

University of Waterloo
Department of Philosophy
Phil 221 Ethics
Fall 2015, TTh 4:00-5:20, RCH 205

Instructor Information

Instructor: Patricia Marino

Office: Hagey Hall (HH) 332

Office Hours: Wednesdays 2-4 and by appointment. Check LEARN for updates.

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, and contractualism. In the second, we'll turn briefly to some challenges to morality including subjectivism and skepticism. The third part of the course includes responses to those challenges and some moral alternatives that are not "moral theories"; these include contractarianism, virtue ethics, and ethics of care. In the last part of the course, we'll discuss how issues like gender, race, disability, and the prospect of climate change ought to inform our moral thinking.

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. 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 more important than learning any particular piece 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!

Course outline and readings (readings are posted on LEARN):

Week 1: Introduction and moral theory: utilitarianism

- Sept 15: Introduction
- Sept 17: John Stuart Mill, *Utilitarianism* (Read Chapters 1 and 2 and pp 41-51).

Week 2: Moral theory: rule utilitarianism and act utilitarianism

- Sept 22: J. J. C. Smart, "Extreme and Restricted Utilitarianism," *The Philosophical Quarterly*, 6(25) (1956), 344–354 (read the whole thing).
- Sept 24: John Rawls, "Two Concepts of Rules," *The Philosophical Review* 64(1) 1955, 3-32 (read the whole thing).

Week 3: Moral theory: Kantian moral philosophy

- Sept 29: Immanuel Kant, selection from *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*, reprinted in Russ Shafer-Landau, *Moral Theory: An Anthology* (Wiley-Blackwell, 2013) (read the whole thing).
- Oct 1: Christine Korsgaard, "Kant's Formula of Universal Law," *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly* 66 (1985) (we'll read the Harvard open access version; read the whole thing).

Week 4: Moral theory Kantian and pluralist deontology

- Oct 6: Christine Korsgaard, "The Right to Lie: Kant on Dealing with Evil," *Philosophy & Public Affairs*, 15 (1986), pp. 325-349 (read the whole thing).
- Oct 8: W. D. Ross, "What Makes Right Acts Right," from his book *The Right and The Good* (Oxford University Press) 2002 (1930) (read pp. 16 - 47)

Week 5: Moral theory: Rawls and contractualism

- Oct 13: John Rawls, "Justice as Fairness," *The Philosophical Review*, 67(2) (1958), 164-194 (read pages 164-178).
- Oct 15: John Rawls, "Justice as Fairness," (read the rest, that is, pages 178-194). First paper due.

Week 6: Challenges to morality: subjectivism

- Oct 20: David Hume, selection from "An Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals"
- Oct 22: **First test**

Week 7: Challenges to morality: emotivism and error theory

- Oct 27: Stevenson, "The Emotive Meaning of Ethical Terms," *Mind New Series*, 46(181) (1937), 14-31. (read the whole thing).
- Oct 29: John 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).

Week 8: Contractarianism

- Nov 3: David 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).
- Nov 5: Christopher 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), pp. 76-95 (read the whole thing)

Week 9: Feminist ethics and ethics of care

- Nov 10: Philippa Foot, "Virtues and Vices, Chapter 1 of *Virtues and Vices and Other Essays in Moral Philosophy* (Clarendon Press, 2002) (read the whole thing).
- Nov 12: Rosalind Hursthouse, "Virtue Theory and Abortion," *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, 20(3) (1991), 223-246 (read the whole thing).

Week 10: Virtue Ethics

- Nov 17: Nel Noddings, "An Ethic of Caring," from *Caring: A Feminine Approach to Ethics and Moral Education* (University of California Press, 1984), 79–103, reprinted in Russ Shafer-Landau, *Moral Theory: An Anthology* (Wiley-Blackwell, 2013) (read the whole thing).
- Nov 19: Cheshire Calhoun, "Justice, Care, Gender Bias," *The Journal of Philosophy*, 85 (1988), pp. 451-463 (read the whole thing). **Second paper due.**

Week 11: Challenges to theory: race and disability

- Nov. 24: Charles Mills, "'Ideal theory' as Ideology," *Hypatia*, 20(3) (2005), 165–183 (read the whole thing).
- Nov 26: Eva Feder Kittay, "The Personal is Philosophical is the Personal," in Kittay and Carlson, eds., *Cognitive Disability and Its Challenge to Moral Philosophy*, (Wiley-Blackwell 2010).

Week 12: Ethics for a broken world

- Dec 1: selection from Tim Mulgan, *Ethics for a Broken World* (Acumen Publishing, 2011) (page #s TBA)
- Dec 3: **second test**

Course Requirements and Assessment

- Paper 1: October 15, 20%
- Test 1: October 22, 20%
- Paper 2: November 19, 30%
- Test 2: December 3, 20%
- Attendance and participation: 10%

Papers

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. 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. The second paper should be similar in format and content to the first, with topics handed out. The second paper should be 1500-1800 words.

Tests

Tests will be a mix of short answer and short essay; test 1 covers the first six weeks of material. Test 1 covers the first half of the course and test 2 the second half.

Attendance and Participation

Attendance is required and everyone should participate in class discussion. Participation can take several forms: you may pose an informed question, or volunteer an answer a question, or offer a response to me or to another student. If you come to class regularly without participating, your attendance and participation grade will be 70 percent (you may miss up to three classes for any reason with no penalty). If you participate regularly that will increase your participation grade; if you attend less frequently that will lower it. I will post attendance and participation grades on LEARN at the end of term; if you don't agree with yours please email me and we can discuss it.

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 three percentage points from your paper grade per day of lateness. If you experience unexpected problems 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) please do not use technology in ways that are distracting to me or to the other students and 2) please be mentally present for what is going on in the classroom. This means no videos, no social networking, no email, and no checking your phone during class. If you must use your phone, please leave the classroom.

Attendance Policy

Attendance is required, but you may miss up to three class meetings with no penalty. See information under "Attendance and participation" above. If you experience unexpected problems like illness or personal difficulties, or you expect to miss more than three class meetings for any other reason, please let me know as soon as possible.

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.