**PHIL102: Contemporary Moral Problems**

**SUM2014, M-F12:00-1:00, SAV 264**

**Instructor: Benjamin Hole**

Office Hours: *M-F1-1:15*

Email: bvhole@uw.edu

**COURSE DESCRIPTION**

In this course, we connect various contemporary issues with ethical theory, in order to better understand the nature of moral disputes. While there are many such issues, we concentrate on topics concerning sexual ethics, international ethics, and social/political ethics. Philosophers approach specific moral issues by making use of theories and applying them to the real world. So, we begin the course with an introduction to ethical theory and the philosophical study of contemporary moral issues. Next, we read articles to investigate how ethical theory is applied to support views on these issues. The aim is to help you to understand the arguments put forward by defenders of these views and, by examining them, to refine your own understanding. Class sessions consist primarily of lectures and discussion activities. This is a writing intensive course. In addition to a final examination and paper, there are bi-weekly writing assignments and daily quizzes.

**COURSE OBJECTIVES**

There are two main objectives: (1) to familiarize you with the ethical theory and controversies surrounding certain contemporary moral issues, thus helping you develop reasoned views on these (and related) issues, and (2) to help you sharpen your ability to think clearly and critically about such issues. In order to meet these course objectives, you must learn certain philosophical skills in the following areas (see the Learning Goals document for further description of these skills):

* *Interpretation and Analysis*: be able to analyze, interpret, and understand philosophical texts and discourse.
* *Argumentation*: be able to effectively identify, evaluate, and formulate arguments.
* *Philosophical Knowledge and Methodology*: be able to demonstrate a high degree of fluency with the major traditions, figures, concepts, and methods of philosophy.
* *Communication*: be able to develop, organize, and express ideas in a precise, clear, effective, and systematic manner in writing and discussion.

**COURSE MATERIALS**

1. Required: *Disputed Moral Issues: A Reader*, edited by Mark Timmons[[1]](#footnote-1)
2. Required: *Turning Technologies Clicker*

* There are also required readings available electronically on the course website.
* The textbook is available for temporary check-out on course-reserves at Odegaard Library.
* *Turning Technologies Clicker* will be used daily for discussion and quizzes.

**HOW TO SATISFY THE COURSE OBJECTIVES**

“When students know the goals, are given opportunities to practice and get feedback, and are able to show their level of understanding— learning is supported.” (Ambrose et. al., *How Learning Works: Seven Research-Based Principles for Smart Teaching*: Jossey-Bass, 2010, page 85)

There are several basic skills involved in philosophy, including readingcritically, writing argumentatively, listening carefully, and critically engaging with others. In order to do well on the final paper and exam, you must both learn the course content and become proficient in these skills. You will need to become proficient at reconstructing an argument from the text, for example, and objecting to specific premises by developing your own counterarguments. The course is structured such that there are bi-weekly writing assignments designed for you to practice these skills and receive feedback while thinking critically about the course materials. There are also low-stakes opportunities to practice and receive feedback on a daily basis, through participation activities and quizzes. See the assessment summary (below) for a fuller description.

**Think** [**metacognitively**](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mVE21QhY-lI) **about your learning (and about your grade).** Metacognition is the process of reflecting on and adjusting your own thinking. These thought processes help monitor and control your learning when you, for example: assess the task at hand, assess your own skills and knowledge, plan an approach to a task, apply strategies and monitor progress, reflect on whether approach is working, and/or make adjustments to your approach. Throughout the quarter, [self-regulate your own learning](http://www.expertlearners.com/srl.php) by asking yourself what you did well on and what you did not do well on? Why? What could you do differently in the future? Keep the final paper and exam in mind and continually think about ways to do well on these high-stakes assignments. Practice the skills throughout the quarter and adapt to whatever feedback I give you. Assess *yourself* and adapt; for example, assess your writing assignments before you turn them in. When you receive feedback from me, ask yourself what types of errors did you make? What will you do differently next time?Also, I am always available to offer more feedback and discuss strategies for doing well in the class, during office hours.

If you do not attend class regularly you will not be able to participate and develop some of the requisite skills for success, especially listening and discussing. Lack of participation may affect your final grade in a variety of ways. If you miss class you will have less time to prepare your assignments. You will be less prepared to write your papers and take the quizzes. You may well miss the quizzes and so receive a lower grade. It is in your interest both in terms of your grade and your education to participate regularly in class. You are the primary person responsible for your education. Full preparation includes not only keeping up with the reading, but also taking notes on the reading, formulating questions about the reading and generally having spent time thinking about the topic for the day in terms of its application to questions that you would like me and your classmates to discuss. It also includes independent research, from looking up unfamiliar terms in a philosophical encyclopedia to looking up particular positions or concepts.

**Assessment Summary**

***Participation*  10%**

**Extra Credit**

*Final Exam Study Guide +4%*

*Total 104%*

***Daily Quizzes*  10%**

***Writing Assignments* 25%**

***Final Exam*  20%**

***Final Paper*  35%**

***Total* 100%**

**ASSSESSMENT CATEGORIES**

***Participation*** *(10%):* All students are expected to play an active role in class discussion. Such participation presupposes regular attendance. Credit will be given for active engagement with the material, and for helpful interactions with others. We aim to establish an environment where mutual respect is accompanied by serious reflective engagement with the material. There is a [**grading rubric**](http://www46.homepage.villanova.edu/john.immerwahr/TP101/lects/participation%20matrix0001.pdf) for your participation grade, posted on the course website, which clarifies expectations and defines the elements of quality class participation. Participation will be graded holistically at the end of the quarter. Active involvement in your learning increases what you remember, how well it is assimilated, and how you apply what you have learned in new contexts. You must, for example, articulate your thoughts about the topics discussed in class and submit them for critical examination by your peers. In listening to peers, you hear many different ways of interpreting and applying class material and therefore are better able to integrate and apply ideas to many examples.

***Daily Quizzes*** *(10%)* will take place via *Turning Technologies Clickers*. These quizzes will be given during most class sessions throughout the quarter.Each student’s lowest five quiz grades will be dropped. This means that students can miss up tofive quizzes without negatively impacting their overall grade. This policy is designed to allowfor unexpected technical problems (i.e., malfunctioning clicker) and absences (i.e., due to illness). Because of this, students will not be allowed to takemake-up quizzes. The point of the daily quizzes is to serve as low-stakes opportunities for assessment and to make sure that you are following the course material.

***Writing Assignments*** *(25%):* There will be a short (usually 1-3pgs) writing assignment due on Tuesday every other week, submitted online, except for the first assignment, which will be due on Friday of the first week (6/27). All writing assignments must be single or double spaced and typed in 12pt font. There will be no late/makeup assignments, but your lowest score will be dropped. This allows for you to miss one assignment and still earn the full amount of credit. You are required to submit an electronic copy before class (**by 12pm**). The point of the writing assignments is to serve as mid-stakes opportunities for assessment and to provide you with practice of the philosophical skills you will need to master for the final paper: *Interpretation and Analysis*, *Argumentation*, *Philosophical Knowledge and Methodology*, and *Communication*.

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| **Assignment** | **Due** |
| ***WA 1*** | ***6/27*** |
| ***WA 2*** | [***PHIL 102 A: Contemporary Moral Problems***](https://canvas.uw.edu/courses/884483)  **7/8** |
| ***WA 3*** | ***7/22*** |
| ***WA 4*** | [***PHIL 102 A: Contemporary Moral Problems***](https://canvas.uw.edu/courses/884483)  ***8/5*** |
| ***WA 5*** | ***8/19*** |

***Final Exam*** *(20%):* The final exam will be conducted on the last day of class and it will cover all of the course material. This includes lectures, handouts, discussions, and assigned readings. The point of the exam is for you to demonstrate that you are familiar with a broad range of concepts, skills, and views in ethical theory. Review for the final exam throughout the quarter by reviewing the weekly reading and study guides.

* *Final Exam Study Guide “Extra Credit” (4%)*: You may earn up to 4% “extra credit” for submitting a document answering the Reading and Study Guide review questions. You will be graded on completion and good faith effort.

***Final Paper*** *(35%):* You are required to submit an electronic copy before class, **due 8/21, 12pm**. The point of the paper is for you to demonstrate that you are familiar with a major view in ethical theory and are able to critically evaluate that view with philosophical rigor. Your critical evaluation is an opportunity for you to demonstrate your mastery of the philosophical skills you have practiced throughout the quarter. Therefore, the paper will be assessed on the basis of *Interpretation and Analysis*, *Argumentation*, *Philosophical Knowledge and Methodology*, and *Communication*.

***Late Paper Policy****:*  The paper is to be handed in on the date and time specified. If you see that you cannot make any given deadline, contact me immediately. Normally, extensions can be granted only if the reason for the delay is both serious and unpredictable (e.g., serious illness). In these cases, documented evidence (e.g., a doctor’s note) is required. Without extensions, late papers will be penalized by three tenths of a point (e.g., from 3.8 to 3.5) per day or part thereof (including weekends and holidays).

**GENERAL COURSE POLICIES**

1. In order to pass this course, **you must pass at least 4 of the 5 grading categories**.
2. **Participation is** **mandatory.** You have a duty to your fellow students to be here to discuss, critique, and improve their ideas.
3. The issues we discuss are ones about which reasonable people disagree, often passionately. Philosophers are devoted to the idea that this disagreement can be the subject of reasoned, respectful, and mutually beneficial discussion. The discussion only works, though, when we are willing and able to share our beliefs and arguments –even when they’re unpopular. So, the most important rule: **respect others**. In practice, this means two things:

*a. Listen respectfully to the arguments of the other side.*

*b. If someone in class is making it difficult for you to speak –whether it’s a fellow student or myself– come and talk with me, and we’ll do something about it.*

1. You have an obligation to learn about **what counts as plagiarism** and avoid it. Most plagiarism isn’t deliberate, but the result ofmisunderstanding what counts as acceptable academic practice. See the attached departmental policies.
2. Please make every effort to **arrive in class on time**. Please do not leave the class before the period is over. Please **wait for the class to end before you pack your bag to leave**. I will make every effort to end at the moment the period ends. If you have to arrive late or leave early for any special circumstances, please let me know beforehand.
3. You are required to **turn your cell phones and other electronic devices** **off** during the class period. If a cell phone goes off in class or if you are found to be texting or using an electronic device for other purposes in class, you can either give it to me for the duration of the class, or you will be asked to leave the class immediately.
4. **The use of a laptop in class is also discouraged**, except in the case where it accommodates a disability (see below). If you use a laptop and you are found to be engaging in an activity unrelated to the class, you will be asked to either hand the laptop to the instructor for the duration of the class or you will be asked to leave the class immediately. However, if you wish to use a laptop in class, please sit towards the front of the class.
5. In order to receive **writing credit**, you must pass the following two grading categories: the writing assignments and the final paper.

**MISCELLANEOUS ADVICE**

1. **Use me as a resource.** Please feel free to stop by my office early in the quarter, and stop by often. I am here not only to answer questions about lectures, our discussions, and the readings, but also to engage in conversation about philosophy in general.
2. **Attend.** The classroom is much more than a place to review the information presented in the readings. It is a place to learn additional, new concepts (not in the readings), to participate in projects, to see useful images, and to have engaging discussions. The information presented in class is important, and it is difficult to “re-live” it through a peer’s notebook. This is a discussion based class. With that said, if you have to miss class, be sure to ask someone to take detailed notes.
3. **Do the assigned reading multiple times –at least two or three.** Before class look at it, and again after. The readings are short, but rich. If possible, do the readings two or three times before class. Try to read slowly and carefully – including the editors’ notes. Knowing the material will familiarize you with the concepts we discuss in class. It is helpful to take brief notes on the readings or (at the very least) to underline/highlight important concepts. This will provide you with the skills to understand better the conceptual aspects of the material. Reviewing the readings will reinforce what you have learned in class.
4. **Make a calendar** of the whole quarter with all of your courses and place it in a prominent place in your life (e.g. above your desk or on your MyUW page). This will help you keep track of due dates to spot potential conflicts. It is so important to be organized and manage your time wisely.
5. **Study in a quiet and comfortable place.** You will be more likely to learn and retain if you are in a less stressful environment - and stress includes being overwhelmed by stimuli. This may not be in your room where there are many distractions.
6. A word to the wise: **Find a study partner or group to** discuss things with outside of class. The sooner you get together with your peers to talk about the class, the better. That way you can look over your notes right away, when they are still fresh. You are likely to learn a lot from one another and find places where you need clarification or discussion. You are strongly encouraged to discuss the class material, your ideas, your puzzles and difficulties with each other. *(Note, however, that if you join a study group, you still need to take responsibility for doing your own work.)*

**Course Schedule**

* ***See separate document for the reading and assignment schedule, posted on course website.***
* **You are responsible for every reading *before* the week we’re scheduled to discuss the reading.**

***\*\* I reserve the right to revise the syllabus.\*\****

**UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON**

**DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY**

**INFORMATION FOR STUDENTS[[2]](#footnote-2)\***

# COURSES, GRADING, ACADEMIC CONDUCT

# Plagiarism

Plagiarism is defined as the use of creations, ideas or words of publicly available work without formally acknowledging the author or source through appropriate use of quotation marks, references, and the like. Plagiarizing is presenting someone else’s work as one’s own original work or thought. This constitutes plagiarism whether it is intentional or unintentional. The University of Washington takes plagiarism very seriously. Plagiarism may lead to disciplinary action by the University against the student who submitted the work. Any student who is uncertain whether his or her use of the work of others constitutes plagiarism should consult the course instructor for guidance before formally submitting the course work involved. *(Sources: UW Graduate School Style Manual; UW Bothell Catalog; UW Student Conduct Code)*

# Incompletes

An incomplete is given only when the student has been in attendance and has done satisfactory work until within two weeks of the end of the quarter and has furnished proof satisfactory to the instructor that the work cannot be completed because of illness or other circumstances beyond the student’s control. *(Source: UW General Catalog Online, “Student Guide/Grading”)*

# Grade Appeal Procedure

A student who believes he or she has been improperly graded must first discuss the matter with the instructor. If the student is not satisfied with the instructor’s explanation, the student may submit a written appeal to the chair of the Department of Philosophy with a copy of the appeal also sent to the instructor. The chair consults with the instructor to ensure that the evaluation of the student’s performance has not been arbitrary or capricious. Should the chair believe the instructor’s conduct to be arbitrary or capricious and the instructor declines to revise the grade, the chair, with the approval of the voting members of his or her faculty, shall appoint an appropriate member, or members, of the faculty of the Department of Philosophy to evaluate the performance of the student and assign a grade. The Dean and Provost should be informed of this action. Once a student submits a written appeal, this document and all subsequent actions on this appeal are recorded in written form for deposit in a School file*. (Source: UW General Catalog Online, “Student Guide/Grading”)*

# Concerns about a Course, an Instructor, or a Teaching Assistant

If you have any concerns about a Philosophy course or your instructor, please see the instructor about these concerns as soon as possible. If you are not comfortable talking with the instructor or not satisfied with the response that you receive, you may contact the chair of the program offering the course (names available from the Department of Philosophy, 361 Savery Hall).

If you have any concerns about a teaching assistant, please see the teaching assistant about these concerns as soon as possible. If you are not comfortable talking with the teaching assistant or not satisfied with the response that you receive, you may contact the instructor in charge of the course. If you are still not satisfied with the response that you receive, you may contact the chair of the program offering the course (names available from the Department of Philosophy, 361 Savery Hall), or the Graduate School at G-1 Communications Building (543-5900).

For your reference, these procedures are posted on a Philosophy bulletin board outside the Department of Philosophy main office on the 3rd floor of Savery Hall.

# POLICIES, RULES, RESOURCES

# Equal Opportunity

The University of Washington reaffirms its policy of equal opportunity regardless of race, color, creed, religion, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, age, marital status, disability, or status as a disabled veteran or Vietnam-era veteran in accordance with University of Washington policy and applicable federal and state statutes and regulations.

# Disability Accommodation

The University of Washington is committed to providing access, equal opportunity and reasonable accommodation in its services, programs, activities, education and employment for individuals with disabilities. For information or to request disability accommodation contact: Disabled Students Services (Seattle campus) at (206) 543-8924/V, (206) 543-8925/TTY, (206) 616-8379/Fax, or e-mail at uwdss@u.washington.edu; Bothell Student Affairs at (425) 352-5000/V; (425) 352-5303/TTY, (425) 352-5335/Fax, or e-mail at uwbothel@u.washington.edu; Tacoma Student Services at (253) 552-4000/V, (253) 552-4413/TTY, (253) 552-4414/Fax.

# Sexual Harassment

Sexual harassment is defined as the use of one’s authority or power, either explicitly or implicitly, to coerce another into unwanted sexual relations or to punish another for his or her refusal, or as the creation by a member of the University community of an intimidating, hostile, or offensive working or educational environment through verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature.

If you believe that you are being harassed, seek help—the earlier the better. You may speak with your instructor, your teaching assistant, the undergraduate advisor (363 Savery Hall), graduate program assistant (366 Savery Hall), or the chair of the Philosophy Department (364 Savery Hall). In addition, you should be aware that the University has designated special people to help you. They are: University Ombudsman and Ombudsman for Sexual Harassment (for complaints involving faculty members and teaching assistants) Susan Neff, 301 Student Union (HUB), 543-6028; and the University Complaint Investigation and Resolution Office, 616-2028. *(Sources: UW Graduate School, CIDR, Office of the President)*

# Office of Scholarly Integrity

The Office of Scholarly Integrity is housed in the Office of the Vice-Provost. The Office of Scholarly Integrity assumes responsibility for investigating and resolving allegations of scientific and scholarly misconduct by faculty, students, and staff of the University of Washington. The Office of Scholarly Integrity coordinates, in consultation and cooperation with the Schools and Colleges, inquiries and investigations into allegations of scientific and scholarly misconduct. The Office of Scholarly Integrity is responsible for compliance with reporting requirements established by various Federal and other funding agencies in matters of scientific or scholarly misconduct. The Office of Scholarly Integrity maintains all records resulting from inquiries and investigations of such allegations. University rules (Handbook, Vol. II, Section 25-51, Executive Order #61) define scientific and scholarly misconduct to include the following forms of inappropriate activities: intentional misrepresentation of credentials; falsification of data; plagiarism; abuse of confidentiality; deliberate violation of regulations applicable to research. Students can report cases of scientific or scholarly misconduct either to the Office of Scholarly Integrity, to their faculty adviser, or the department chair. The student should report such problems to whomever he or she feels most comfortable. *(Sources: UW web page http://www.grad.washington.edu/OSI/osi.htm); minutes of Grad School Executive Staff and Division Heads meeting, 7/23/98)*

1. Although the bookstore ordered the most recent edition of the textbook (since that’s all OUP had available), I’ve designed the course to work with earlier editions ones (by posting PDFs of the readings). Additionally, the readings for the first three weeks of the course are available without a textbook. The purpose of this flexibility is to allow you to shop for a cheaper edition, if you want. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. *\* Adapted from material prepared by the UW Department of History and used with permission.* [↑](#footnote-ref-2)