

Principles of Ethics (Phil 311)  
Spring 2013

Instructor: Dr. Williams  
Office: Daniel 208  
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Office Hours: MW 1-2 and 3:30-4:30 or by appointment  
Email: WilliamsNM@wofford.edu  
Class Time and Location: MW 2:00-3:20/Daniel 218

**Course Description**

In this seminar we will examine several issues surrounding moral philosophy including whether there is any objective right and wrong and whether we should be moral. We will also critically analyze traditional Western ethical theories such as consequentialism, deontology, virtue and feminist ethics.

**Required Text**

- *Ethical Theory*, Russ Shafer-Landau (ed.), 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 2013

**Learning Outcomes**

By the end of the semester, students will be able to:

- recognize and apply basic patterns of logical reasoning within ethical contexts;
- identify certain ethical theories as well as selected arguments for and against those theories;
- effectively communicate, in both oral and written form, specific moral arguments.

**Methods of Evaluation**

● **Two in-class essay exams:** A comprehensive study guide will be given one week prior to the exam. All essay questions originate from our assigned readings and class discussions.

● **Short Writing Assignments:** Throughout the semester I will assign short (300 words) writing assignments to encourage currency with the readings and to generate ideas for final paper topics. The cumulative average is worth 10% of your final grade. All work must be typed and turned in at the beginning of class. They will be graded on the basis of completeness, thoughtfulness, and clarity.

● **Argumentative Essay:** This will be a 8-10 page paper due at the end of the semester. The topic must deal with some contentious issue associated with our readings. There are two stages to this project. First, you will turn in a one-page outline where you clearly state your central thesis, supporting reasons, considered objections and responses. Second, you will present your outline to the class. These brief presentations aim at sharpening your oral presentation skills and providing you with critical feedback from classmates.

● **Discussion sessions:** This learning through teaching activity entails students giving a 15-minute presentation on an assigned reading. The main purpose of these presentations is to generate class discussion. Detailed instructions will be given with the presentation schedule.

**Distribution of Graded Work**

- Two in-class exams @ 25% each
- Final argumentative essay = 25%
- Short writing assignments = 10%
- Discussion sessions = 15%

**Grading Scale\*** (percentage): A =100-94; A- = 93-90; B+ = 89-87; B =86-84; B- =83-80; C+ = 79-77; C =76-74; C- =73-70; D =69-60; F =below 60

\*Grades in this course are based on academic achievement and competence.

### **Missed Tests/Late Work**

If you know in advance that you will not be attending class when an exam is scheduled, you must see me as soon as possible so that we can make necessary arrangements. If I don't hear from you by the next class period you will have forfeited the exam grade. All work is due at the beginning of class. For every hour an assignment is late, half a letter grade will be deducted.

### **Attendance**

Attendance is required in this class. You are allowed two absences with no grade reduction, thereafter three points off your final paper for every unexcused absence. I will record attendance at every class meeting. You are required to arrive at class on time and remain for the entire period in order to be counted as present. I have the right to drop you from the course in the event of excessive absences.

### **Honor Code**

Academic dishonesty will be handed in accordance to Wofford's honor code, which can be found at [http://www.wofford.edu/studentlife/honor\\_code.pdf](http://www.wofford.edu/studentlife/honor_code.pdf)

### **Disability**

If you have a disability that requires my attention please let me know as soon as possible so that I may accommodate you.

## **Reading schedule**

### **Week 1** --- Feb. 4 *The Status of Morality*

- Introduction
- Ayer: A Critique of Ethics
- Mackie: The Subjectivity of Values

### **Week 2** --- Feb. 11

- Harman: Moral Relativism Defended
- Gensler: Cultural Relativism
- Shafer-Landau: Ethics as Philosophy
- Smith: Realism

### **Week 3** --- Feb. 18 *Why Be Moral?*

- Plato: The Immoralist's Challenge
- Foot: Morality as a System of Hypothetical Imperatives
- Feinberg: Psychological Egoism
- Rachels: Ethical Egoism

### **Week 4** --- Feb. 25 *Consequentialism*

- Mill: Utilitarianism
- Hare: What is Wrong with Slavery
- Singer: Famine, Affluence and Morality

- Harris: The Survival Lottery

**Week 5** --- March 4 *Deontology*

- Kant: Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals
- Korsgaard: Kant's Formula of Universal Law
- O'Neill: Kantian Approaches to Some Famine Problems
- Review: catch up day

**Week 6** --- March 11 *Virtue Ethics*

● **Exam #1**

- Aristotle: The Nature of Virtue
- Hursthouse: Normative Virtue Ethics

**Week 7** --- March 18

- Slote: Agent-Based Virtue Ethics
- Rousseau: Emile (PDF)
- Kant: The sublime and beautiful (PDF)
- Aristotle: The Politics (PDF)

**Week 8** --- March 25 *Feminist Ethics*

- Gilligan: In a Different Voice
- Noddings: An Ethics of Caring
- Calhoun: Justice, Care, and Gender Bias
- Baier: The Need for More than Justice

**Week 9** --- April 1 (*Spring Break*)

**Week 10** --- April 8 *Particularism*

- Frye: Sexism
- Ross: What Makes Right Acts Right?
- Little: On Knowing the "Why"

**Week 11** --- April 15 *Moral Standing*

- **Exam #2**
- Singer: All Animals are Equal
- Regan: Animal Rights (from *Empty Cages*)

**Week 12** --- April 22

- Video: Death on a Factory Farm

**Week 13** --- April 29

Paper presentations

**Week 14** --- May 6

Paper presentations