

PHIL 221: ETHICS 1

Fall 2011: Mon, Wed, Fri: 9:30-10:20, DWE 3522A

Professor: Mathieu Doucet

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Office hours: Mon, Wed 3:00—4:00, or by appointment or by chance (I'm often around)

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Course website: Through UW's new Desire2Learn system

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Moral philosophy is the systematic attempt to provide an answer to what is perhaps the most important question of all: how should we live our lives? This course is an historical introduction to three of the major movements in moral philosophy. We will focus on the central texts of each of these movements: Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* (written around 330 BCE), Immanuel Kant's *Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals* (1785), and John Stuart Mill's *Utilitarianism* (1861). Each of these books defends a very different vision of the good life, of the nature and value of happiness, and of what makes an action, or a person, morally worthy. In addition to these three primary texts, we will also consider real-world applications of the theories defended in the main texts, and will conclude the class by considering a variety of skeptical challenges to the very project of moral philosophy.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

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

- a. Summarize and distinguish the central tenets of several influential moral theories.
- b. Clearly explain, in writing, key concepts and arguments in moral philosophy
- c. Apply positions and concepts from moral philosophy to real-world moral issues.
- d. Critically evaluate the strengths, weaknesses, implications, and assumptions of positions and arguments in moral philosophy.

This course will help develop the skills to:

- e. Read and critically evaluate primary philosophical texts from distinct historical periods.
- 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 can be 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 text to class.

- Be in your seat ready to participate at the beginning of class, and remain until the end of class.
- 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 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 about the nature of the good life.

TEXTS

- Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, translated by Terence Irwin.
- Immanuel Kant, *Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals*, translated by James Ellington.
- John Stuart Mill, *Utilitarianism*.
- Friedrich Nietzsche, *On The Genealogy of Morality*, translated by Maudemaire Clark
- Additional readings will be made available through D2L.

Note on the texts: The bookstore will be stocking the Hackett Publishing Company edition of each of these texts. Hackett editions are inexpensive and widely available, but you are free to use other translations or editions if you have them.

METHODS OF ASSESSMENT

Work required	Percentage of final grade	Date
Online discussion	15%	4 posts and 4 responses, due throughout the term
Short assignment 1	15%	Friday, Oct. 7 th
Short assignment 2	15%	Monday, Nov. 7 th
Midterm quiz (online)	10%	Thursday, Oct. 27 th
End of term quiz (online)	10%	Monday, Dec. 5 th
Term Paper	35%	Monday, Dec. 12 th

Online discussion: (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: four times during the term, you will write a post answering a question posted on the discussion board on D2L. Once everyone in your group has answered the questions, you will then write a response to one (or more) of your group members' posts.

You must submit 4 answers **and** 4 responses. The posts will not be marked: provided that you submit **both** 4 answers **and** 4 responses, you will receive 10% (each missing post **or** reply costs 2% up to a maximum of 10%). **Provided that you write 4 posts and 4 responses**, at the end of the term you will be able to nominate 1 of your posts to be marked, for an additional 5%. That means if you do not fully participate in the discussion board, you forfeit the 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: Friday, September 23rd

Post 2: Friday, October 14th

Post 3: Friday, November 11th

Post 4: Friday, November 25th

Nominate best post: Monday, Dec. 5th

Reply 1: Monday, Sept 26th

Reply 2: Monday, October 17th

Reply 3: Monday, November 14th

Reply 4: Monday, November 28th

Short assignments: (15% each= 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 (10% each= 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 two 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 schedule of readings is 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.

Topic	Reading	Date	Assignment
Aristotle and virtue ethics	None	Sept 12	
	Aristotle, <i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> , Book I	Sept 14	
		Sept 16	
	<i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> , Book II, III	Sept 19	
		Sept 21	
	<i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> , Books III, X	Sept 23	Post 1
		Sept 26	Reply 1
Cahn and Kleinig: debate on “The Happy Immoralist”	Sept 28		
Harman, “Moral Philosophy Meets Social Psychology”	Sept 30		
Kant and deontological ethics	Kant, <i>Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals</i> , 1 st section	Oct 3	
		Oct 5	
		Oct 7	Assignment 1 due
	Thanksgiving: no class	Oct 10	
	Kant, <i>Grounding</i> , 2 nd section	Oct 12	
		Oct 14	Post 2
		Oct 17	Reply 2
	Korsgaard, “The right to lie”	Oct 19	
Oct 21			
Foot, “The Problem of Abortion and Doctrine of Double Effect”	Oct 24		
Mill and utilitarian ethics	<i>Utilitarianism</i> , Chapter 1	Oct 26	Online Quiz 1 (Oct. 27)
	<i>Utilitarianism</i> , Chapter 2	Oct 28	
		Oct 31	
	<i>Utilitarianism</i> , Chapter 3	Nov 2	
		Nov 4	
	Smart, “Extreme and restricted utilitarianism”	Nov 7	Assignment 2 due
	Hooker, “Rule consequentialism”	Nov 9	
	Class cancelled	Nov 11	Post 3
Peter Singer: “Famine, Affluence, and Morality”	Nov 14	Reply 3	
Williams, “Against utilitarianism”	Nov 16		
Meta-ethics and scepticism	Readings TBA	Nov 18	
		Nov 21	
		Nov 23	
Nietzsche and sceptical critiques of morality	Wolf, “Moral Saints”	Nov 25	Post 4
	Nietzsche, <i>Genealogy of Morals</i>	Nov 28	Reply 4
		Nov 30	
		Dec 2	
		Dec 5	Online Quiz 2 Nominate best post

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.