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# Philosophy 202: Introduction to Philosophy

University of Michigan, Winter Semester, 2010

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**Office hours** Wednesday, 4:00–6:00pm (1156 Angell), or by appointment

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## 1 Required Texts

- P. Singer (ed.), *A Companion to Ethics* (1993, Wiley-Blackwell). [[AMAZON](#)]
- P. Singer (ed.), *Ethics* (1994, Oxford Readers Series). [[AMAZON](#)]

Together, these books will run you \$65 from Amazon, if purchased new. If purchased used, they will run you considerably less.

## 2 Course Content and Goals

This course is a topical introduction to contemporary **ANALYTIC PHILOSOPHY**. In this class, we'll take a narrower focus than is ordinarily taken in introductory philosophy courses. Specifically, our focus will be on **contemporary philosophical ethics** and **moral philosophy**.

This means that we'll be interested in exploring questions like: what justifies or

explains morality? Why be moral? Are moral conventions like political conventions: arrangements developed and sustained for some social purpose? What is the nature of rights? Is it ever right to sacrifice the rights of one to promote the interests of the many? What is the nature of moral truth? Does it make sense to say that moral claims (e.g., *murder is wrong*) can be right or wrong? Is moral truth objective, or is it relative to some standard? How does morality demand that we treat non-human creatures (e.g., fetuses and animals)? What is the connection between morality and evolutionary biology?

My goal, broadly speaking, in this course is to introduce you to a general method for thinking and writing carefully about a wide range of philosophical questions. Ideally, the skill set you learn in this course will include:

- The ability to *read philosophical literature* carefully and identify (i) an author's point of view and (ii) her arguments in favor of that point of view.
- The ability to *evaluate philosophical arguments* critically, to ascertain whether an author's argument (i) supports her point of view and (ii) is itself plausible.
- The ability to *construct plausible arguments* for philosophical points of view.

### 3 Course Structure

For most scheduled meetings, I'll assign a chunk of reading. Your job, prior to the lecture, is to do the reading, to do it *carefully*, and to come to lecture ready to discuss the reading with the rest of the class. The bulk of class time will be devoted to student-led discussion.

Some meetings will require that the student complete a short writing assignment. See below for further information.

### 4 Grading

There are 400 possible points. The breakdown is as follows.

- Short writing assignments ( $4 \times 25 = 100$  points)
- Midterm paper (3,000 words, 120 points)
- Comprehensive final exam (120 points)
- Participation (60 points)

Attending each class and contributing something meaningful to each discussion will ensure that you receive a perfect attendance and participation grade.

### 5 Attendance policy

Note carefully: *you are allowed ONE (and only one) unexcused absence, no questions asked. Further unexcused absences will result in a deduction of 1% (four points) from your total grade for the course.* Note that this makes attendance very important to your grade: you must attend lecture to earn participation points, and you must attend lecture in order to avoid these deductions. (Note that an absence may be excused in the case of documented personal hardship or necessity.)

## 6 Short Writing Assignments

You're expected to complete FOUR short writing assignments (SWAs) over the course of the semester. Exactly TWO of these must be completed *after the midterm paper due date*. Note that there are SEVEN due dates for SWAs listed on the schedule. So, you are free to skip THREE (and only two) SWAs without incurring a penalty.

By short, I mean roughly 600-700 words in length (one page, single-spaced).

Your job in the SWAs will be two-fold: (i) to reconstruct, paying close attention to detail, the argument an author is making in a particular passage, and (ii) to offer a brief critical assessment of the argument. I will say more about my expectations for these exercises in class.

## 7 Midterm Paper

The midterm paper will be an in-depth, critical exploration of a *topic of my choosing*. Good papers will state a philosophical thesis, carefully lay out the various arguments in favor of it, and critically evaluate those arguments, via the construction of counter-arguments. Excellent papers will develop and present plausible arguments for an original philosophical position, or, alternatively, develop plausible, original arguments for one of the philosophical positions we discuss in class. I will say more about my expectations for the midterm paper (and distribute a list of possible topics) at a later date in the term.

## 8 Final Exam

The final exam will be comprehensive. The format of the final exam will be a mixture of short answer and essay. You will need to bring a blue book.

The final exam must be taken on the date and time specified in the Registrar's Winter 2010 Final Exam Schedule (<http://www.ro.umich.edu/exams/winter.php>). *There will be absolutely no exceptions.*

## 9 Plagiarism

Is prohibited! See <http://www.lib.umich.edu/handouts/plagiar.pdf> for an explanation of what plagiarism is. All suspected cases of plagiarism will be reported to the Dean. Confirmed cases of plagiarism may result in a failing grade for the course (minimally, in a failing grade for the assignment) and in further academic sanctions, such as expulsion.

## 10 Late Work

Written work will be collected at the beginning of lecture. Note that an assignment is "late" if it is turned in *any time subsequent to the collection at the beginning of lecture*.

Late SWAs will only be accepted in cases of documented personal hardship.

Midterm papers submitted between 0 and 24 hours after initial collection will be

docked one full grade (12 points); papers submitted between 24 and 48 hours after initial collection will be docked two full grades (24 points); and so on...

## 11 Schedule

Some notes about this schedule.

- The 1993 Singer volume is abbreviated “1993,” the 1994 volume “1994.”
- Dates marked with a  $\oplus$  are dates on which a SWA is due.
- It is ambitious (and therefore subject to revision). We may get behind and decide to spend two days on a single topic, having only budgeted one. We will handle complications and revisions of the schedule as they arise.

**Thursday, January 7.** Introduction.

**Tuesday, January 12.** Reading/writing philosophy, intro to grounding of ethics.

- Pryor, “Guidelines on Reading Philosophy” (<http://www.jimpryor.net/teaching/guidelines/reading.html>)
- Pryor, “Guidelines on Writing a Philosophy Paper” (<http://www.jimpryor.net/teaching/guidelines/writing.html>)
- Midgley, “The Origin of Ethics” (1993, #1)

**Thursday, January 14.** The State of Nature.

GROUNDING  
ETHICS

- Hobbes, “Of the Natural Condition of Mankind...” (1994, #4)

$\oplus$  **Tuesday, January 19.** The State of Nature (ctd.).

- Rousseau, “The Natural State of Man” (1994, #5)
- Rousseau, *The Social Contract* (Book I, Ch. 6-9) (<http://www.constitution.org/jjr/socon.htm>)

**Thursday, January 21.** Kantian and Hobbesian contractarianism.

- Kymlicka, “The Social Contract Tradition” (1993, #15)

**Tuesday, January 26.** Modern contractarianism.

- Rawls, “The Main Idea of the Theory of Justice” (1994, #87)
- Gauthier, “Why Contractarianism?” (1994, #88)

$\oplus$  **Thursday, January 28.** Contractarianism: criticism.

- Midgley, “Duties Concerning Islands” (1994, #89)

**Tuesday, February 2.** The Role of Autonomy.

- Rawls, *Kantian Constructivism in Moral Theory* (will be provided on CTools)

**Thursday, February 4.** Contractarianism: wrap-up.

**Tuesday, February 9.** Consequentialism vs. non-consequentialism.

NORMATIVE  
ETHICS

- Pettit, “Consequentialism” (1993, #19)

**Thursday, February 11.** Alienation, agent-relativity, the separateness of persons.

- Rawls, “The Separateness of Persons” (1994, #84)
- Williams, “Jim and the Indians” (1994, #85)

⊕ **Tuesday, February 16** *Prima facie* duties.

- Ross, “The Personal Character of Duty” (1994, #83)
- Dancy, “An Ethic of Prima Facie Duties” (1993, #18)

**Thursday, February 18.** Rights and side-constraints.

- Almond, “Rights” (1993, #22)
- Nozick, “The Rationality of Side Constraints” (1994, #68)

**Tuesday, February 23.** The categorical imperative.

- O’Neill, “Kantian Ethics” (1993, #14)
- Kant, “The Categorical Imperative” (1994, #73)

**Thursday, February 25.** Kantianism.

THE ROLE  
OF REASON

- Re-read: O’Neill, “Kantian Ethics”
- Kant, “Pure Practical Reason and the Moral Law” (1994, #34)
- Hegel, “Adding Substance to Kant’s Empty Formalism” (1994, #35)

**Tuesday, March 2; Thursday, March 4.** No class (Spring vacation)

⊕ **Tuesday, March 9.** Humeanism.

- Hume, “Reason and Passion” (1994, #33)

**Thursday, March 11.** Morality’s objectivity.

- Nagel, “The Objective Basis of Morality” (1994, #41)

**Friday, March 12.** Term paper due.

**Tuesday, March 16.** Anti-realism.

MORAL  
TRUTH

- Wittgenstein, “A Lecture on Ethics” (1994, #38)
- Ayer, “Ethics for Logical Positivists” (1994, #39)

**Thursday, March 18.** Non-cognitivism.

- Hare, “Universal Prescriptivism” (1993, #40)

**Tuesday, March 23.** The argument from queerness.

- Mackie, “The Argument from Queerness” (1994, #42)

⊕ **Thursday, March 25.** The argument from motivational internalism; Smith’s realism.

- Smith, “Realism” (1993, #35)

**Tuesday, March 30.** Naturalism and Non-Naturalism.

- Pigden, “Naturalism” (1993, #37)

**Thursday, April 1.** Intuitionism.

- Dancy, “Intuitionism” (1993, #36)

⊕ **Tuesday, April 6.** The importance of evolution.

- McGinn, “Evolution and the Basis of Morality” (1994, #43)
- Ruse, “The Significance of Evolution” (1993, #44)

**Thursday, April 8.** Relativism.

- Gowans, “Moral Relativism” (Sections 2, 5, 6, 7 only)  
(<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/moral-relativism/>)
- Wong, “Relativism” (1993, #39)

**Tuesday, April 13.** Ethics of Abortion.

- Warren, “Abortion” (1993, #26)

APPLICATION

⊕ **Thursday, April 15.** Animal Ethics.

- Singer, “All Animals Are Equal”  
(<http://www.animal-rights-library.com/texts-m/singer02.pdf>)
- Singer, “Animal Liberation at 30”  
(<http://www.nybooks.com/articles/16276>)

**Tuesday, April 20.** Radical Critique.

- Wood, “Marx Against Morality” (1993, #45)
- Nietzsche, “The Origins of Herd Morality” (1994, #10)
- Freud, “The Cultural Superego” (1994, #11)