

Philosophy 102A: Contemporary Moral Problems: Summer 2009

Instructor: Rachel Fredericks

Class: 12:00-1:00 M-F EEB 045

Office Hours: 1:00-2:00 Mondays and Tuesdays in EEB atrium

Email: rachef@u.washington.edu

Course Description:

This course in applied ethics is designed to introduce students to philosophical reasoning by considering a number of moral problems that individuals in contemporary society grapple with daily. Your skills in philosophical reasoning will be developed and tested in three ways:

- (1) Reading Comprehension: involves carefully, closely reading all the assigned philosophical texts
- (2) Philosophical Writing: involves completing a variety of written assignments designed to teach you how good philosophical writing differs from writing you may have done in other contexts
- (3) Class discussion: involves actively, respectfully engaging with your peers about controversial issues that are intimately related to our flourishing as individuals and as a society

Both the second and third elements of the class will require you to understand the reasoning used by others, to evaluate and critique those arguments, and to defend your own views with arguments. In general, this course requires a willingness to prepare yourself for class discussion by reading critically, a willingness to defend your views with reasons and arguments, and a willingness to give a good faith effort to develop your philosophical skills, both in writing and in verbal expression.

Student Conduct & Academic Integrity:

I take academic honesty extremely seriously and will pursue sanctions against any student(s) caught engaging in any form of academic misconduct, in accordance with the University of Washington Student Conduct Code, which can be found at:

<http://www.washington.edu/students/handbook/conduct.html#020>

You can find additional information about what constitutes plagiarism/academic dishonesty at: <http://depts.washington.edu/grading/issue1/honesty.htm#plagiarism>

If you have any questions about what constitutes academic dishonesty, please ask me. Ignorance of policies regarding academic misconduct does not constitute a legitimate excuse for inappropriate behavior.

Disability Accommodations:

Students with disabilities should contact Disabled Student Services at (206) 543-8924/V, (206) 543-8925/TTY, (206) 616-8379 (FAX), or e-mail at uwdss@u.washington.edu. If you have a letter from the Disability Services Office indicating you have a disability that requires academic accommodations, please present the letter to me so we can discuss the accommodations you might need for the class.

Textbook:

Michael Minch and Christine Weigel. *Living Ethics: An Introduction*. Wadsworth, Cengage Learning. 2009.

Any other readings will be available electronically or distributed in class. The readings are listed by the class dates when we will begin discussing them; you should read the assigned reading **prior** to coming to class that day.

Schedule:

6/22: Introduction to the class

Reading: *Living Ethics*, pages 1-16

6/23: Introduction to Arguments

6/24: More Arguments

Reading: Margaret Talbot. "Brain Gain." *The New Yorker*. April 27, 2009

http://www.newyorker.com/reporting/2009/04/27/090427fa_fact_talbot

6/25: Objections

6/26: Moral Relativism: Taylor

Reading: 189-200

6/29: Deontological Theories: Kant

Reading: pages 44-51

6/30: More Kant

7/1: Consequentialist Theories: Mill

Reading: 51-54

7/2: More Mill & Theory Comparison

7/3: No Class: Holiday (have fun!)

7/6: Distribution of goods: Nozick

Reading: 244-248

7/7: More Nozick

7/8: Property: Locke

Reading: 464-467

7/9: Distribution of goods: Singer

Reading: 248-252

7/10: More Singer

7/13: Slavery: Bales

Reading: 278-285

7/14: More Bales

7/15: Aristotle

Reading: 112-121

7/16: More Aristotle

7/17: Midterm Review

7/20: **In Class Midterm Exam: 125 points**

7/21: In-Class, Post-Exam Activity

7/22: Women & Work: Hooks

Reading: 478-484

7/23: More Hooks

7/24: Women & Environment: Shiva

Reading: 658-666

7/27: More Shiva

7/28: Talk about Midterm

7/29: Ethics & Self: Ruth

Reading: 372-376

7/30: Ethics & Feeling: Damasio

Reading: 94-100

7/31: More Damasio

8/3: Ethics & Religion: Plato

Reading: 159-161

DUE: revisions of exam essay for those who want W credit

8/4: Ethics & Religion: Nielsen

Reading: 165-171

8/5: Comparison of Views

8/6: Ethics & Religion: Mavrodes

Reading: 171-179

8/7: Comparison of Views

8/10: Just War Theory: Minch

Reading: 287-294

8/11: More Minch

DUE: draft of paper for those who want W credit

8/12: Just War Theory: Turner Johnson

Reading: 294-306

8/13: More Turner Johnson

8/14: Jihad & Just War: Hashmi

Reading: 306-310

8/17: TBD Newton & Fish 261-267

Final Paper Due (125 points)

8/18: TBD

8/19: TBD

8/20: TBD McKibben 652-657

8/21: TBD

Grading:

Late work will not be given credit unless you have made prior arrangements with me. In cases of documented illness or emergency, contact me as soon as possible to make arrangements.

A significant portion of your grade will be determined by how successfully you complete a number of small in-class assignments and overnight homework. You will only be able to complete these assignments if you turn them in on time, which requires that you be in class to receive (and sometimes to complete) those assignments. However, I recognize that *occasionally* one needs to miss class for a good reason. Therefore, I will arrange things such that there will be approximately 150 points available from this type of small assignment, even though you only need 125 points to get full credit for this portion of the class. Thus, if you miss 1 or two assignments, you can still do very well on the homework portion of the course. Everyone should plan to attend class every day and complete all the in class and homework assignments; if you do a good job completing all of them, you will effectively receive a bonus.

I do not intend to curve the grades for this course, but I will, at my discretion, give a bonus of .1 to the final decimal grade of those students who show significant improvement over the course of the term.

Participation: 25 points

In class assignments and overnight homework: 125 points

Midterm exam: 125 points

Revisions to exam essay: 25 points (only for those who want W credit)

Draft of final paper: 25 points (only for those who want W credit)

Final paper: 125 points

Total: 400 points (450 for those who want W credit)

Approximate Grade Conversion:

The numbers below give you a guideline of the conversion from points to final decimal grade. I won't determine the details of the conversion until I've seen the final spread of points earned, but if you earn the points listed below, you are guaranteed *at least* the corresponding decimal grade. I will only adjust grades upward from the conversions listed below.

Points required for 3.5: 360 (405 for W credit): 90%

Points required for 2.5: 320 (360 for W credit): 80%

Points required for 1.5: 280 (315 for W credit): 70%

Points required for the minimum passing grade (.7): 240 (270 for W credit): 60%

Optional Writing Credit:

Optional writing credit is available for this course. If you would like to pursue this option, you must inform me of your intention to do so on the day of the midterm exam. To be eligible for W credit, one will need to complete two extra assignments: revision of an essay from the midterm exam and a draft of the final paper. Each of these assignments will be worth 25 points. Students who want the writing credit will also be required to write a slightly longer final paper (5 pages instead of 4).