

PHIL 110B: INTRODUCTION TO ETHICS AND VALUES
Fall 2011: Monday, Wednesday, Friday: 1:30—2:20, AL 124

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Office hours: Mon, Wed 3:00—4:00, or by appointment or by chance (I'm often around)	Course website: Through D2L
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“WHAT IS AT STAKE IS FAR FROM INSIGNIFICANT: IT IS HOW ONE SHOULD LIVE ONE’S LIFE.”
PLATO, *REPUBLIC*.



COURSE DESCRIPTION

Moral philosophy is the systematic attempt to provide an answer to Plato’s ‘far from insignificant question.’ Beginning with *Republic*, this course explores some of the debates that philosophers have engaged in while trying to answer the question of how we should live our lives. We will pay particular attention to five different aspects of the question:

- (1) What reasons do we have (if any) to live a morally good life?
- (2) Are moral questions a matter of *knowledge*, or simply *opinion*?
- (3) How should we live our lives *together*?
- (4) What actions are morally right? Why?
- (5) Can we ever be truly morally responsible for what we do?

These questions have been the subject of intense debate for well over two thousand years, so our readings will be a mixture of historical and contemporary approaches. The purpose of the course is not to convince you that any one set of views is correct—rather, it is to introduce you to a variety of different views and to help you to reflect about fundamental philosophical questions in ethics.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

By the end of the course, you should be able to:

- a. Identify and distinguish central positions in several important debates in moral philosophy
- b. Clearly explain, in writing, key concepts and arguments in moral philosophy
- c. Apply philosophical positions and arguments to real-world moral issues
- d. Critically evaluate the strengths, weaknesses, implications, and assumptions of philosophical positions and arguments

This course will help develop the skills to:

- e. Read and critically evaluate primary philosophical texts
- f. Write clear, well-structured explanations and assessments of philosophical arguments

LEARNING ACTIVITIES

In order to achieve these objectives, you should:

- Do the readings **prior to class**. Most of the readings are relatively short, but they are difficult. You will get the most out of the class if you read them *carefully* and *more than once*, both before *and* after the class.
- Bring your copy of the reading to class.
- Be in class ready to participate at the beginning of lecture, and remain in class until the end of lecture.
- Take notes in class and review them.
- Restrict the use of your laptop in class to taking notes and reviewing readings.
- Ask questions of the Professor and Teaching Assistants when you are unclear about concepts.
- Put serious thought into your written assignments, including the discussion board posts.
- Finally, come to class ready to participate in a discussion about interesting and important questions: it is no accident that *Republic* (perhaps the most influential work in the history of philosophy) is a retelling of a long and rambling discussion between friends on the nature of morality. Our classroom is in many respects different from the ancient Athenian *agora*, but we will all get the most out of this class if you come ready to ask and answer questions, and to engage in discussion and friendly debate.

TEXTS

Plato, *Republic*.

The bookstore will be stocking Robin Waterfield's translation, published by Oxford University Press. *Republic* is readily available used, and any edition or translation will do, though you should try to get an edition that includes the standard marginal page numbers (you'll know that it does if the first page has "327a" somewhere in the margins.)

All other readings are available electronically from the UW Library's eReserves. There is a link to the eReserves page on the course D2L site.

METHODS OF ASSESSMENT

Work required	Percentage of final grade	Date
Online discussion posts	15%	5 posts and 5 responses, due throughout the term (see dates below)
Short assignment 1	15%	Friday, Oct. 7 th
Midterm quiz (online)	10%	Tuesday, Oct. 25 th
Short assignment 2	15%	Friday, Nov. 11 th
End of term quiz (online)	10%	Monday, Dec. 5 th
Term paper	35%	Monday, Dec. 12 th

Online discussion posts (15%)

At the beginning of the term, you will be randomly divided into small discussion groups on D2L. For the rest of the term, you and your group members will carry out an online discussion of the questions we're addressing in the course.

Posts should be relatively short (2-3 paragraphs maximum). They do not need to be written in formal academic English (more on that later in the term) but they should be grammatical and clearly express the intended ideas to your fellow group members.

The process works as follows: once during each section of the course, you must answer a discussion question on D2L. Once you've submitted your answer, you will be able to see your fellow group members' submissions. You must then write a response to one (or more) of your group members' posts.

You must submit 5 answers **and** 5 responses. The posts will not be marked: provided that you submit **both** 5 answers **and** 5 responses, you will receive 10% (each missing post costs 2%). **Provided that you write 5 posts and 5 responses**, at the end of the term you will be able to nominate 1 of your posts to be marked out of an additional 5%. Since part of the purpose of the posts is to allow you to have a philosophical discussion with your classmates, it is important to write your posts and replies on time. **Late posts will not be accepted.**

Due dates for the posts are as follows:

Post 1: Monday, Sept. 19th

Post 2: Friday, Sept. 30th

Post 3: Friday, Oct. 14th

Post 4: Friday, Oct. 28th

Post 5: Friday, Nov. 18th

Nominate best post: Dec. 6th

Reply 1: Friday, Sept. 23rd

Reply 2: Monday, Oct. 3rd

Reply 3: Monday, Oct. 17th

Reply 2: Monday, Oct. 31st

Reply 5: Monday, Nov. 21st

Short assignments: (30%)

Each short assignment will ask you to explain or respond to an argument presented in one or more of the readings. Assignments will be approximately 2 double-spaced pages. Questions will be made available at least two weeks prior to the due date. All assignments must be submitted online via the course D2L site.

Term paper (35%)

The final essay will be 4-6 pages in length. The question will be made available at least 3 weeks prior to the due date. All papers must be submitted online via D2L.

Quizzes (20%)

The quizzes will be completed online. The quiz will be available for 24 hours, and you will have a total of 1 hour to complete it from the time you log-in. The mid-term quiz will cover material from the first 6 weeks of the course, while the end of term quiz will cover material from weeks 7-12.

METHOD OF SUBMISSION

All work for the course must be submitted electronically via D2L.

Discussion board: Each question will be contained in its own thread on the discussion board. The replies will be posted to a separate thread.

Short assignments and term papers: All assignments and essays must be submitted to the relevant Drop-Box on D2L in one of the following file formats: **.doc**, **.docx**, **.rtf**, or **PDF**. Hard copies will not be accepted.

Assignments and essays must be prepared for **blind review**. This means that you *should not include your name anywhere* on the paper, or in the file name of the document you submit to the Drop-Box. Documents should be named as follows: Student#_assignment#.docx (or .rtf, or whatever format you choose). For example: 1234567_assignment2.docx

LATE POLICY

Discussion posts: No posts or replies will be accepted after the submission deadlines. The discussion board will only work if everyone posts on time.

Short assignments and term paper: Assignments must be submitted to the relevant Drop-Box on D2L **by 11:59 pm** on the due date. Late assignments will be penalized 10%, with an additional 5% for each extra day (i.e. 1 day late= 10%, 2 days late= 15%). No submissions will be accepted once marked assignments have been returned to the class.

D2L SITE AND EMAIL

Over the next year, the University of Waterloo will be switching from the UW-ACE online course management system to the Desire2Learn (D2L) system. While most of your courses this term will still be on UW-ACE, PHIL 221 is one of the course that will be piloting D2L. You can access the course D2L page through your normal UW-ACE homepage.

The D2L site is an important component of the learning environment for the class. It is where you will find many of the readings for the course, the questions for your discussion posts, short assignments, and term paper, where you will submit all of your work, and where you will complete the online quizzes. It is also where you will find the most up-to-date version of this syllabus, along with helpful links for writing philosophy assignments. It is the individual student's responsibility to check the D2L site on a regular basis.

From time to time, I will send students important emails regarding (for instance) readings, assignments, and quizzes (or -- if they should arise -- last minute emergencies that affect a scheduled lecture). If you would rather receive these emails at your home

account (e.g., hotmail, gmail, rogers...), then you must enter that email address on your UWDir entry. To log on to UWDir and update your entry, follow this link: <https://ego.uwaterloo.ca/~uwdir/Update>. It is your responsibility to stay current with course news by regularly checking whichever email account is listed on your UWDir entry.

SCHEDULE OF READINGS

The final lecture topics and readings are subject to fine-tuning, with notice. Students are responsible for doing the assigned reading *before* the corresponding lectures. The lectures are intended to supplement, problematize, and clarify the readings, not to replace them.

Section	Topic	Date	Reading	Assignment
I: What reason do we have (if any) to live a morally good life?	Introduction to moral philosophy	Sept 12	None	
		Sept 14	<i>Republic</i> , Ch. 1	
		Sept 16		
	Why be moral? The value of morality	Sept 19	<i>Republic</i> , Ch.2	Post 1
		Sept 21		
		Sept 23	Gauthier, "Morality and advantage"	Reply 1
Morality and self-interest	Sept 26			
	Sept 28	Feinberg, "Psychological egoism"		
II: How should we live our lives together?	The Soul and the State	Sept 30	<i>Republic</i> , Ch.3	Post 2
	A critique of democracy	Oct 3	<i>Republic</i> , Ch.8 (selections), Ch.11	Reply 2
		Oct 5		
		Oct 7		Assignment 1
		Oct 10	Thanksgiving	
	A defense of democracy	Oct 12	Mill, <i>Representative Government</i> , Ch. 3 (selections)	
Oct 14			Post 3	
III: Can we have moral knowledge, or is morality just a matter of opinion?	Knowledge of the Good	Oct 17	<i>Republic</i> , Ch. 9	Reply 3
		Oct 19		
		Oct 21		
	Reason and Passion	Oct 24	Hume, "On the influencing motives of the will"	Online Quiz 1 (Oct. 25th)
		Oct 26	Hume, "Moral distinctions not derived from reason"	
		Oct 28		Post 4
IV: What actions are morally right? Why?	Introduction to moral theory	Oct 31	Choosing between groups: boats, trains, hospitals (D2L)	Reply 4
	Moral theory: utilitarianism	Nov 2	Mill, <i>Utilitarianism</i> (selections)	
		Nov 4		
		Nov 7		
	Moral theory: Kant	Nov 9	Kant, <i>Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals</i> (selections)	
		Nov 11	Class cancelled	Assignment 2
Nov. 14		Kant, continued		
V: Can we ever be morally responsible for what we do?	Free Will and determinism	Nov. 18	Nagel: "Free Will"	Post 5
		Nov. 21	Strawson, "Your move: the maze of free will"	Reply 5
	Free Will: libertarianism	Nov 23	Kane, "Libertarianism, Indeterminism, and Chance"	
		Nov 25	Chisholm, "Human Freedom and the Self"	
	Free Will: compatibilism	Nov 29	Ayer, "Freedom and necessity"	
		Dec 1	Frankfurt, "Alternate possibilities and moral responsibility"	
		Dec 3		
	Wrap	Dec 5		Quiz 2 (online) Nominate best post

THE FINE PRINT

Academic Integrity:

In order to maintain a culture of academic integrity, members of the University of Waterloo are expected to promote honesty, trust, fairness, respect and responsibility.

Discipline:

A student is expected to know what constitutes academic integrity, to avoid committing academic offences, and to take responsibility for his/her actions. A student who is unsure whether an action constitutes an offence, or who needs help in learning how to avoid offences (e.g., plagiarism, cheating) or about “rules” for group work/collaboration should seek guidance from the course professor, academic advisor, or the Undergraduate Associate Dean. When misconduct has been found to have occurred, disciplinary penalties will be imposed under Policy 71 – Student Discipline. For information on categories of offenses and types of penalties, students should refer to Policy 71 - Student Discipline,

<http://www.adm.uwaterloo.ca/infosec/Policies/policy71.htm>

Grievance:

A student who believes that a decision affecting some aspect of his/her university life has been unfair or unreasonable may have grounds for initiating a grievance. Read Policy 70 - Student Petitions and Grievances, Section 4,

<http://www.adm.uwaterloo.ca/infosec/Policies/policy70.htm>

Appeals:

A student may appeal the finding and/or penalty in a decision made under Policy 70 - Student Petitions and Grievances (other than regarding a petition) or Policy 71 - Student Discipline if a ground for an appeal can be established. Read Policy 72 - Student Appeals, <http://www.adm.uwaterloo.ca/infosec/Policies/policy72.htm>

Academic Integrity website (Arts):

http://arts.uwaterloo.ca/arts/ugrad/academic_responsibility.html

Academic Integrity Office (UW):

<http://uwaterloo.ca/academicintegrity/>

Note for students with disabilities:

The Office for Persons with Disabilities (OPD), located in Needles Hall, Room 1132, collaborates with all academic departments to arrange appropriate accommodations for students with disabilities without compromising the academic integrity of the curriculum. If you require academic accommodations to lessen the impact of your disability, please register with the OPD at the beginning of each academic term.

Verification of illness:

Students who are ill and unable to meet assignment due dates or write a term test or final examination should seek medical treatment and provide confirmation of the illness to the instructor within 48 hours by submitting a completed UW Verification of Illness

Form to support requests for accommodation due to illness. Students in distance education courses must also provide confirmation of the illness but submit it to the Distance Education Office. The UW Verification of Illness Form is normally the only acceptable medical documentation and is available on line at:

http://www.healthservices.uwaterloo.ca/Health_Services/verification.html.

Students who consult their physician or use the services of an off-campus walk-in clinic must provide this form to the attending physician for completion; doctors notes and forms created by the physician or clinic are normally not acceptable. Health Services charges a \$10 fee for completing the University of Waterloo Verification of Illness Form, which is not covered by OHIP/UHIP. Fees for this service levied by off-campus practitioners are the student's responsibility.