

**PHIL 941: Graduate Seminar in Ethical Theory**  
**Syllabus, Spring 2012**  
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## **I. Administrative Information**

Professor: Robert Streiffer

Lectures: 5193 Helen C. White, Thursday, 3:30-5:30

Office Hours: Philosophy Office, Wednesday, 3:00-4:00 and by appointment

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## **II. Course Description**

This class is a graduate level survey course of ethical theory. We will be exploring the four main traditions within ethical theory: consequentialism, deontology, contractualism, and virtue ethics. We will be trying to determine what distinguishes the traditions from each other and the comparative theoretical and practical advantages they have.

## **III. Required Materials**

The reading packet will be distributed electronically; instructions will be provided in class.

## **IV. Class Requirements**

1. Read all of the assignments, read them carefully, and read them critically. The average amount of reading per class is about 42 pages.
2. Attend all the classes and participate in the discussions. Participation is 10% of your grade.
3. A term paper, 5,400-6,600 words (18-22 pages) in length, on a topic of your choosing (although I'm happy to help you choose), written in two drafts and worth 60% of your grade. You must submit a paper proposal, 250-350 words (1 page) in length, at the beginning of class on March 8. You must submit a rough draft, at least 3,000 words (10 pages) in length, at the beginning of class on March 29. The final draft is due at the beginning of class on May 10.
4. Two 20-25 minute in-class presentations on some aspect of the reading for that day. You should make a handout no longer than two pages, that defines any key terminology and theses and lays out the overall argument in valid form. You are then responsible for leading discussion after your presentation. Bring copies to distribute in class the day of your presentation. Each presentation will be 15% of your grade. People who are presenting on the same day should consult beforehand to avoid redundancy in the presentations.

## V. Reading Schedule

### Consequentialism/Utilitarianism (4 meetings)

1. January 26, Administrative Topics; Course Overview (54 pages)
  - (1) Shelly Kagan, "Preliminaries," ch. 1 of *Normative Ethics* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1998), 1-22 (22 pages)
  - (2) John Stuart Mill, "From *Utilitarianism*," reprinted in *Consequentialism*, ed. Stephen Darwall (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2003), (32 pages)
2. February 2 (32 pages)
  - (1) G. E. Moore, "From *Principia Ethica*," ch. 5, 89-92 (4 pages)
  - (2) Derek Parfit, "From *Reasons and Persons*," ch. 8, 132-159 (28 pages)
3. February 9 (69 pages)
  - (1) Bernard Williams, "Consequentialism and Integrity," reprinted in *Consequentialism and Its Critics*, ed. Samuel Scheffler (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 20-50 (31 pages)
  - (2) Peter Railton, "Alienation, Consequentialism, and the Demands of Morality," *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 13:2 (Spring 1984), 134-171 (38 pages) [Zi Lin]

February 16: I will be out of town. We will reschedule a replacement meeting later in the semester.

4. February 23 (15 pages)
  - (1) Shelly Kagan, Earlier sections, but not moral methodology section
  - (2) Shelly Kagan, "Resisting Options to Do Harm," in *The Limits of Morality* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 19-24 (6 pages) [Lee Wong]
  - (3) Shelly Kagan, "Constraints," in *The Limits of Morality* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 24-32 (9 pages) [Josh Mund]

### Deontology (3 meetings)

5. March 1 (68 pages)
  - (1) Judith Jarvis Thomson, "Claims, Privileges, and Powers," ch. 1 in *The Realm of Rights* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990), 37-60 (24 pages)
  - (2) Judith Jarvis Thomson, "Duties," ch. 2 in *The Realm of Rights* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990), 61-78 (18 pages) [Michael Hebert] [Next time, have 1 person cover both Ch 1 and Ch 2]
  - (3) Judith Jarvis Thomson, "Ought," ch. 3 in *The Realm of Rights* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990), 79-104 (26 pages) [David Moon]
6. March 8 (35 pages)  
Paper Proposals Due
  - (1) Judith Jarvis Thomson, "Value," ch. 5 in *The Realm of Rights* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990), 123-148 (26 pages) (Craig Schmitt)
  - (2) Judith Jarvis Thomson, "Tradeoffs," ch. 6 in *The Realm of Rights* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990), 149-175 (27 pages) [Josh Kissel]

## 7. March 15 (37 pages)

- (1) Francis Kamm, "Nonconsequentialism," ch. 1 in *Intricate Ethics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 11-47 (37 pages) [Zi Lin and Ben Schwan]

**Contractualism (4 meetings)**

## 8. March 22 (39 pages)

- (1) John Rawls, "From *A Theory of Justice*," ch. 7 reprinted in *Contractarianism/Contractualism*, ed. Stephen Darwall (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2003), 151-189 (39 pages) [Josh Mund and/or Josh Kissel]

## 9. March 29 (59 pages)

Rough Draft of Paper Due

- (1) Thomas Scanlon, "The Structure of Contractualism," ch. 5 in *What We Owe to Each Other* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 1998), 189-247 (59 pages) [David Moon]

April 5, Spring Break

## 10. April 12 (47 pages)

- (1) Thomas Scanlon, "Responsibility," ch. 6 in *What We Owe to Each Other* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 1998), 248-294 (47 pages) (skip chapter next time) [Ben Schwan]

## 11. April 19 (33 pages)

- (1) Thomas Scanlon, "Promises," ch. 7 in *What We Owe to Each Other* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 1998), 295-327 (33 pages) [Josh Mund, Lee Wong]

**Virtue Ethics (3 meetings)**

## 12. April 26 (26 pages)

- (1) Judith Jarvis Thomson, "The Right and the Good," *The Journal of Philosophy* 94:6 (June 1997), 273-298 (26 pages) [Craig Schmitt]

## 13. May 3 (52 pages)

- (1) Ron Sandler, "What Makes a Character Trait a Virtue?" ch. 1 in *Character and Environment* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), 9-37 (29 pages) [Nicholas Bell (optional)]
- (2) Ron Sandler, "The Environment and Human Flourishing," ch. 2 in *Character and Environment* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), 39-61 (23 pages) [Michael Dean]

## 14. May 10 (39 pages)

Final Draft of Paper Due

- (1) Ron Sandler, "The Environment Itself" ch. 3 in *Character and Environment* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), 63-83 (21 pages)
- (2) Ron Sandler, "Environmental Decision Making," ch. 4 in *Character and Environment* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), 85-102 (18 pages)