

PHIL 541: Modern Ethical Theories
Syllabus Fall 2009 (Updated)
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A. Administrative Information

Instructor: Professor Robert Streiffer
Class Time: 1:00-2:15, Tu, Th, 357 Soils
Office Hours: Tu 2:30 – 3:30 in my Bioethics Office, and by appointment
Bioethics Office: 1411 Medical Sciences Center; 262-7490
Philosophy Office: 5123 Helen C. White Hall; 263-9479
E-Mail: rstreiffer@wisc.edu; Home page: <https://mywebspace.wisc.edu/rstreiffer/web/>
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 theories, focusing on the following specific topics: (1) the status of morality; (2) the reasons for being moral; (3) value theory; (4) moral responsibility; (5) moral standing; (6) consequentialism; (7) deontology; and contractarianism.

C. Materials:

The readings are primarily from Shafer-Landau, R. 2007. *Ethical Theory: An Anthology*, Blackwell *Philosophy Anthologies*. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, which is available through the UW Bookstore (and other sources, such as Amazon). Additional readings, marked with a “*”, will be handed out in class or made available electronically on my web site.

D. Requirements:

- (1) Attend all the classes (but see the H1N1 update in section E).
- (2) Read all of the assignments (prior to the day they are assigned), read them carefully, and read them critically. This may require more than one reading. You should be able to briefly summarize the thesis of each article assigned, as well as the general gist of the argument for that thesis. Come to class ready to discuss the material. The contribution that each person makes to the discussion is important. In addition to being expected to show familiarity with the class discussion in your papers and on the final exam, class participation will count as 10% of your grade.
- (3) Write two argumentative papers, per the schedule below. You must hand in two 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	Sept. 24	Oct. 8	1150-1250 words (4 pages)	2 weeks	25%
2	Nov. 5	Nov. 24	1750-1850 words (6 pages)	2 ½ weeks	35%

- (4) A comprehensive in-class final exam, worth 30% of your grade. The exam will consist of short-answer, multiple choice, and true/false questions. Review questions will be handed out in advance. The exam is scheduled for Friday, December 18, 10:05am – 12:05 pm, in a room to be determined.

Participation (10%) + Paper 1 (25%) + Paper 2 (35%) + Final (30%) = 100%

E. Additional Class Policies

Grading Mechanics: I use the following numerical equivalents when calculating your final grades: A=4, AB=3.5, B=3, BC=2.5, C=2, D=1, F=0.

H1N1 Update: Campus policy says the following: To limit the spread of disease, everyone on campus must consider it prudent to stay home from work and class at the first sign of influenza symptoms (fever of 100 degrees F/37.8 degrees C or higher with cough or sore throat) until at least 24 hours after they have been completely fever-free (without fever-reducing medication). For most people, this takes three to five days (health care workers must stay out for a minimum of seven days from symptom onset). To support isolation of ill people, the campus has adopted the policy that it will not require medical excuses for students, faculty or staff absences from flu-like symptoms. Support your own good health with frequent hand-washing and by trying to avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth. Influenza virus spreads through close contact with respiratory droplets, which generally means touching a contaminated surface with your hands and then touching your hands to your face. These hygiene measures are among the most powerful precautions you can take for yourself, as it will be impossible for every surface to be disinfected every time anyone touches it. If you have questions about this guidance, visit <<http://flu.wisc.edu>>.

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://students.wisc.edu/saja/misconduct/UWS14.html>. The UW Writing Center also has helpful guidelines <http://students.wisc.edu/saja/pdf/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.

Classroom Etiquette: You are expected to behave in ways that are appropriate and respectful both to me and to 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. Turning 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 also provide individual writing instruction. Their web site is <http://writing.wisc.edu>. 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. I encourage you to take a look at materials on http://guts.studentorg.wisc.edu/index.asp?page=resources_ss and to try to benefit from them.