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# Philosophy 202: Introduction to Philosophy

University of Michigan, Fall Semester, 2009

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**Instructor** Nate Charlow

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**Office hours** T/TH 3:00-4:00, or by appointment

## 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 Goals

This course is a topical introduction to contemporary [ANALYTIC PHILOSOPHY](#), focusing on issues in ethics. My goal, broadly speaking, 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 ( $5 \times 20 = 100$  points)
- Midterm paper (3,000-4,000 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.)

Swine flu exception: to prevent the spread of swine flu, if you have flu symptoms, **you shouldn't come to class**. In fact, you shouldn't come to class for **at least one week**. Flu absences are **automatically excused**, but note that if you take a flu absence, I expect you to be gone for at least one week.

## 6 Short Writing Assignments

You will be expected to complete FIVE short writing assignments (SWAs) over the course of the semester. THREE (and no more than three) of these must be completed *after the midterm paper due date*. Note that there are SEVEN due dates for SWAs listed on the schedule. This means that you are free to skip TWO (and only two) SWAs without incurring a penalty.<sup>1</sup>

By short, I mean roughly 600-700 words in length (two pages, double-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)

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<sup>1</sup>If this is in any way confusing, please contact me, and I will clarify it for you.

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 view clearly, carefully lay out the various arguments in favor of that view, 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 Fall 2009 Final Exam Schedule (<http://www.umich.edu/~regoff/exams/fall.html>). *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. Any confirmed case of plagiarism will result, minimally, in a failing grade for the course and, potentially, 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 writing assignments will not be accepted, except in cases of documented, severe 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.

**Tuesday, September 8.** Introduction. Reading and writing philosophy.

- 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>)

**Thursday, September 10.** Grounding Ethics.

- Midgley, “The Origin of Ethics” (1993, #1)
- Hobbes, “Of the Natural Condition of Mankind...” (1994, #4)
- Locke, “Our Rights in the State of Nature” (1994, #65)
- Rousseau, “The Natural State of Man” (1994, #5)

$\oplus$  **Tuesday, September 15.** Ethical Origins.

- Rousseau, *The Social Contract* (Book I, Ch. 6-9)  
(<http://www.constitution.org/jjr/socon.htm>)

GROUNDING  
ETHICS

**Thursday, September 17.** Contractarian Theories.

- Kymlicka, “The Social Contract Tradition” (1993, #15)
- Rawls, “The Main Idea of the Theory of Justice” (1994, #87)

**Tuesday, September 22.** Contractarian Theories (ctd.).

- Gauthier, “Why Contractarianism?” (1994, #88)

**Thursday, September 24.** Contractarian Theories (wrap-up).

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

**Tuesday, September 29.** Kantian Constructivism.

- Korsgaard, *The Sources of Normativity* (selections, will be provided on CTools)

⊕ **Thursday, October 1.** Kantian Theories.

- O’Neill, “Kantian Ethics” (1993, #14)
- Kant, “Pure Practical Reason and the Moral Law” (1994, #34)
- Kant, “The Categorical Imperative” (1994, #73)
- Hegel, “Adding Substance to Kant’s Empty Formalism” (1994, #35)

NORMATIVE  
ETHICS

**Tuesday, October 6.** Consequentialism and Utilitarianism.

- Pettit, “Consequentialism” (1993, #19)
- Singer, “The Theory” (1994, article III.a)
- Mill, “Higher and Lower Pleasures” (1994, #54)

**Thursday, October 8.** Objections to Consequentialism.

- Dostoevsky, “Ivan’s Challenge” (1994, #82)
- Ross, “The Personal Character of Duty” (1994, #83)
- Rawls, “The Separateness of Persons” (1994, #84)
- Williams, “Jim and the Indians” (1994, #85)

**Tuesday, October 13.** Deontological Theories.

- Davis, “Contemporary Deontology” (1993, #17)
- Dancy, “An Ethic of Prima Facie Duties” (1993, #18)

⊕ **Thursday, October 15.** Theories of Rights.

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

**Tuesday, October 20.** No class (Fall Break).

**Thursday, October 22.**

- **PAPER DUE.** No reading for today.

**Tuesday, October 27.** Realism vs. Anti-Realism about Ethical Truth.

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

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⊕ **Thursday, October 29.** Realism vs. Anti-Realism about Ethical Truth (ctd.).

- Smith, “Realism” (1993, #35)
- Mackie, “The Argument from Queerness” (1994, #42)

**Tuesday, November 3.** Naturalism and Non-Naturalism.

- Ridge, “Moral Non-Naturalism” (Sections 1-3 only)  
(<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/moral-non-naturalism/>)

**Thursday, November 5.** Naturalism and Non-Naturalism (ctd.).

- Dancy, “Intuitionism” (1993, #36)
- Pigden, “Naturalism” (1993, #37)

**Tuesday, November 10.** Relativism.

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

⊕ **Thursday, November 12.** Objectivism.

- Re-read: Kant, “Pure Practical Reason and the Moral Law” (1994, #34)
- Nagel, “The Objective Basis of Morality” (1994, #41)

THEORIES  
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**Tuesday, November 17.** Subjectivism.

- Rachels, “Subjectivism” (1993, #38)

⊕ **Thursday, November 19.** Sentimentalism.

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

**Tuesday, November 24.** Non-Cognitivism.

- Hare, “Universal Prescriptivism” (1993, #40)
- Re-read: Ayer, “Ethics for Logical Positivists” (1994, #39)

**Thursday, November 26.** No class (Thanksgiving Break).

**Tuesday, December 1.** Ethics of Abortion.

- Warren, “Abortion” (1993, #26)

APPLIED  
ETHICS

⊕ **Thursday, December 3.** 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, December 8.** Evolution.

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

AGAINST  
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**Thursday, December 10.** Radical Critique.

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