

**PHIL 3311W: Introduction to Ethical Theories  
Stoner/Fall 2014**

W/F 9:45-11:00, Humphrey 184

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Office hours: Tuesdays, 10:30-11:30, and by appointment.

Course Description

Most of us believe that it's morally good to help people in serious distress. Most of us believe it's morally bad to spread false gossip about others. Moral theories are attempts to systematize, explain, and justify moral convictions like these. This course will provide an introduction to three important moral theories: utilitarianism, Kantianism, and virtue ethics. We will study and discuss classical and contemporary texts.

Required Texts

Required and recommended readings are linked on the course web site:

<http://www.tc.umn.edu/~ston0235/3311/>

Course Requirements

Weekly Short Writing:	150 points
Drafted Paper:	300 points
Discussion guide:	200 points
Final exam:	150 points
Participation self-evaluations:	2 X 100 points

**Final exam.** A short-essay exam. I will hand out review questions two weeks before the exam, and all questions will be drawn from the review sheet.

**Participation self-evaluations.** At mid-term and again at the end of the semester, you will turn in a two-page self-evaluation of your participation in the course.

**Weekly short papers.** Each week you will write a one-page paper. I will email the prompt for the week's paper to you on Friday, and the papers are due at the beginning of class the following Wednesday. I won't accept late short papers for any reason. I will only accept emailed short-papers if you make arrangements with me ahead of time. Your total score for the weekly writing assignments will be the sum of your ten best scores out of thirteen available assignments. (In other words, I'll drop your lowest three scores.)

**Drafted paper.** In addition to the weekly writing you will write a drafted longer paper on an assigned

topic. This paper will require careful engagement with a challenging reading, and give you an opportunity to develop an argument of your own in some detail.

**Discussion guide.** In the closing weeks of the semester, you will write your own discussion guide for one of the assigned readings. You will use your guide for an in-class, small-group discussion, and then turn it in as your second piece of substantial writing.

### Grade Table

These thresholds indicate firm cut-off points. For example, a final score, at the end of the semester, of 864 points is B, while a final score of 865 is a B+.

Letter Grade	Point threshold
A	935
A-	900
B+	865
B	835
B-	800
C+	765
C	735
C-	700
D	600
F	–

### Course Calendar

#### **Week 1: (September 3/5) What is ethical theory?**

#### **Week 2: (September 10/12) Classical utilitarianism**

Mill, Utilitarianism, Chapters 1-3

#### **Week 3: (September 17/19) Hedonism and alternative theories of well-being**

Nozick, “The Experience Machine”

Crisp, “Hedonism Reconsidered”

#### **Week 4: (September 24/26) Utilitarianism: rights, justice, and rules**

Carritt, “Criticisms of Utilitarianism”

Brandt, “Some Merits of One Form of Rule Utilitarianism”

#### **Week 5: (October 1/3) Utilitarianism: Singer and Williams**

Singer, “Famine, Affluence, and Morality”

Williams, “The Integrity Critique”

Long-paper prompt handed out on Wednesday

**Week 6: (October 8/10) Kantianism: The Formula of Universal Law**

Kant, *Groundwork for the Metaphysic of Morals*, Introduction and Chapter 1  
Herman, “On the Value of Acting from the Motive of Duty”

**Week 7: (October 15/17) Kantianism: The Formula of Humanity**

Hill, “Humanity As an End in Itself”

Long paper draft due on Friday

**Week 8: (October 22/24) Critics of the modern approach: Wolf and Stocker**

Wolf, “Moral Saints”

Stocker, “The Schizophrenia of Modern Ethical Theories”

Midterm self-assessment of participation due on Friday

Commented drafts handed back on Friday

**Week 9: (October 29/31) Aristotle on the virtues**

Aristotle, *Nichomachean Ethics*, Books I and II

Final draft of long paper due on Friday

**Week 10: (November 5/7) Virtuous characters and right actions**

Hursthouse, “Right Action”

Johnson, “Virtue and Right”

**Week 11: (November 12/14) Hume on the virtues**

Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals*

Discussion guide sign-up on Friday

**Week 12: (November 19/21) Relativism and good judgment**

Hume, “Of the Standard of Taste”

Abramson, “Hume on Cultural Conflicts of Value”

**Week 13: (November 26) Revisit utilitarianism**

Hooker, “Rule-Consequentialism, Incoherence, Fairness”

Final exam review sheet handed out on Wednesday

**Week 14: (December 3/5) Revisit Kantianism and virtue ethics**

Korsgaard, "The Right to Lie: Kant on Dealing With Evil"  
Annas, "Being Virtuous and Doing the Right Thing"

### **Week 15: (December 10) Wrap-up, final exam review**

End-of-term self-assessment of participation due on Wednesday

### **Final Exam**

Tuesday, December 16, 1:30-3:30, in our usual classroom

### Course Policies

**Late papers.** Weekly short writing, due at the beginning of class most Wednesdays, will not be accepted late for any reason. The rough draft of the long paper will not be accepted late for any reason. The participation self-evaluations, the final draft of the long paper, and the discussion guide, I will accept late at a penalty of ten points per day late.

**Attendance.** I will take attendance, and distribute points accordingly, on three days: 11/26, 12/3, and 12/5. Aside from those days, I will not take attendance. If you choose not to attend, you will miss important content.

**Electronic Devices.** Please do not use any electronics during lectures. No phones, no laptops, no tablets, no nothing. If you have a legitimate reason for bringing a device to class (if you have a sick kid at home who might need to call you, for example) please let me know before class starts.

**Small group discussions.** Small-group discussions are the core of this course. Disagreement is an inevitable and desirable consequence of any serious philosophical discussion. Disagreement can be fruitful, it can be fun, and it can also be frustrating. I expect you to be—always and without fail—respectful, thoughtful, and kind in discussion, even in the face of frustrating disagreements. This is not hard to do. If at any point you feel the temptation to sneer, or get angry or hurt, or raise your voice, take a moment to calm down. Then offer, as clearly and generously as you can, the reasons you disagree with the trend of the discussion.

**Writing support.** Most of your course grade is based on your writing. Don't hesitate to seek writing help either from me or from UMN's writing support programs.

- Student Writing Support: <http://writing.umn.edu/sws/> They offer free face-to-face tutoring for all University of Minnesota students at various locations, as well as online writing help.
- Non-native speakers in need of assistance or guidance with writing concerns can contact Sheryl Holt, the Coordinator for Non-Native Speakers ([holtx001@tc.umn.edu](mailto:holtx001@tc.umn.edu)). 337 Nolte Center (612.624.4524).

**Scholastic Dishonesty.** The Board of Regents describes scholastic dishonesty as follows: "Scholastic dishonesty means plagiarizing; cheating on assignments or examinations; engaging in unauthorized collaboration on academic work; taking, acquiring, or using test materials without faculty permission; submitting false or incomplete records of academic achievement; acting alone or in cooperation with another to falsify records or to obtain dishonestly grades, honors, awards, or professional endorsement;

or altering, forging, or misusing a University academic record; or fabricating or falsifying of data, research procedures, or data analysis."

The upshot, in the context of this course: don't plagiarize. Do not copy another author's words, or paraphrase another author's ideas without citing your sources. Citations should be thorough enough to allow your readers to locate the passage you are quoting or paraphrasing. There is no shame in understanding, appreciating, and incorporating another person's work, so long as you give credit where it's due. There is much shame in passing off someone else's work as your own.

If I discover you've plagiarized any part of any assignment, you'll get a zero for that assignment (or, in the case of weekly writing, a zero for your entire weekly writing grade) and I'll file a report with the University.