-87 (7 pages)

**8. October 26: Deontology (39 pages)**

- Immanuel Kant, excerpt from *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, translated and edited by Mary Gregor. Cambridge, U. K.; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998, pp. 7-16, 24-39 (14 pages)
- Thomas Hill, Jr., "Is a Good Will Overrated?," *Human Welfare and Moral Worth* Vol. 1, No. 9 (July, 2002), pp. 37-61 (25 pages)
- Recommended: Christine Korsgaard, "Kant's Analysis of Obligation: The Argument of *Groundwork* I," *The Monist* Vol. 72, No. 3 (July, 1989), pp. 311-340 (30 pages)

**9. November 2: Deontology (61 pages)****2<sup>nd</sup> Paper Topics Handed Out**

- Onora O'Neill, "Consistency in Action," in *Universality and Morality: Essays on Ethical Universality* ed. N. Potter and M. Timmons (Dordrecht: Reidel, 1985), pp. 159-186 (28 pages)
- Recommended: Christine Korsgaard, "Kant's Formula of Humanity" reprinted in *Creating the Kingdom of Ends* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 106-129 (24 pages)
- Philippa Foot, "Abortion and the Doctrine of Double Effect," from *The Oxford Review*, No. 5 (1967) (10 pages)
- Judith Thomson, "The Trolley Problem," in *Rights, Restitution, and Risk: Essays in Moral Theory*, ed. W. Parent (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1986), pp. 94-116 (23 pages)

**10. November 9: Contractualism (40 pages)**

- Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, selections (14 pages)
- David Gauthier, "Why Contractarianism?," From *Contractarianism and Rational Choice*, ed. Peter Vallentyne (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991), pp. 15-30 (16 pages)
- John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (Cambridge, Mass.: The Belknap Press of the Harvard University Press, 1971), pp. 11-21, 60-63, 136-140 (10 pages)

**11. November 16: Virtue Ethics (37 pages)****2<sup>nd</sup> Paper Topics Due**

- Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, translated by Terence Irwin, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1999), pp. 1-5, 7-12, 15-29, 163-169 (14 pages)
- Julia Annas, "Being Virtuous and Doing the Right Thing," Presidential Address at the Pacific Division meeting of the American Philosophical Association, March 2004 (23 pages)
- Recommended: Martha Nussbaum, "Non-Relative Virtues: An Aristotelian Approach," in *The Quality of Life*, ed. Nussbaum and Sen (Oxford; Oxford University Press, 1993), pp. 242-269 (23 pages)

**12. November 23: Virtue Ethics (54 pages)**

- Rosalind Hursthouse, "Normative Virtue Ethics," in *How Should One Live*, ed. Roger Crisp (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), pp. 19-36 (18 pages)
- Michael Slote, "Agent-Based Virtue Ethics," *Midwest Studies in Philosophy* 20 (1995), pp. 83-101. (18 pages)
- Christine Swanton, "A Virtue Ethical Account of Right Action," *Ethics* 112 (2001), pp. 32-52 (18 pages)

**13. November 30: Moral Particularism (23 pages)**

**3<sup>rd</sup> Paper Topics Handed Out**

- W.D. Ross, "What Makes Right Actions Right?" from *The Right and the Good* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1930), pp. 18-20, 21-23, 29-32, 39-41 (7 pages)
- David McNaughton, "An Unconnected Heap of Duties?" *Philosophical Quarterly* 46, pp. 433-447 (16 pages)

**14. December 7: Moral Particularism (25 pages)**

- Jonathan Dancy, "An Unprincipled Morality," unpublished (6 pages)
- Margaret Little, "On Knowing the Why: Particularism and Moral Theory," *Hastings Center Report* Vol. 31, Iss. 4 (Jul/Aug 2001), pp. 32-40 (10 pages)
- Gerald Dworkin, "Unprincipled Ethics," *Midwest Studies in Philosophy* 20 (1995), pp. 224-239 (6 pages)

**15. December 14**

**3<sup>rd</sup> Paper Topics Due**

- Continue Previous Discussion