

**PHIL 1003W: Introduction to Ethics
Stoner/Spring 2012**

M/W/F 10:10-11:00, Blegen 250

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Office hour: Mondays, 2:30 – 3:30, and by appointment.

Teaching assistant

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Office hour: Mondays, 11:15 – 12:15, and by appointment.

Course Description

We'll spend the first half of the semester discussing the question of to whom or what we can have moral duties. Are moral considerations always and only considerations about how to treat other people? Or can we have moral duties to animals? Or the environment? Or the law? In the second half of the semester, our focus will shift to the question of moral theory: what feature, if any, do all moral obligations share that makes them moral obligations? We'll discuss the views of Mill and Hume.

Because the primary purpose of the course is not to convey information, but rather 1) to develop skill in understanding and critically evaluating moral arguments, and 2) to subject our own moral beliefs to critical examination, we will rely on small-group discussions and short, careful writing whenever possible. Expect the course to be about 1/2 lecture and 1/2 guided, small-group discussions. Expect to do some writing—short papers, long papers, or in-class essay exams—every week.

Required Texts

Plato, *Crito* (included in *The Trial and Death of Socrates*)
Mill, *Utilitarianism*
Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals*

Additional required readings are available on the course website:

<http://www.tc.umn.edu/~ston0235/1003/>

Course Requirements

Midterm exam:	100 points
Final exam:	100 points
Participation:	150 points

Weekly Short Writing:	150 points
Long Paper 1:	250 points
Long Paper 2:	250 points

Tests. Both tests are in-class written exams. I will hand out review questions ahead of the exams, and all questions will be drawn from the review sheet.

Participation. Small-group discussions are the centerpiece of the course. For these discussions to succeed, your attendance alone is insufficient. You must come prepared and contribute positively to lectures and sections.

Weekly Short Papers. Each week you will write a one-page response 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 Monday. Short papers will not be accepted late for any reason. Your total score for the weekly writing assignments will be the sum of your ten best scores out of thirteen available assignments. (That is, we'll drop your lowest three scores.)

Long Papers. In addition to the weekly writing you will write two longer papers that will require you to develop your own arguments in some detail.

Grade Table

At the end of the semester, I will total up all your points and assign letter grades based on this table. These thresholds indicate firm cut-off points. For example, a total score of 864 points will be marked B, while a total score of 865 will be marked 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

Introduction

01/18:	Lecture:	Course overview
01/20:	Lecture:	Reading philosophy, and discussing philosophy in small groups
	Discussion:	A fictional moral dilemma
	Reading:	Tellez, “Just Lather, That's All”

To what or whom do we have moral duties?

Animals?

- 01/23: Lecture: Duties to anything that can suffer?
Reading: Singer, "All Animals Are Equal"
- 01/25: Lecture: Or duties only to our own kind?
Reading: Cohen, "In Defense of Speciesism"
- 01/27: Discussion: Duties to animals

The environment?

- 01/30: Discussion: Leopold's Land Ethic
Reading: Excerpts from Leopold, *A Sand County Almanac*, including "A Land Ethic"
- 02/01: Lecture: Duties to the land
Reading: Goodpaster, "On Being Morally Considerable"
- 02/03: Discussion: Duties to the land
Reading: Cahen, "Against the Moral Considerability of Ecosystems"

The law?

- 02/06-10: Discussion: Plato's *Crito* and the duty to obey the law
Reading: Plato, *Crito*
- 02/13: Lecture: A duty to obey the law?
Reading: Smith, "Is there a *prima facie* obligation to obey the law?"
- 02/15: Discussion: A duty to disobey the law?
Reading: King, "Letter from a Birmingham Jail"
- 02/17: *Class Canceled*
- 02/20: *Class Canceled*
- 02/22: Lecture: How to write a philosophy paper
Prompts for paper 1 handed out in class
- 02/24: Discussion: A case of conflicting duties
Reading: Bierce, "A Horseman in the Sky"
Raz, "The Obligation to Obey the Law"

Interlude: Moral Theory

Change this up: 1. What's a theory? 2. Why Divine Command is bad. 3. Why relativism is bad.

- 02/27: Discussion: Some practice framing moral arguments
Reading: Questions submitted to Randy Cohen's *Ethicist* column
Midterm review sheets handed out in class
- 02/29: Lecture: What is a moral theory?
- 03/02: Lecture: Moral theories and the prospects for moral progress
- 03/05: Midterm Review
- 03/07: Midterm
Draft of paper 1 due in class

03/09: *Class Canceled*

03/12 - 16: Spring break

Mill's act-based utilitarianism

03/19-23: Discussion: Mill's *Utilitarianism*
Reading: Mill, *Utilitarianism*
Drafts of paper 1 handed back on 03/23

Well-being

03/26: Lecture: Mill's hedonism
Reading: Nozick, "The Experience Machine"
03/28: Lecture: Criticisms of hedonism and alternative accounts of well-being
Reading: Tiberius, "Well-Being: Psychological Research for Philosophers"
03/30: Discussion: Well-being
Reading: Crisp, "Hedonism Reconsidered," especially section 5

Consequentialism

04/02: Lecture: Utilitarian calculus
Reading: Bykvist, "Utilitarian Aggregation"
Final drafts of paper 1 due at the beginning of class
04/04: Discussion: Applying utilitarianism to cases
Reading: Selected questions to *The Ethicist*
04/06: In-class video
04/09: Lecture: Criticisms of consequentialism
Reading: Carritt, "Criticisms of Utilitarianism"
04/11: Discussion: Justice and rights
Reading: TBA
04/13: Lecture: Character evaluation vs. action evaluation
Video: The Simpsons, "Lisa Gets an 'A'"

Hume's character-based utilitarianism

04/16-20 Discussion: Hume's *Enquiry*
Reading: Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals*
Prompt for paper 2 handed out in class on 04/20

Natural and artificial virtues

04/23: Lecture: Virtue theories and catalogs of virtue
Reading: Hursthouse, "The Virtue Ethics Approach"
04/25: Lecture: Natural and artificial virtues
Reading: Mackie, "Natural Virtues"
Mackie, "Artificial Virtues" (sections 1-3)
04/27: Discussion: Natural and artificial virtues

The sensible knave's objection

- 04/30: Lecture: The sensible knave
 Reading: Gautier, “Artificial Virtues and the Sensible Knave”
 Baier, “Artificial Virtues and the Equally Sensible Non-Knaves”
- 05/02: Discussion: The sensible knave
- 05/04: Final exam review
 Paper 2 due at the beginning of class
- 05/10: Final exam, 1:30 – 3:30, in our normal classroom

Course Policies

Late papers. Weekly short writing, due at the beginning of class on Mondays, will not be accepted late for any reason. The rough draft of long paper 1 will not be accepted late for any reason. Paper 2, and the final draft of paper 1 will be accepted late at a penalty of 1/3 of a letter grade per day late. (For example, a C+ paper turned in on Friday when it was due Wednesday will be scored a C-.)

Attendance. I will not take attendance at our M/W/F full-class meetings. If you choose not to attend, you will miss important content. Neither I nor the TAs are interested in re-capping for you the days you missed. Please don't ask. If you choose to attend, behave in a way that respects the students sitting around you. Do not wear headphones, or text, or do crossword puzzles. If you'd rather experience the living death of sudoku, please stay home. Understand that if you make a habit of staying home, your participation grade will suffer.

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 from me, your TAs, or any of UMN's writing support programs.

- Student Writing Support: 306b Lind Hall (and other locations) (612.625.1893) <http://writing.umn.edu>. This is a service offering face-to-face tutoring for all University of Minnesota students by appointment in Lind Hall and walk-in at satellites around campus. Two ESL specialists and one IT specialist are on staff. There is also online writing help.
- The Student Writing Guide: A guidebook providing student writers with detailed, step-by-step guidance through the writing process and lists numerous writerly resources. Available on the web in pdf at: <http://writing.umn.edu/docs/sws/swgpdf.pdf> or at the Center for Writing, 207a Lind Hall, (612.626.7579), writing@umn.edu.
- 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). 337 Nolte Center (612.624.4524).

Scholastic Dishonesty. Scholastic dishonesty is described by the Board of Regents 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: do not 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 writer's views, 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.