

**PHI 192: Introduction to Moral Theory**  
Fall 2018

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Office hours: Mondays 2:00-4:00 PM, or by appointment, in Bird Library café.

**COURSE DESCRIPTION:** The main goal of the course is to introduce students to the basic methods of philosophical reasoning: students will learn how to articulate their beliefs clearly and concisely, to critically analyze and evaluate arguments, construct and defend their own positions, and reason persuasively. These skills will be developed with an eye to the following questions:

1. What makes someone's life go better or worse?
2. Is life ultimately worth living or would it have been better never to have been born?
3. Is death bad for the one who dies?
4. What makes an action morally right or wrong?

We will examine a number of influential answers to these questions drawn from both historical and contemporary sources.

**REQUIRED TEXTS:** All the required readings for this class will be made available online at the course page on Blackboard. You are expected to print out them out promptly, study them carefully, and mark them up extensively.

**ASSESSMENT:** There will be three exams and seven short homework assignments. Participation and attendance will also form an important part of your grade. Your course grade will be determined by the following percentages:

First Exam = 20%  
Second Exam = 20%  
Third Exam = 20%  
Short Writing Assignments = 30%  
Attendance & Participation = 10%

Each exam will have a short answer section and one essay question. The short homework assignments will often require you to extract, explain, and evaluate an argument from a piece of text. Specific topics & instructions for these assignments will be distributed when they are assigned. Participation points will be allotted primarily for useful contributions to class discussion. There is **NO** extra credit.

**READING & CLASS PARTICIPATION:** It is of the utmost importance that you complete the assigned readings before class. The material is difficult and must be read carefully and perhaps several times. You should do the assigned readings before each class, so that you have a chance to think about what questions you have concerning the material. If the lecture and discussion in class do not answer your question, make sure to ask it. It is very important that you attend class regularly and participate in class discussion. Preparing questions, asking questions, and hearing the answer and any related discussion are all excellent ways of making sure that you learn the material. Asking questions will also raise your grade. In addition, there may be occasional pop quizzes on the course readings.

**CELL PHONES, LAPTOPS, ETC.:** None of the aforementioned electronic devices are to be used during class. They are distracting to me as well as to your classmates. If you would like to use your laptop for the sole purpose of taking notes, please complete the Request and Agreement form which I will provide at the beginning of the second class. If you are caught using a laptop for any other purpose in class, you will be prohibited from any further use.

**BLACKBOARD:** I will frequently use Blackboard to send emails, post hand-outs, supplementary readings and other material. Make sure that you can sign on to that site and that you check it frequently.

**HELP:** Philosophy is hard, but help is readily available. You might find some of the readings difficult and some of the material confusing. If you find yourself struggling with something you do not understand, please do not hesitate to let me know. I will be more than happy to help you. Don't wait for a bad grade on an exam. If you seek help, you will get it.

**ACCOMMODATION FOR DISABILITIES AND SPECIAL NEEDS:** Students who are in need of disability-related academic accommodations must register with the Office of Disability Services (ODS), 804 University Avenue, Room 309, (315) 443-4498. Students with authorized disability-related accommodations should provide a current Accommodation Authorization Letter from ODS to the instructor and review these accommodations with the instructor. Accommodations, such as exam administration, are not provided retroactively; therefore, planning for accommodation as early as possible is necessary. For more information, see the Office of Disability Services, <http://disabilityservices.syr.edu>.

**RELIGIOUS OBSERVANCES POLICY:** SU religious observances policy recognizes the diversity of faiths represented among the campus community and protects the rights of students, faculty, and staff to observe religious holidays according to their tradition. Under the policy, students are provided an opportunity to make up any examination, study, or work requirements that may be missed due to a religious observance provided they notify their instructors before the end of the second week of classes for regular session classes and by the submission deadline for flexibly formatted classes. For more information and the complete policy, see the Religious Observances Policy at [http://supolicies.syr.edu/emp\\_ben/religious\\_observance.htm](http://supolicies.syr.edu/emp_ben/religious_observance.htm).

**ACADEMIC INTEGRITY:** The Syracuse University Academic Integrity Policy holds students accountable for the integrity of the work they submit. Students should be familiar with the Policy and know that it is their responsibility to learn about instructor and general academic expectations with regard to proper citation of sources in written work. The policy also governs the integrity of work submitted in exams and assignments as well as the veracity of signatures on attendance sheets and other verifications of participation in class activities. Serious sanctions can result from academic dishonesty of any sort. For more information and the complete policy, see the Academic Integrity Policy and Procedures at <http://academicintegrity.syr.edu>.

The *minimum* penalty for an academic integrity violation in this course is a zero on the exam, assignment, or quiz in question. A report will then be sent to the Academic Integrity Office. If you are not sure whether what you are doing constitutes a violation of academic integrity, please ask me immediately.

**TENTATIVE SCHEDULE (SUBJECT TO REVISION):** Please complete all the readings before the class periods indicated below. They will be made available in the “Readings” section of the Blackboard website: <http://bbgroupa.syr.edu/>.

### **Introduction**

Tues, 8/28     General Introduction

### **Unit I: What Makes Someone’s Life Go Best?**

Thurs, 8/30     Introduction to Axiology  
                     Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book I.1-4

Tues, 9/4        Hedonistic Theories  
                     John Stuart Mill, *Utilitarianism*, Chap. 2, pp. 209-210

Thurs, 9/6        Hedonistic Theories (continued)  
                     Mill, *Utilitarianism*, Chap. 4  
                     **First Short Assignment Due**

Tues, 9/11       Hedonistic Theories (continued)  
                     Mill, *Utilitarianism*, Chap. 2, pp. 210-214

Thurs, 9/13       Hedonistic Theories (continued)  
                     Robert Nozick, “The Experience Machine” from *Anarchy, State, and Utopia*

Tues, 9/18        Desire Satisfaction Theories  
                     Chris Heathwood, “Fairing Well and Getting What You Want”

Thurs, 9/20        Desire Satisfaction Theories (continued)  
                     **Second Short Writing Assignment Due**

Tues, 9/25        Desire Satisfaction Theories (continued)

Thurs, 9/27        Perfectionist Theories  
                     Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book I.7-9

Tues, 10/2        Perfectionist Theories (continued)

**Thurs, 10/4     Exam 1**

### **Unit II: Is Life Worth Living?**

Tues, 10/9        Pessimism  
                     Arthur Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation*, Vol. 2, Chap. 46

Thurs, 10/11     Pessimism (continued)

Tues, 10/16     Pessimism (continued)

Thurs, 10/18 Optimism: Virtue  
Immanuel Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, Sect. 1

Tues, 10/23 Optimism: Meaning  
Susan Wolf, "Meaning in Life"  
**Third Short Writing Assignment Due**

Thurs, 10/25 Optimism: Meaning (continued)

### **Unit III: Is Death Bad for the One Who Dies?**

Tues, 10/30 Epicureanism  
Epicurus, "Letter to Menoeceus"  
Lucretius, *De Rerum Natura*, Book III, 830-911

Thurs, 11/1 Deprivationism  
Lucretius, *De Rerum Natura*, Book III, 912-1094  
**Fourth Short Writing Assignment Due**

Tues, 11/6 Deprivationism (continued)  
**Fifth Short Writing Assignment Due**

**Thurs, 11/8 Exam 2**

### **Unit IV: What Makes Something the Right Thing to Do?**

Tues, 11/13 Introduction to Normative Ethics

Thurs, 11/15 Interlude: Famine Relief

[Tues, 11/20 & Thurs, 11/22 – THANKSGIVING BREAK – No Class]

Tues, 11/27 Utilitarian Theories  
Mill, *Utilitarianism*, Chap. 2

Thurs, 11/29 Utilitarian Theories (continued)  
**Sixth Short Writing Assignment Due**

Tues, 12/4 Kantian Theories  
Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, Sect. 2

Thurs, 12/6 Kantian Theories (continued)  
**Seventh Short Writing Assignment Due**

**Tues, 12/11 Final Exam at 5:15-7:15 PM**