

## SYLLABUS

PHIL 301/ WOMS 237C: Ethics  
Summer 2009  
Gonzaga-in-Florence  
Dr. Liu  
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### COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course provides an excellent opportunity for students to study both classic ethical theories and contemporary moral problems. We will critically examine four influential ethical theories (virtue theory, contractarianism, deontology, and utilitarianism) and three moral issues (capital punishment, animal rights and euthanasia). By studying selections from classic texts, students will understand several of the most important ethical theories in the Western philosophical tradition. Through reading selections about contemporary moral disputes, students will familiarize themselves with different positions on the controversial issues and learn how to apply ethical theories to those issues. The format of this course is a combination of lecture and discussion, which will make some difficult reading materials understandable and at the same time allow students to articulate their thoughts and exchange their ideas. This course aims at helping students understand the nature of morality, learn the basic skills of moral reasoning and make thoughtful judgments on moral issues.

### REQUIREMENTS

Reading, contemplating and articulating are effective ways of learning philosophy and therefore are the principal requirements for the course.

1. Homework: It is important that you be prepared for each class; that is, you **should have read the material assigned for the day prior to the class meeting and should be ready to contribute to the discussion**. In order to help you do so, in each class you should have either (1) two critical questions about the reading for that day, or (2) a point of interest or disagreement. Your questions should not be "one-liners". You should elaborate on them. Similarly, you should explain why you find a certain point interesting, novel, neat, problematic, unsound, and the like. **To get credit, your preparation must be evidently engaged in the assigned reading for that day and convey your reflection on the philosophical issues discussed in the text**. In order to get a "B grade" and above for this course, it is necessary to turn in 15 of your preparations. You should turn in your preparation **for that day, on which the reading is discussed in class**. For example, you can turn in your preparation for Plato's Crito next time.
2. **To be successful in this course, you must spend adequate time studying the course material. It is strongly recommended that students review the material after the class discussion.**
3. Participation and attendance: Students should actively participate in class discussions. Good class participation can raise your grade, and poor attendance can lower your grade. **The university's attendance policy will be enforced.**
4. Tests: Students will be required to take three tests. The format of the tests includes multiple choice and essay questions.

### GRADING

There is no extra credit work in this course (besides consistently good participation). Your final grade in this course will be determined as follows:

The first test = 35%	90 - 100 = A (90-94 = A-)
The second test =40%	80 - 89 = B (80-82 = B- / 87-89 = B+)

The final test = 10%	70 - 79 = C (70-72 = C- / 77-79 = C+)
Homework = 15%	60 - 69 = D (67-69 = D+)
Total =100%	0 - 59 = F

**Textbook: Steven Cahn & Peter Markie: *Ethics*, the third edition**

**Internet sources:**

Plato's *Crito* at <http://classics.mit.edu/Plato/crito.html>

Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* at <http://classics.mit.edu/Aristotle/nicomachaen.html>

Hobbes' *Leviathan* at <http://oregonstate.edu/instruct/phl302/texts/hobbes/leviathan-contents.html>

Bentham's *An Introduction to the Principles of Moral and Legislation* at

<http://www.utilitarianism.com/jeremy-bentham/index.html>

Kant's *Fundamental Principle of Metaphysic of Morals* at

<http://ebooks.adelaide.edu.au/k/kant/immanuel/k16prm/>

## TOPICS AND TENTATIVE READING ASSIGNMENT

5/18 What will this course be like? Explanation of the syllabus and introduction to Ethics

### Virtue Ethics

5/19 Plato, *Crito* pp.33-37 (Use the library or the internet to find out biographical information about Socrates and Plato.) If you have not bought the textbook, you can find a translation of *Crito* (different from the one in the textbook) at <http://classics.mit.edu/Plato/crito.html>.

5/20 Continue Plato, *Crito*, pp.37-42 and *Phaedo*

5/21 Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book I

(The selection in our textbook is abridged. If you want to read the unabridged chapters of Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*, you can find the book at <http://classics.mit.edu/Aristotle/nicomachaen.html>)

5/25 Continue

5/26 Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book II

5/27 Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book X

### Contractarian Ethics

5/28 Hobbes *Leviathan*, Chapter XIII

6/1 Hobbes *Leviathan*, Chapters XIV & XV (The selection of these two chapters in our textbook is abridged. Please read the two unabridged chapters of Hobbes' *Leviathan* at <http://oregonstate.edu/instruct/phl302/texts/hobbes/leviathan-contents.html>)

6/2 No class

6/3 Q&A and First Test                      Reminder: Have you turned in at least six preparations yet?

### Utilitarian Ethics

6/4 Bentham, *An Introduction to the Principles of Moral and Legislation*, Chapters I&II

6/8 Bentham, *An Introduction to the Principles of Moral and Legislation*, Chapters III&IV

### Deontological Ethic

6/9 Kant, *Fundamental Principle of Metaphysic of Morals*, Preface pp.270-273

6/10 Kant, *Fundamental Principle of Metaphysic of Morals*, Section I

6/11 Kant, *Fundamental Principle of Metaphysic of Morals*, Section II

6/15 A&Q Second Test      Reminder: Have you turned in at least 12 preparations yet?

**Animal Rights**

6/16 Tom Regan, *The Case for Animal Rights*

6/17 Carl Cohen, *The Case for Animal Rights in Biomedical Research*

**Capital Punishment**

6/18 Van den Haag, *In Defense of the Death Penalty*

6/22 Stephen Nathanson, an Eye for an Eye

**Euthanasia**

6/23 James Rachels, Active and Passive Euthanasia

6/25 Philippa Foot: Killing and Letting Die

6/24 No class

6/26 Final Examination