

# PHIL 541: Modern Ethical Theories Fall 2013 Syllabus

## A. Administrative Information

Instructor: Professor Robert Streiffer

Class Time: MWF 12:05-12:55, 2231 Humanities

Office Hours: Wed 1:00-2:15, in my Bioethics Office, and by appointment

Philosophy Office: 5101 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: <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) moral knowledge; (3) the reasons for being moral; (4) value theory; (5) moral responsibility; (6) consequentialism; (7) deontology; (8) Contractarianism, (9) virtue ethics, and (10) particularism.

## 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.

## D. Requirements:

- (1) Attend all the classes. Attendance will be worth 5% of your grade.

You're first two absences are freebies; you don't need to contact me or let me know. Any additional absences must, except in the case of emergencies, be cleared in advance of the class missed to count as excused. 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 absence above your free ones will affect your attendance grade as follows:

1 absence	AB
2 absences	B
3 absences	BC
4 absences	C
5 absences	D
6 absences	F

- (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, 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	Oct. 2	Oct. 18	1500-2100 words (5-7 pages)	2 ½ weeks	30%
2	Nov. 25	Dec. 13	1800-2400 words (6-8 pages)	3 weeks	35%

- (4) Several short, in-class, unannounced quizzes, cumulatively worth 20% of your grade. These will be on the readings assigned for that day, and possibly include short-answer, multiple choice, and true/false questions. If you have an excused absence, your grade will be computed as if the quiz you missed did not occur. If you have an unexcused absence, you will get a zero for that quiz. No make-up quizzes will be given.

**Attendance (5%)+ Participation (10%) + Paper 1 (30%) + Paper 2 (35%) + Quizzes (20%) = 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.

**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.) can result in a permanent note that goes into your academic file and that UW can 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 academic misconduct, 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 misconduct is not an acceptable defense. Other penalties may also be used, if appropriate.

**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.
6. Staying awake.
7. Refraining from reading any non-course-related material.
8. Refraining from packing up until class is completely over.
9. Turning off any beepers or cell phones 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 Jesse Steinberg, 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](http://guts.studentorg.wisc.edu/index.asp?page=resources_ss) and to try to benefit from them.