

PHIL 541/581: Modern Ethical Theories
Fall 2014 Syllabus
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A. Administrative Information

Instructor: Professor Robert Streiffer
Class Time and Location: MW 2:30-3:45, 2115 Humanities
Office Hours: Tuesday 2:00-3:00, 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
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 explanation; (3) value theory; (4) consequentialism; (5) deontology; (6) contractarianism; (7) virtue ethics; and (8) moral responsibility.

C. Materials:

The readings are primarily from Shafer-Landau, R. 2013. *Ethical Theory: An Anthology*, Second Edition. Malden, MA: Wiley-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 absence is a freebie; 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 one 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. You will be expected to show familiarity with the class discussion in your papers.
- (3) Bring to class the readings that we will be discussing that day. Part of our time will be spent reconstructing the arguments based on a close reading of the text, and that is more efficiently done if everyone has their own copy of the reading to examine.
- (4) Write three argumentative papers, per the schedule below. You must hand in all 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. 17	Sept. 24	550-650 words (2 pages)	1 ½ weeks	10%
2	Oct. 22	Nov. 10	1500-2100 words (5-7 pages)	2 ½ weeks	30%
3	Nov. 19	Dec. 10	1800-2400 words (6-8 pages)	3 weeks	35%

- (5) Several short, in-class, unannounced quizzes, cumulatively worth 20% of your grade. These will be at the start of class, 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. The grade for the quizzes will be determined as follows:

% = total # of correct answers on all the quizzes/total # of questions on all the quizzes (“Select all that apply” questions count as more than one answer)

Grade	A	AB	B	BC	C	D	F
%	100-93	92.9-87	86.9-81	80.9-75	74.9-69	68.9-60	0-59.9

Attendance (5%)+ Paper 1 (10%) + Paper 2 (30%) + Paper 3 (35%) + Quizzes (20%) = 100%

I use standard letter grades for the papers, which convert to 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.

- (6) Honor students will have one additional paper, 1800-2400 words (6-8 pages), on a topic of their choice. Consult with me about the topic and time frame after you have had a chance to review the schedule. The paper percentages will then be 10%, 15%, 20%, 20%

E. Additional Class Policies

Academic Misconduct: 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. Expressing patience and courtesy 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, hats, and headphones.
6. Staying awake.
7. Refraining from reading any non-course-related material.
8. Refraining from packing up until class is completely over.
9. Refraining from using electronics during class. This includes laptops, tablets, cell phones, etc.

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/resources/student.html> and to try to benefit from them. Jim Pryor has a helpful page on how to read philosophy at <http://www.jimpryor.net/teaching/guidelines/reading.html> and a helpful page on how to write a philosophy paper at <http://www.jimpryor.net/teaching/guidelines/writing.html>.