

University of Waterloo
Department of Philosophy
Philosophy 221
Ethics
Fall 2013
T Th 10:30 – 11:50, HH 139

Instructor: Patricia Marino
Office: HH 332
Office Hours: Tuesdays and Thursdays 1:00-2:00 and by appointment
Email: pmarino@uwaterloo.ca

Course Description

This is a course on ethical theory in the Western philosophical tradition. Ethical theorizing attempts to find general principles tying together our various particular judgments, with the aims of explaining and justifying beliefs we have, correcting mistaken judgments, and finding out what to believe about new, complex, and controversial cases. Whether this is possible and what form it should take are both matters of much debate. In the first part of the course we will consider, through a combination of historical and relatively recent texts, several different and conflicting ethical views, including utilitarianism, Kantian ethical theory, contractualism, contractarianism, virtue ethics, and principle pluralism. We then turn to broader questions of the possibility of ethical truth and objectivity, the nature of ethical justification, and the implications of some empirical research.

Course Requirements

Requirements: Attendance at class meetings, participation in in-class discussions and projects, two papers, one optional rewrite, two in-class tests. There is no final exam; the second paper is due during finals period. The first paper should be 900-1200 words and topics will be handed out. For the first paper, you have the option of handing in a rewrite based on my comments. If you choose to do this your new paper grade will be an average of the original and the rewrite; your grade will not go down if the new draft is worse, but improved grades require significant changes and not just small edits. The second paper should be 1500-1800 words, and is due during the final exam period. Tests will be a mix of short answer and short essay.

Paper assignments will ask you to write about your own ideas about a philosophical problem while engaging the texts and ideas we've encountered in class. The focus is on presenting an original argument. Of course this means the ideas in your papers must be your own; we will talk more in class about how to ensure that the ideas you present as your own really are, and how to cite any outside sources you do use appropriately. If you have any questions at any time about academic honesty and what it requires, do not hesitate to ask. Just raise your hand or approach me after class.

All readings are posted on the LEARN course page as pdfs you can download. Everyone is expected to have read the reading before the date for which it is listed and to be ready to discuss it in class. I will post study questions on LEARN ahead of time for each week's reading and you should come to class having given some thought to these. **YOU MUST BRING THE TEXT WE'RE DISCUSSING TO CLASS** -- you can print it out, bring a laptop, or bring a tablet, but you must have the text with you. Course announcements and information will be on the LEARN page so please check it daily.

Although attendance and participation are not a formal component of your grade, everyone should participate in class discussion. There will be time in each class meeting for clarification questions and discussion questions from the students -- come to class with questions of both kinds. On days you can't make it to class you're responsible for finding out what we covered and talked about. You can see in the grades breakdown that papers are worth more than grades, so it is worth your while to put a lot of effort into them. Tests will be a mix of quotation identification, quotation explanation, short answer, and short essay, and are not cumulative: the first test covers weeks 1-6; the second weeks 7-12.

Philosophy texts are often dense with argumentation and you should expect to read each reading more than once. In class, I will explain some context for the ideas in the readings, raise questions, propose topics for discussion, and answer particular questions you have about the readings. But I won't be summarizing the readings or presenting the ideas in simplified form. The main reason for this is that one thing you are learning in a philosophy course is how to think for yourself about complex ideas, and this means encountering ideas in their original form, so you can form your own opinions. In a course like this, improving your reading, thinking and expression skills is much more important than learning any particular set of information.

If you have questions about the syllabus, the course, the requirements, the assignments, or anything else to do with this course, please do not hesitate to ask!

Assessment

Paper 1, due October 10 (week 5) (via LEARN before class time), 25%

Test 1, October 17 (week 6), 20%

Test 2, November 28 (week 12) 20%

Paper 2, due December 12 (via LEARN, before 5:00pm), 35%

Late Work

Please submit your papers to LEARN before class on the day they are due. Obviously, you should hand in your papers on time, but if you must be late, I will subtract five percentage points from your paper grade per day of lateness. If you experience unexpected difficulties like illness or personal difficulties, please let me know as soon as possible; if you expect to miss a deadline, let me know by email before the deadline rather than after.

Information on Plagiarism Detection

No formal or technological plagiarism detection mechanisms will be used in this class.

Electronic Device Policy

There is no formal policy against the use of laptops or tablets in class, but there are two rules: 1) you may not use any technology in ways that are distracting to me or to the other students and 2) you must be mentally present for what is going on in the classroom. This means no videos, no social networking, no email, no checking your phone during class. If you must use your phone, please leave the classroom.

Attendance Policy

I will be taking attendance every class period. Though attendance does not factor into your grade, the class is structured so that attendance is necessary for doing well. If something comes up that will mean missing more than a class or two, let me know as soon as possible.

Course Outline and Readings

Week 1 Introduction and utilitarianism

Sept 10 Introduction

Sept 12 Mill, *Utilitarianism*, (Read Chapters 1 and 2 and pp 41-51).

Week 2 Rule utilitarianism and act utilitarianism

Sept 17 Smart, "Extreme and Restricted Utilitarianism," *The Philosophical Quarterly*, 6(25) (1956), 344–354 (read the whole thing).

Sept 19 Rawls, "Two Concepts of Rules," *The Philosophical Review* 64(1) 1955, 3-32 (read the whole thing).

Week 3 Kantian moral philosophy

Sept 24 Kant, Chapter 1 of *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*, Jonathan Bennett, trans. (read pages 5 to 12) and Korsgaard, "Fellow Creatures: Kantian Ethics and Our Duties to Animals," Tanner Lectures on Human Values, 2004 (read pages 79-87).

Sept 26 Korsgaard, "Fellow Creatures: Kantian Ethics and Our Duties to Animals," *Tanner Lectures on Human Values* 24, 79–110. (read the rest, that is, pages 87- 110).

Week 4 Rawls's contractualism and theory of justice

Oct 1 Rawls, "Justice as Fairness," *The Philosophical Review*, 67(2) (1958), 164-194 (read pages 164-178).

Oct 3 Rawls, "Justice as Fairness," (read the rest, that is, pages 178-194).

Week 5 Contractarianism

Oct 8 Hobbes, *Leviathan*, Part 1, sections XIII and XIV

Oct 10 Gauthier, "Why Contractarianism?" In Vallentyne, P. (ed) *Contractarianism and Rational Choice: Essays on David Gauthier's Morals by Agreement*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press (1991), pp. 15-30 (read the whole thing). **First paper due.**

Week 6 Contractarianism and moral standing

Oct 15 Morris, "Moral Standing and Rational-Choice Contractarianism," In Vallentyne, P. (ed) *Contractarianism and Rational Choice: Essays on David Gauthier's Morals by Agreement*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press (1991), 76-95 (read the whole thing).

Oct 17 Test 1

Week 7 Virtue ethics

Oct 22 Foot, "Virtues and Vices, Chapter 1 of *Virtues and Vices and Other Essays in Moral Philosophy*, Clarendon Press, 2002 (read the whole thing).

Oct 24 Hursthouse, "Virtue Theory and Abortion," *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, 20(3) (1991), 223-246 (read the whole thing).

Week 8 Pluralism and emotivism

Oct 29 Ross, "What Makes Right Acts Right," from his book *The Right and The Good* (Oxford University Press) 2002 (1930) (read pp. 16 - 47).

Oct 31 Stevenson, "The Emotive Meaning of Ethical Terms," *Mind New Series*, 46(181) (1937), 14-31. (read the whole thing).

Week 9 Disagreement, relativism, and objectivity

Nov 5 Mackie, "The Subjectivity of Values," Chapter 1 of his *Ethics, Inventing Right and Wrong* (Viking Press, 1977) (read sections 1, 7, 8, 10, and 11).

Nov 7 Brink, "Moral Disagreement," Chapter 7, section 4 of his *Realism and the Foundation of Ethics* (read pages 197- 209).

Week 10 Intuitions, justification, and moral psychology

Nov 1 Rawls, "Outline of a Decision Procedure for Ethics," *The Philosophical Review*, 60(2) (1951), 177-197 (read the whole thing).

Nov 14 Haidt, "The Emotional Dog and Its Rational Tail: A Social Intuitionist Approach to Moral Judgment," *Psychological Review*, 108(4) (2001), 814-834 (read the whole thing).

Week 11 Intuitions, justification, and neuroscience

Nov 19 Singer, "Ethics and Intuitions," *The Journal of Ethics*, 9(3) (2005), 331-352.

Nov 21 Pinker, "The Moral Instinct," *The New York Times Magazine* 13 (2008): 32-37.

Week 12 Ethics for a broken world

Nov 24 selection from Tim Mulgan, *Ethics for a Broken World*, Acumen Publishing, 2011 (page ##s TBA)

Nov 26 Test 2

Institutional-required statements for undergraduate course outlines approved by Senate Undergraduate Council, April 14, 2009

Cross-listed course

Please note that a cross-listed course will count in all respective averages no matter under which rubric it has been taken. For example, a PHIL/PSCI cross-list will count in a Philosophy major average, even if the course was taken under the Political Science rubric.

Academic Integrity

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](#).

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](#).

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](#).

Other sources of information for students

[Academic integrity \(Arts\)](#) [Academic Integrity Office \(uWaterloo\)](#)

Accommodation for Students with Disabilities

Note for students with disabilities: The [AccessAbility Services office](#), 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 AS office at the beginning of each academic term.