

THE UNIVERSITY OF WESTERN ONTARIO
DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY
Undergraduate Course Outline 2016-2017
Philosophy 3720G
Normative Ethics

Term: Winter 2017
Meeting Times: M, 1:30-2:30; W, 1:30-3:30
Location: University Community Centre 61
Instructor: Professor Anthony Skelton
Office Location: Stevenson Hall 2150C
Office Hours: M, 3:30-4:30; W, 9:30-10:30
E-mail: askelto4@uwo.ca
Phone: 519-661-2111, 87953

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course is devoted to examining a number of problems in contemporary normative ethics. We will focus in particular on four main issues. Our first focus will be on aggregation. Suppose you can save either one person or five people from dying. You cannot save all six. Do the claims of the five outweigh the claims of the one? If so, why? If not, why not? Our second focus will be on population ethics. Our procreative behaviour makes a difference to the size of our population. How many people ought there to be? What population size is most desirable? Which principles should guide our answers to these questions? Our third focus will be on the role of intention in ethics. Does the intention with which one acts matter to the morality of one's act? Is it harder to justify intending evil as a means to a good end than to foresee it as an outcome of aiming at a good end? Our fourth focus will be on the nature of well-being. What does well-being consist in? What makes a life go well for the individual living it? Is well-being the only thing of value? What else might matter besides well-being?

OBJECTIVES

This course has four main objectives. The first is to acquaint students with some of the

most prominent issues in contemporary normative ethics. The second is to provide students with a deeper appreciation of the differences between rival conceptions of ethics. The third is to equip students with some of the skills required for conducting philosophical research in ethics. The fourth is to help students develop the ability to express philosophical concepts and arguments clearly and economically in writing.

TEXTS

All readings found on-line through OWL.

COURSE PRESUPPOSITIONS

This course will presuppose some familiarity with the basic concepts and main problems of contemporary moral philosophy. For those wishing to be reminded of these, a good source is R. Shafer-Landau, *The Fundamentals of Ethics*, second edition.

CLASS SUCCESS

To make this class a success, you must attend class on a regular basis, do the readings in advance of attending the lectures, and make a good faith effort to contribute to classroom discussion. It is important that everyone contribute to classroom discussion. Discussion with each other in class is the way in which we learn from each other and how we sharpen and clarify our views. Accordingly, we are duty bound to make the classroom inclusive and inviting to the exchange of philosophical ideas.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Week One (Jan 9): **Organization and Introduction**

Reading: Parfit, *Reasons and Persons*, 452-454.

Week Two (Jan 16): **Aggregation**

Reading: Taurek, 'Should the Numbers Count?'

Week Three (Jan 23): **Aggregation**

Reading: Scanlon, 'Aggregation'

Week Four (Jan 30): **Aggregation**

Reading: Hirose, 'Aggregation and Numbers'

Timmerman, 'The Individualist Lottery: How people count, but not their numbers'

Week Five (Feb 6): **Population Ethics**

Reading: Parfit, 'Overpopulation and the Quality of Life'

NOTE: First Essay Assignment is due on Friday, Feb 10, 2017.

Week Six (Feb 13): **Population Ethics**

Reading: Shiffrin, 'Wrongful Life, Procreative Responsibility, and the Significance of Harm'

Week Seven (Feb 20): **Reading Week: No Classes**

Week Eight (Feb 27): **Intention**

Reading: Foot, 'The Problem of Abortion and the Doctrine of Double Effect'

Week Nine (Mar 6): **Intention**

Reading: Quinn, 'Actions, Intentions, and Consequences: The Doctrine of Double Effect'

Week Ten (Mar 13): **Value Theory**

Reading: Parfit, 'What Makes Someone's Life Go Best'

NOTE: Second Essay Assignment is due on Thursday, March 16, 2016.

Week Eleven (Mar 20): **Value Theory**

Reading: Sumner, 'Welfare and Happiness'

Week Twelve (Mar 27): **Value Theory**

Reading: Badhwar, 'Well-being'

Week Thirteen (April 3): **Value Theory**

Readings: Bradford, 'The Value of Achievements'

REQUIREMENTS

Your grade for this course will be based on two essays and eight weekly responses to the course readings. The first paper (1450 words) is worth 40 percent of the final grade, the second paper (1800 words) is worth 50 percent of the final grade, and the responses are worth 10 percent of the final grade.

1. Essay

Due date: Friday, Feb 10, 2017
Length: No more than 1450 words
Value: 40 percent of final grade

2. Essay

Due date: Thursday, March 16, 2017
Length: No more than 1800 words
Value: 50 percent of final grade

3. Responses

When: In class, at the beginning of the first class of each week, starting in week two.
Length: A response should be no more than 200 words in length
What: A response briefly outlines and critically engages with **one** of the main claims found in the readings assigned for that week. This claim may be historical, it may be a premiss in an argument, it may be a conclusion of an argument, it may be about a philosophical position.
Number: 8
Value: 10 percent of final grade. Each response is worth 1.25 marks.

REGULATIONS

1. Submission of essays

Please submit your assignments electronically. Do not submit a paper copy.

In order to submit your assignment, visit the OWL site for this course. On the left-hand navigation menu you will find the assignment tool. Click on this tool and you will find the assignment guidelines and basic instructions for submitting your assignment. To submit your assignment upload it and click on the submit button at the bottom of the page.

A corrected version of your paper will be returned to you through the OWL site.

2. Turnitin.com

All required papers will be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted will be included as course documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement currently between The University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com (<http://www.turnitin.com>).

3. Extensions

With respect to all of the course work, exceptions to the above work submission dates may be granted only as a result of petition to the Academic Counselor of the student's faculty. Instructors have no authority to waive this requirement, and any unofficial arrangements they make with students will not be respected by the administration.

All course work (with the exception of final examinations) must be submitted by the last day of classes.

Academic policies on examinations, appeals, absences due to illness, etc. may be found in the 2016-17 Academic Calendar. For further information, contact the Philosophy Undergraduate Counselor, Professor Devin Henry, Stevenson Hall 3140, 519-661-2111, ext. 85876, your Faculty's Academic Counselor or the Ombudsperson.

4. Late essays and penalties

An essay will be considered late if it is handed in after the due date without a prearranged extension (or after the extended date, in the case of an extension). Late essays will be penalized at the rate of three percentage points per day late. Essays more than ten days late will not be accepted.

A response is considered late if it is not handed in at the beginning of class. You are only required to submit 8 responses. Therefore, in four weeks of the term you are not required to submit a response. You may submit more than 8 if you wish; your grade will be based on the best 8 responses that you submit.

5. Plagiarism

Plagiarism is a form of cheating. Plagiarism is unacknowledged copying or paraphrasing of the words or ideas of another person. In general, anyone who learns something from a source (other than course lectures or general background knowledge any student of the course could reasonably be expected to have) and then presents that knowledge as their own discovery is considered to have plagiarized, even if the words used to express the ideas are not exactly the same.

Examples of plagiarism include: misrepresenting co-authored or group work as individually done, cutting and pasting copied or paraphrased work by others in with your own work, paraphrasing or otherwise altering the order of words or phrases and/or substituting words or phrases of similar meaning without acknowledgement that you are doing so, aiding and abetting such offences, among others.

Students must write their essays and assignments in their own words. Whenever students take an idea, or a passage from another author, they must acknowledge their debt both by using quotation marks where appropriate and by proper referencing such as footnotes or citations. Scholastic offences are taken very seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence: http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf

6. E-mail policy

I am not able to respond to philosophical concerns or questions over e-mail. I will deal with such concerns or questions during my office hours only. If you have a problem turning in an assignment on time or you need to make an appointment with me or you have some private issue you wish to communicate to me, feel free to use e-mail. Otherwise, please attend my office hours or make an appointment to see me.

7. Statement on Use of Electronic Devices

Feel free to use electronic devices in class but please use them for academic purposes only.

8. Prerequisites

Unless you have either the requisites for this course or written special permission from your Dean to enroll in it, you may be removed from this course and it will be deleted from your record. This decision may not be appealed. You will receive no adjustment to your fees in the event that you are dropped from a course for failing to have the necessary prerequisites.

9. Department of Philosophy Policies

The Department of Philosophy Policies which govern the conduct, standards, and expectations for student participation in Philosophy courses is available in the Undergraduate section of the Department of Philosophy website at <http://www.uwo.ca/philosophy/undergraduate/policies.html>. It is your responsibility to understand the policies set out by the Senate and the Department of Philosophy, and thus ignorance of these policies cannot be used as grounds of appeal.

10. Mental Health

Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to Mental Health@Western <http://www.uwo.ca/uwocom/mentalhealth/> for a complete list of options about how to obtain help. Immediate help in the event of a crisis can be had by phoning 519-661-3030 (during class hours) or 519-433-2023 (after class hours and on weekends and holidays).

The policy on Accommodation for Mental Illness is here:
http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/accommodation_medical.pdf.

11. Support Services

Registrarial Services: <http://www.registrar.uwo.ca>
Student Support Services: <https://student.uwo.ca/psp/heprdweb/?cmd=login>
Services provided by USC: <http://westernusc.ca/services/>
Student Development Centre: <http://www.sdc.uwo.ca/>