

PHIL 3314: Ethical Theory

Fall 2012 MW 2:30-3:45pm GYM 126

Professor

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Office Hours: MW 4:00-5:30pm or by appointment (and feel free to drop in if the door is open!)

General Remarks

Please note that while this course is open to all students, it is an upper-division course and is therefore designed primarily for those who have some background in philosophy and/or theoretical ethics. Students with no such background are strongly encouraged to take PHIL 1304: Morality and Justice or PHIL 2304: Global Ethics before taking this course.

This course is designed so as to promote class discussion. While I will do some lecturing, my primary intention is for us to discuss—as a group—the arguments presented in the readings, and for you to offer arguments of your own. Some of the best discussion in philosophy is generated by people defending controversial views—even ones that they do not personally hold. So, not only should you feel comfortable defending viewpoints that may not be popular, but I encourage all of you to consider how you might defend viewpoints that are not your own. Along these lines, you should always be mindful of the fact that the positions your classmates take do not necessarily represent what they actually believe.

Course Materials

Shelly Kagan, *Normative Ethics*

Russ Shafer-Landau, *Whatever Happened to Good and Evil?*

Miscellaneous readings will be available on Scholar.

Course Schedule

You can track all readings and assignments on the Course Calendar on Scholar (also available through my Filebox site). Readings will be assigned no less than one week in advance.

Assessment

Class Participation and Weekly Prompts (30%)

While there is no official attendance policy, you will receive a class participation grade based on your general level of involvement in class discussion. In addition, each Monday or Wednesday I will distribute a prompt asking you to respond to something in the reading for the following week. Responses are due on the day for which the reading in question is assigned (typically one week after the prompt is distributed). Responses should be about **one (1) typed, double-spaced page**.

Midterm Exam (20%)

There will be an in-class exam (date TBA) at midterm covering all of the material from the first half of the course.

Paper (20%)

You will be asked to write a short (**5-6 typed, double-spaced pages**) paper on a topic of your choosing. Example topics and more information will be available later in the semester. The paper will mostly likely be due the week after Thanksgiving break (specific date/time TBA).

Final Exam (30%)

There will be a Final Exam covering material from the entire semester (with an emphasis on material covered after the Midterm Exam).

Special Circumstances

If you need adaptations or accommodations because of a disability (learning disability, attention deficit disorder, psychological, physical, etc.), if you have emergency medical information to share with me, or if you need special arrangements in case the building must be evacuated, please make an appointment with me as soon as possible.

Academic Integrity

It is my sincere hope that this section of the syllabus is merely a formality. Please do not plagiarize or cheat. In all but the most extremely exceptional cases, students found presenting others' work as their own will fail this course. For specifics on the VT Honor Code, please visit <http://www.honorsystem.vt.edu/>.