

# Philosophy 213: Ethics (Fall 2014)

## Syllabus

This syllabus is subject to change.

Professor: Dr. Rachel Fredericks

I prefer to be called Rachel, but you may call me Professor (or Doctor) Fredericks if that makes you more comfortable.

Classes: Tuesdays & Thursdays, 10:00–11:40 a.m. in Reichhold 110

Email Address: [rachel.fredericks@colby-sawyer.edu](mailto:rachel.fredericks@colby-sawyer.edu)

I prefer to be contacted by email rather than telephone. If you send me an email, I will usually be able to respond within 24 hours during the week and 48 hours on the weekend.

Office Hours: M&F 2:15 – 3:15 p.m., T&TH 11:45 a.m. – 12:45 p.m., and by appointment

Office Location: Colgate 234

Office Phone: 603 526 3422

Supplemental Instructor (SI): Nikkita Gottling

Study sessions: Wednesdays & Sundays, 7:00 – 8:00 p.m. in Colgate 228

### **Course Description**

This course is an introduction to moral theories, a challenging course in which we confront questions about moral goodness and rightness. Since the class is mainly about ethical theory rather than application or practice, we do not focus on trying to determine what we should do in particular situations or what we should think about particular hot button ethical issues. Rather, we concentrate on investigating more abstract issues, particularly on the question of what, in general, distinguishes morally right/good actions from morally wrong/bad actions. We explore the most influential ethical theories in the Western tradition, which all attempt to answer that question, though in different ways. The aim is to help you analyze the arguments put forward by defenders of these views and, by examining them, to refine and defend your own beliefs about what makes actions morally right/good or morally wrong/bad. This involves evaluating, supporting, and criticizing the arguments provided by people who hold opposing views.

Students in their first philosophy class often find it more difficult than they were expecting, but since our focus is on building skills step-by-step, students also tend to see a lot of improvement over the course of the term.

Success in this course requires you to (a) prepare yourself for class by carefully, actively and critically reading *all* the assigned texts (many of which will be dense and technical), (b) defend your own views with reasons and arguments (both during class discussion and in writing), while showing respect for those who disagree with you, and (c) give a good faith effort to develop your philosophical skills by engaging with your assigned readings, your peers, and your professor about philosophically complex, abstract theories that have implications for how you and others should think, feel, and act.

## Student Learning Outcomes

Upon successful completion of the course:

1. Students will have gained knowledge of key ethical theories from the Western tradition.
2. Students will have improved their ability to read carefully and critically.
3. Students will have improved their oral and written communication skills, especially in terms of:
  - a. Clarity and precision of expression
  - b. Attentive listening to others
  - c. Accuracy and charity in presenting others' views
  - d. Persuasiveness in articulating the justifications for their own views (that is, giving good reasons in support of their beliefs)
4. Students will have developed their ability to think critically, which involves:
  - a. Identifying arguments and their parts within a text
  - b. Recognizing the assumptions behind an argument that are not expressed in a text
  - c. Recreating others' arguments in their own words
  - d. Asking (and answering questions) about the content and quality of arguments
  - e. Criticizing (their own and others') arguments' content and structure in a rigorous and fair-minded way
  - f. Defending (their own and others') arguments from criticism and
  - g. Taking a stand for and/or against philosophical arguments and overall views as individuals.

## Required Books:

Aristotle. *Nicomachean Ethics*. Hackett (second edition), 1999.

Kant, Immanuel. *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*. Hackett (third edition), 1993.

Rawls, John. *A Theory of Justice*. Belnap Press of Harvard University Press (original edition), 2005.

Additional required readings (not from these books) are available online via Moodle and are marked on the schedule with a \*.

You should have all required readings done before class on the day for which they are scheduled, and you should always bring a copy (paper or electronic) of them with you to class on the day for which they are scheduled!

## Recommended Books

Graff, Gerald, and Cathy Birkenstein. *They Say, I Say: The Moves that Matter in Persuasive Writing*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 2007.

Weston, Anthony. *A Rulebook for Arguments*. 4<sup>th</sup> ed. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 2009.

More recommended readings are available via Moodle. Pay attention to which resources on Moodle are required and which are recommended! Some recommended readings are meant to help struggling students catch or keep up, some are meant to challenge students who are doing well to push themselves further, and some are mostly just for fun.

## Schedule

All groups of students are different in their interests, needs, and talents, so I reserve the right to make changes to this schedule (although I try to do that as little as possible and give as much warning as possible if and when I do).

If Mountain Day falls on a day when we are scheduled to have class, the deadline for any assignment due that day will be extended by 24 hours, and we will pick up where we left off during the next scheduled class. During that next class, I will announce any further adjustments to the schedule, and post them to Moodle in the form of a revised syllabus.

If Mountain Day falls on a day when a paper is due, the deadline for that paper will be extended by 24 hours.

If Mountain Day falls on a day when we are not scheduled to have class, *nothing changes* (unless a paper is due that day, in which case, the only change will be the one mentioned above). The schedule of required readings will not change, nor will homework assignments and deadlines. The fact that yesterday was Mountain Day does not constitute a legitimate excuse for missing class today, failing to turn in an assignment, or not doing the required reading.

### Week 1

#### 9/9: Introduction to the Class

Today we introduce ourselves, talk through the class policies and goals as described on the syllabus, and begin to see what makes philosophy classes different from other classes.

#### 9/11: Introduction to Philosophical Arguments

Today we discuss different types of arguments, exploring basic examples from each category under consideration. We also begin to identify the key ways that some arguments are better or worse than others; that is, we begin to evaluate example arguments.

- Required reading: John D. Mariana, “How to Read Philosophy”\*
- Required reading: Rachel Fredericks, “Guide To Philosophical Reading And Questioning”\*
- Required reading: Rachel Fredericks, “Guidelines for Submitting Assignments Electronically via Moodle”\*
  - Recommended reading: for those who learn visually and/or those who want to see some common mistakes in reasoning, see Ali Almosawi, “An Illustrated Book of Bad Arguments”\*
  - Recommended reading: for those who would like some more detailed explanation of good strategies for reading philosophical texts, or who just want to see a different way of explaining some of the same guidelines we’ve already touched upon, see Jim Pryor, “Guidelines on Reading Philosophy”\*

### Week 2

#### 9/15: Add/drop deadline

#### 9/16: Arguments, Objections, & Responses

Today we continue thinking about how to evaluate arguments, this time by discussing what it means to make or consider an objection to an argument and to respond to an

objection. Considering objections and responding to them is the primary way that philosophers make their arguments strong and persuasive. The material we cover about what makes objections and responses better or worse will be extremely important to know when you write your papers later in term.

- Required reading: Rachel Fredericks, “Guide to Philosophical Note-Taking”\*
- Required reading: Sharon Rupp, “Be Employable. Study Philosophy”\*
- Required reading: Rachel Fredericks, “Guide to Learning from Comments on Your Assignments”\*
  - Recommended reading: if you want even more information about reading philosophical texts, this time in the form of an academic paper written by a teacher who aims to teach best practices to other teachers (and who includes a handout about reading philosophy that he distributes to his students), see David Concepción’s “How to Read Philosophy”\*

#### 9/18: Descriptive Ethical Relativism

Today we begin unpacking our first philosophical text. We work carefully through what the author says, making sure we understand the view itself and, more importantly, why the author thinks we should accept his view. We will also note a few things about the author’s writing, since there are many features of it that make it a good model for your own philosophical writing.

- Required reading: Paul Taylor, “Ethical Relativism,” pp. 189-193\*

#### Week 3

#### 9/23: Normative Ethical Relativism

Today we continue discussing ethical relativism, but turn to a different *kind* of ethical relativism. Again, we carefully work through what the author believes and why he believes it. One of the important things that we practice today (that we did a bit of last time as well) is being able to tell the difference between when the author is speaking in his or her own voice (advocating for the position that the author actually accepts) and when the author is speaking in the voice of another (considering, but not ultimately accepting, the views of opponents).

- Required reading: Paul Taylor, “Ethical Relativism,” pp. 193-196 and 198-200\*
  - Recommended reading: if you want to challenge yourself by considering a third kind of ethical relativism, about which Taylor is more ambivalent, see Paul Taylor, “Ethical Relativism,” pp. 196-198\*

#### 9/25: Virtue Ethics: the Highest Good & the Highest Science

Today we turn to Aristotle, whose views about ethics have been influential to a degree that probably cannot be overstated. Given the writing style, figuring out what he means will be more challenging than when we read contemporary authors like Taylor. I will use pictures to help you see a parallel that Aristotle draws between a hierarchy of goods and a hierarchy of sciences. Our focus in the next few days will be on figuring out what exactly is at the top of the hierarchy of goods he has in mind.

- Required reading: Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book I, chapters 1-5 (pp. 1-5)
- Required reading: Rachel Fredericks, “Guide to Philosophical Writing”\*
  - Recommended reading: if it would help you to read an overview of some of the key elements in Aristotle’s thinking (written in contemporary

English), see Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Editor's Introduction, pp. xvi-xix & xxii-xxv

#### Week 4

##### 9/30: Virtue Ethics & the Highest Good for Humans

Today we investigate Aristotle's function argument, which results in a provisional (not quite yet complete) explanation of what the highest good for humans is. During our next class, we see him continue to fill out the details. Notice that I am not going to go over everything important and/or interesting about this reading (or future readings) during class; as you practice your philosophical skills, you'll be responsible for thinking carefully about more parts of the text on your own, without being walked through them in class.

Required reading: Aristotle, *Ethics*, Book I, chapters 7-10 & 13 (pp. 7-14, 16-18)

##### 10/2: The Definition and Acquisition of Virtue

Today we finally get the full definition of virtue, which we analyze bit by bit. We also talk about how two different types of virtue are acquired and, if we have time, one particular example of a virtue: practical intelligence or prudence. At this point, you should begin to have an idea of the extent to which you think Aristotle's views about ethics are (a) well-defended and (b) correct, noticing that those are two different things. You should also be thinking about what your biggest beef with Aristotle's arguments might be.

Required reading: Aristotle, *Ethics*, Book II, chapters 1-7, and Book VI, chapters 5 & 13 (pp. 18-27, 89-90 & 98-99)

#### **10/3: Pass/fail deadline**

### **FIRST PAPER DUE AT 11:59 P.M. ON FRIDAY, OCTOBER 3**

#### Week 5

##### 10/7: Contemporary Virtue Ethics

Today, lest you think that virtue ethics died with Aristotle long ago, we turn to an influential contemporary author who supports a view that is rooted in Aristotle's virtue ethics (that is, she thinks in much the same way as Aristotle and believes many of the same things, but not 100%). In writing this, Nussbaum is responding to people who think that the two views we have looked at so far (normative ethical relativism and virtue ethics) have a lot in common. You'll be better prepared for class discussion if you give some careful thought ahead of time to why people might see the two as similar.

- Required reading: Martha Nussbaum, "Non-Relative Virtues: An Aristotelian Approach," pp. 32-39\*
  - Recommended reading: Martha Nussbaum, "Non-Relative Virtues: An Aristotelian Approach," pp. 39-53\*

##### 10/9: The Meaning of Utilitarianism

Today I give you some historical information (not from the reading) about the founders and influence of utilitarianism, then we talk through some definitions of different kinds of hedonism. We also discuss some ways in which utilitarianism is different from and similar to virtue ethics, something that you should also be thinking about on your own.

- Required reading: Henry Sidgwick, "Utilitarianism," pp. 253-256\*

#### Week 6

#### **10/14: Fall Recess (no classes)**

10/16: Utilitarianism & Numbers

Today we talk about how utilitarians compare pleasures and pains, as well as who they mean when they talk about “all whose interests are affected.” That is, we talk about what kinds of creatures matter morally, according to utilitarianism, and what utilitarianism has to say about future generations.

- Required reading: Henry Sidgwick, “Utilitarianism,” pp. 256-258\*

Week 7

10/21: Utilitarianism versus Intuitionism & Egoism

Today we investigate why Sidgwick thinks that utilitarianism is largely in agreement with common sense morality (aka: intuitionism, the pre-theoretical moral beliefs of regular people), though also an improvement on both common sense morality and egoism. At this point, you should begin to have an idea of the extent to which you think Sidgwick’s views are (a) well-defended and (b) correct, noticing that those are two different things. You should also be thinking about what your biggest beef with Sidgwick’s arguments might be.

- Required reading: Henry Sidgwick, “Utilitarianism,” pp. 258-260\*

10/23: Contemporary Utilitarianism

Today, lest you think that utilitarianism is a dead theory, we discuss what is probably the most frequently read article by the most influential living utilitarian. This is also the first time that we consider in detail how one of the theories we are thinking about directs us to act relative to a particular kind of situation (that is, the article involving an *application* of utilitarianism to a concrete context). Do not underestimate how radically we would have to change our lives to live up to the standard Singer describes, and notice that this radicalness, *by itself*, does not provide a good reason to think that we should reject his conclusion.

- Required reading: Peter Singer, "Famine, Affluence, and Morality"\*

**FIRST PAPER REVISION DUE AT 11:59 P.M. ON THURSDAY, OCTOBER 23**

Week 8

10/28: Critique of Contemporary Utilitarianism

Today we put our critical hats on by turning to Williams, who uses two vivid examples to explain what he sees as being wrong with utilitarianism and discusses why two different kinds of defensive responses are not available to utilitarians. To the extent that time permits, we will also consider what Williams sees as the connection between utilitarianism and integrity, which is the basis of an important objection to utilitarianism. One thing to notice about Williams is that while he is excellent at giving strong reasons to reject the views of others, in this piece (and elsewhere), he says very little about what view he thinks we should accept.

- Required reading: Bernard Williams, "A Critique of Utilitarianism"\*

10/30: Introduction to Kant, the Good Will, & Duty

Today we turn our attention to a view that, historically, was developed before utilitarianism, but that we tackle later in the term because of the relative difficulty of the readings. Kant has high expectations about the background knowledge of his readers, and I fill in a lot of the missing pieces for you during class. Your job is to (a) to get as much as

you can out of the reading before class, (b) pay close attention to what we do in class, and most importantly, (c) return to the reading after class to see how I got what I did out of the text.

- Required reading: Immanuel Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysic of Morals*, End of Preface and Section I (pp. 5-10)
  - Recommended reading: if you want to challenge yourself by learning how Kant divides up philosophy into different categories and explains how he sees the book we read from in relation to his other writings, see Immanuel Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysic of Morals*, Preface (pp. 1-5)

Week 9

### 11/3: Midterm grades due

11/4: Duty, Moral Worth, & Imperatives

Today we start getting into the real meat of Kant's moral theory; by the end of class, we reach the first formulation of the Categorical Imperative, which is, in Kant's view, the supreme principle of morality. You should begin thinking about the ways in which this Kant's view differs from the views of the utilitarians. One of the most common and biggest mistakes that students make when writing about Kant is to make him sound like a utilitarian, *which he is not*. Notice that while sometimes (though not always) Kant and the utilitarians agree on what we should do, they never agree about *why* that is the thing that we should do.

- Required reading: Kant, *Groundwork*, Section I (pp. 10-17), and Section II (pp. 19-30)

11/6: First and Second Formulations of the Categorical Imperative

Today we do an activity to help us see how to use the first formulation of the Categorical Imperative to decide what we should do, then look at another formulation of the Categorical Imperative, which Kant sees as equivalent to the first in terms of what they recommend, though not in terms of their meaning. We will revisit the second formulation when we read the O'Neill piece next week, so think of this as the first pass by which to get a basic understanding of it.

- Required reading: Kant, *Groundwork*, Section II (pp. 30-37)

Week 10

### 11/10: Withdraw deadline

11/11: Autonomy, Relating Kant's Three Formulations of the C.I., & Conclusions

Today our priority is to talk about autonomy and to work on synthesizing all the elements of Kant's view that we have talked about so far. We will probably be running short of time, so you should know that the material about the third formulation of the C.I. (being a legislating member of a kingdom of ends) is not our highest priority. However, Rawls, who we read later, built his theory out of his deep respect for Kant's third formulation of the C.I., so you will want to have read through that material even if we do not discuss it in detail. At this point, you should begin to have an idea of the extent to which you think Kant's views about ethics are (a) well-defended and (b) correct, noticing that those are two different things. You should also be thinking about what your biggest beef with Kant's arguments might be.

- Required reading: Kant, *Groundwork*, Section II (pp. 38-45)

### 11/13: Contemporary Kantianism

Today, we discuss the view of a neo-Kantian (that is, a person who takes Kant as a starting point and agrees with most, but not all, of the things he says), since O’Neill’s interpretation of the second formulation of the Categorical Imperative has become the standard interpretation among philosophers. In addition to coming to grips with her interpretation, we explore how she applies the second formulation in thinking about morally significant challenges in two particularly important areas of human life.

- Required reading: Onora O’Neill, “Between Consenting Adults,” pp. 252-266 & 268-277\*
  - Recommended reading: Onora O’Neill, “Between Consenting Adults,” pp. 266-268\*

### Week 11

#### 11/18: The Main Idea of the Theory of Justice & The Original Position

Today we discuss some background about social contract theories (of which Rawls’s is one); if you have a background in political science and/or economics, you may already be familiar with some of the key elements of these theories, and I invite you to share your expertise with the class. Our priority for today is to (a) figure out what Rawls’s goals are for his theory and (b) become acquainted with the initial choice situation he has in mind.

- Required reading: John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (pp. 11-22)

#### 11/20: Two Principles of Justice, Callous Meritocracy, and the Veil of Ignorance

Today we get to the heart of Rawls’s view by exploring the two principles that he believes people in the original position behind the veil of ignorance could unanimously agree to use to govern the basic structure of their society. As you can tell, we have lots of terminology to come to grips with, and in the time remaining, we consider an objection and response pair that Rawls discusses.

- Required reading: Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (pp. 60-65, 100-108, & 136-140)

### Week 12

#### 11/25: The Maximin Strategy & A Test of the Two Principles

Today we discuss Rawls’s view about using the maximin strategy to decide between alternative principles of justice and work together on an activity that is designed to test Rawls’ claim that the people in the original position could unanimously agree to use the two principles of justice that Rawls defends to govern the basic structure of their society. Your participation in the activity will earn you points toward your homework grade, and many students in the past have told me that this was their favorite activity of the term!

- Required reading: Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (pp. 152-156)
  - Recommended Reading: to better understand how Rawls’ view is similar to and different from Kant’s view, see John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (pp. 251-257)

#### **11/27: Thanksgiving (no classes)**

### Week 13

#### 12/2: Critique of Rawls

Today we turn our attention to one of the major lines of criticism that has been directed at Rawls, one which he wrote a bit about between *A Theory of Justice* and his death. To



help you come to grips with the worries expressed by Okin, I'll walk you through what she means when she (and most other philosophers) mean when they say that their position is feminist, which isn't necessarily what your average person on the street means when they are talking about feminism. While it is obvious from the title that Okin is concerned with gender-based injustice, you should also use your critical thinking skills to consider what Rawls's theory of justice would mean for people who are disabled (especially those whose disabilities are intellectual or emotional rather than physical).

- Required Reading: Susan Okin, "Forty Acres and a Mule for Women: Rawls and Feminism"\*
  - Recommended Reading: for a very different critique of Rawls' view that was developed by a Nobel Prize-winning economist, see John Harsanyi, "Can the Maximin Principle Serve as a Basis for Morality? A Critique of John Rawls's Theory"\*

## **SECOND PAPER DUE AT 11:59 P.M. ON TUESDAY, DECEMBER 2**

### 12/4: Problems with Traditional Ethical Theories

Today we investigate some of the things that traditional moral theories (virtue ethics, Kantianism, and utilitarianism) have in common, and some of the ways that those commonalities are seen as problematic by many feminists (using the same definition of feminism that we talked about in the previous class). Notice that just as when we read Williams, when we read Held, we see strong reasons to reject existing theories, but not as much guidance about what we should put in place of those problematic existing theories.

- Required reading: Virginia Held, "Feminist Transformations of Moral Theory"\*

### Week 14

#### 12/9: Care Ethics

Today we consider one attempt to develop the kind of new theory that Held called for in the piece we read for the last class. This article is dense, containing multiple possible arguments in favor of the claim that we have an obligation to care for others; be sure to be clear in your own mind about which one Engster ultimately thinks is the best one.

- Required reading: Daniel Engster, "Rethinking Care Theory: The Practice of Caring and the Obligation to Care," pp. 50-65\*
  - Recommended reading: Daniel Engster, "Rethinking Care Theory: The Practice of Caring and the Obligation to Care," pp. 65-70\*
  - Recommended reading: to help you think in detail about how this relatively new kind of theory is related to a very old view that we considered early in the term, see both Raja Halwani, "Care Ethics and Virtue Ethics"\* and Maureen Sander-Staudt, "The Unhappy Marriage of Care Ethics and Virtue Ethics"\*

#### 12/11: Exam Review

Today you are in charge! You should come with an understanding of where your strengths and weaknesses are, so that we can revisit the material that you need the most help with as you study for your exam. The burden is on you to ask questions and answer the questions of your fellow students, and my role is to facilitate the discussion and intervene if you get off track.

## **Final Exam**

Friday, December 19<sup>th</sup>, from 10:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. in our regular location (Reichhold 110)

## **Assignments & Assessment**

All assignments (other than those completed during class time) must be typed (double-spaced) and submitted electronically via Moodle. All assignments will be processed using Turnitin, a plagiarism-detecting technology that also allows me to efficiently give you individualized, legible comments on your work. Thus every assignment must include appropriate citations for all quotations and paraphrases, as well as a complete list of bibliographic references at the end. You must use the MLA style guide to format your citations and references, but contrary to the MLA style guide, you do not need to put the Works Cited section on a separate page, and you do need to provide the URL for any source materials found on the Internet. You must always submit your assignments as Microsoft Word documents. To ensure consistent, correct formatting, I have posted an assignment template on the Moodle site for the course for you to use as the starting point for each assignment.

There will be a homework assignment due most days that we have class; homework assignments will always be due at 9:30 a.m., and will never be due on a non-class day. Late homework will not be accepted unless (a) arrangements have been agreed upon with the professor in advance, which requires planning and good reasons, or (b) in case of documented illness or other emergency beyond the student's control. If the latter, the student must contact me as soon as possible to make arrangements.

Papers will always be due at 11:59 p.m. Late papers will be accepted (via email), but they will be penalized 5% for the first minute they are late and an additional 5% for each day that passes between the deadline and submission.

Attendance and active participation in class discussions is crucial to success in mastering the course material and developing your skills. You are expected to come to class with informed questions and opinions about the relevant readings. I will keep track of attendance in class, but it is only one factor relevant to your participation grade. The quality and quantity of your contributions to discussion will be the primary basis for the participation aspect of your grade, but participation in office hours, email exchanges with the professor, and communication via note cards will also be considered.

If you miss five classes without communicating an adequate justifying or excusing reason to me, I may initiate an administrative withdrawal to remove you from the course, based on your performance in the course so far and my best estimation of whether you will be able to successfully complete the course.

A significant portion of your grade will be determined by how successfully you complete small in-class assignments and homework (usually worth 5 or 10 points). You will only receive credit for these assignments if you turn them in on time, since we usually discuss them extensively (and/or complete them) during class immediately after they are due, and if a student were allowed to turn in homework late, they would get a distinct and unfair advantage over other students.

However, I recognize that *occasionally* one will have a good reason for not being in class and/or completing one of these assignments on time. Therefore, I will assign approximately 170 points worth of homework assignments, even though I will calculate grades as though there were only 150 points worth of homework (that is, you only need 150 points to get 100% for this portion of the class, though there are about 170 points possible). Thus, if you forget or botch an assignment or two, you can still get a high score for the homework portion of the course (though you should plan to attend class every day and complete all the in-class and homework assignments).

So it is possible for you to earn more than 100% of the available homework points. If you do an excellent job completing all of these small assignments, you will effectively receive a bonus for this portion of your grade. There will be no opportunities for extra credit other than this one.

The papers you write will be short (approximately four pages double-spaced), and will require you to bring together the skills that you have been practicing in your reading, in class, and in your homework assignments. You will write a thesis statement that tells the reader exactly which claim you will argue for in the paper, recreate (in your own words) an argument from one of the texts assigned for class, and then critically evaluate that argument by discussing an objection to the argument and a response to that objection. Thus, in writing your papers, you will have to take a stand on an issue as an individual and defend that position using the best reasoning you can. Notice that in writing these papers, students will be making progress toward all the learning outcomes for this class! Since philosophy papers tend to be an unfamiliar and challenging form of writing for students, I recommend that you devote some quality attention to (a) the detailed paper assignment prompts I give you, (b) the detailed writing guidelines and tips that I post to Moodle, and (c) the written feedback that you receive from me on your homework assignments. We will also talk about philosophical writing during class.

You will also write and turn in a revised version of your first paper. The reason I have students write papers and then turn in revisions is to show that even when we are as careful as possible in writing and polishing our papers, there is always room for improvement through philosophical exchange with one's audience (this is true of professional philosophers as well as students).

Notice that the papers are worth more points than the revisions. Thus, the first paper you turn in to me should not be a mere rough draft. Instead, turn in the very best paper that you can the first time around to demonstrate your understanding of the material and your philosophical writing skills. After that, show off a different set of skills when you turn in the revision by engaging with and responding well to the individualized comments that I give you on the paper.

The final exam will be comprehensive (that is, cumulative), though there will be more questions about the material on which you have not written papers than on the material about which you did write papers. Questions on the exam will be divided into sections according to how long your answer should be, and you will have some choice of which questions you answer, although you must answer a fixed number of questions from each section. If you answer more questions than I ask you to, you will not receive credit for the surplus answers. A much more detailed explanation of what to expect will be provided via Moodle.

Participation: 50 points

In-class assignments and homework: 150 points

First paper: 75 points

Revised first paper: 25 points  
Second paper: 100 points  
Final exam: 100 points  
Total: 500 points

If you earn the points listed below, you are guaranteed *at least* the corresponding letter grade. Grades will not be rounded up, nor curved, but I may, at my discretion, boost the final grade of students who show *significant* improvement over the course of the term.

A = 95% = 475 points	C = 73% = 365 points
A- = 90% = 450 points	C- = 70% = 350 points
B+ = 87% = 435 points	D+ = 67% = 335 points
B = 83% = 415 points	D = 63% = 315 points
B- = 80% = 400 points	D- = 60% = 300 points
C+ = 77% = 385 points	F = <60% = ≤299 points

In general, written assignments will be evaluated according to the following criteria:

1. Structure and Organization

- a. Is the assignment well organized?
- b. Does it have a clear introductory paragraph, thesis statement, and concluding paragraph?
- c. Are there clear transitions between paragraphs and sections of the assignment?

2. Exposition and Interpretation

- a. Do you give a clear and charitable interpretation of the view(s) under consideration?
- b. Do you make clear the underlying assumptions of the view(s) as well as their implications?
- c. Do you support your interpretations with relevant citations to the text?

3. Argument and Critical Evaluation

- a. Do you provide rational arguments for the claims you make? Is it obvious what they are?
- b. When critiquing a view, do you consider possible responses to that critique?
- c. Do you show that you have thought independently about the problem in question?

4. Writing Style

- a. Is your prose style clear and easy to understand?
- b. Are there any recurring grammatical or spelling errors?
- c. Do you avoid awkward and confusing sentence structures?

## Student Conduct

A respectful, civil environment is crucial for learning any subject, but especially so for philosophy, which involves questioning, defending, and criticizing the beliefs and practices that mean the most to us. Conduct that interferes with other students' ability to learn or my ability to teach is not acceptable and will not be tolerated. In particular, students should not interrupt other students or me, otherwise dominate class discussion, disparage or otherwise disrespect the ideas and beliefs of others (which does not mean that one cannot or should not respectfully provide reasons to disagree), habitually arrive late or leave early, make or receive phone calls, text, surf the internet, or use other technology that is not directly related to course goals.

## Schedule Conflicts

Students are responsible for meeting all of their academic obligations, even if they are engaged in college-sponsored activities, i.e. theatre, athletics, or field trips. There are no excused absences for such activities. In the case of a scheduling conflict between two classes, students should make appropriate arrangements with the course instructors, being mindful that a regularly scheduled class has the higher priority.

Colby-Sawyer acknowledges that religious practices differ from tradition to tradition and that the demands of religious observance in some traditions may cause conflicts with student class schedules. If religious observance will cause a student to be absent from class or otherwise affect his or her ability to complete academic assignments, he or she must notify the instructor in advance and make necessary arrangements to complete the course materials.

## Academic Integrity

All Colby-Sawyer College students are expected to understand the meaning of academic honesty and to behave in accordance with the college's policies on academic honesty as published in the Code of Community Responsibility. To read these policies, see the links found at <http://www.colby-sawyer.edu/campus-life/conduct/honesty/index.html>

Plagiarism is the use of creations, ideas, or words of others without formally acknowledging the author or source through appropriate use of quotation marks, references, and the like. Plagiarizing is presenting someone else's work or thought as one's own original work or thought, whether it is intentional (on purpose) or unintentional (an accident).

More detailed resources explaining what counts as plagiarism and how to avoid plagiarizing are posted on the Moodle site for the class. If, after investigating those resources, you have questions about how to cite appropriately, please contact me *as soon as possible*. It is much better for everyone involved if a student gets help clearing up any confusion right away, before turning in the assignment, rather than waiting and having to deal with the bigger problem of plagiarism.

If I discover that a student has plagiarized or cheated in any way, the student will receive a score of zero for the assignment in question (and this may be sufficient to cause the student to receive a failing grade for the course overall). Whenever a student receives a score of zero for this reason, I arrange a meeting with the student so I can explain why the assignment constitutes plagiarism (or another form of academic dishonesty) and answer the student's questions. The main purpose of these meetings is to ensure that the student understands how to avoid similar problems in the future. After the meeting, I document my findings about the assignment and the content of our discussion in a letter, and send copies of that letter and the related evidence both to the student and to Dean Burton Kirkwood. The student is then asked to sign a copy of the letter (indicating that it is an accurate representation of what has occurred) and return the signed copy to Dean Kirkwood. Generally, for a first offense, no further penalties are assigned beyond the grade penalty on the specific assignment, but decisions about such things are in the hands of the dean, since only he has access to information about whether the student has been reported for a similar infraction before.

## **Disability Accommodations**

Students who have a documented disability will be provided with reasonable accommodations. They are encouraged to contact Access Resources ([accessresources@colby-sawyer.edu](mailto:accessresources@colby-sawyer.edu)) as soon as possible to ensure that such accommodations are implemented in a timely manner. All accommodations must be approved by CSC Access Resources.

## **Concerns or Problems**

If you have a concern or problem relating to any aspect of the course or your performance in it, get in touch with me, the professor, as soon as possible. I want to be able to help you, but if I do not know about your concern, I cannot address it. If discussing your concern with me (and implementing any plan we agree upon) does not resolve the issue, your next step would be to contact the chair of the department, Prof. Tom Kealy.