

Ethical Theory

Philosophy 441– Spring 2017

W 9:50 – 11:10 & F 2:50 – 4:10

Scott Hall 221

Professor Holly Smith

SYLLABUS

Version 1-15-2017

1. Office Hours and Contact Information

Office: Room 539, 106 Somerset Street, Fifth Floor

College Avenue Campus

E-mail: hsmith@philosophy.rutgers.edu

Office Hours: Wednesday 11:10 – 12:10 by appointment only, and additional other times by appointment

2. General Course Information

A. Course focus, and learning goals

This course will examine advanced questions about ethical theories of right conduct, including questions about forms of consequentialism (for example, act utilitarianism and rule utilitarianism); questions about deontological systems (such as Ross's pluralistic ethical theory); questions about whether deontological systems can be reduced to consequentialist systems; and questions about issues that transcend particular systems (such as questions about the relevance of an agent's future actions to what she ought to do now, and about the relevance of the agent's mental states to the rightness or wrongness of her actions).

The **course prerequisite** is two courses in philosophy. Students who have not already taken a prior **ethics** course – for example, *one of* Philosophy 107/108 *Introduction to Ethics*, Philosophy 105/106 *Current Moral and Social Issues*, or Philosophy 341 *Ethics Through History*—will have a **very** difficult time with this course, and are advised to defer enrolling in it until they have taken one of these lower-level ethics courses.

The major goals of the course are to:

- familiarize you with advanced contemporary concepts, positions, and criticisms in ethical theory;
- build your skills in analyzing ethical systems and positions;
- enhance your mastery of understanding, criticizing, and constructing philosophical arguments, and in developing and defending your views both orally and in writing,

- help you improve your writing through the paper assignment and essay examinations.

B. Course website

Materials relevant for the course are available on **Sakai@Rutgers**, the electronic course platform offered by Rutgers. To access these materials, go to <http://sakai.rutgers.edu/> and find the course website for ETHICAL THEORY 01 Sp17. If you normally use a non-Rutgers email program (e.g., gmail or yahoo), you should arrange to have your Rutgers email forwarded to your other email address so that you will automatically receive announcements from the course. But you must use your NetID to access the course website, for example to retrieve another copy of this syllabus, or to view course assignments.

On the class website, the “Announcements” button will open a page containing messages to all class members about such events as class cancellations or changes in assignments. These messages will also have been sent out as emails to each class member. *Make sure you set your options so that you receive all high-priority course announcements.*

The “Resources” folder contains several sub-folders. The sub-folder labeled “Syllabus and Further Readings List” contains a copy of the course syllabus (and any future revisions of this) and a list of some additional readings on many of the topics that you might wish to consult, especially as you are writing your term paper on one of these topics. The readings provided are by no means exhaustive of the good literature available on our topics. The folder “Required readings” contains, in alphabetical order by author’s last name, all the required readings. The folder “Grading Information” contains information on the grading scale used in Phil 441, and an explanation how grades on your paper will be determined. The folder “Writing Tips” contains several pieces of advice on how to write a philosophy paper and how to deal with common puzzlements about apostrophes, gender-neutral pronouns, etc. “In-Class Hand-Outs” will contain any hand-outs that are distributed in class. To view the contents of a folder, click on its name.

A “Chat Room” is available for you to trade questions and ideas with other students in the course. I will not monitor the Chat Room on a regular basis, so if you have questions for me, or that only I can answer, please email me directly.

WARNING: Sometimes the Sakai site is under repair and so unavailable, and sometimes you may have no access to your Rutgers email (for example, if there are issues about your financial aid). For this reason you should download or print off anything in Sakai that you may need access to even if the electronic version is unavailable.

The Sakai website for this class will be taken down shortly after the final examination. If there are materials on it you wish to preserve (e.g., the writing tips), please download or print them off during the semester.

C. Course texts

Sakai –All the required readings are available on the Sakai website, in the “Required Readings” subfolder in the “Resources” folder. These are marked [SAK] in the list of readings.

D. Assignments

- **Students will be asked to write, and hand in, a brief response (on a full 8 ½ x 11 sheet of paper) to the reading at the beginning of each class. The Response should consist of an objection you have to an argument or position in the reading. You may wish to come prepared with a note for yourself about what point you wish to raise.**
- **There will be three graded assignments.**

(1) Mid-term examination. The mid-term examination, which will cover all the materials covered in the course up to that date, will be given during class on **Wednesday March 1**. It will consist of essay questions.

(2) Paper. There is one term paper assignment. The paper should be a minimum of 12 pages long, and no more than 18 pages (printed double-spaced in 12 point font). Students are expected to identify their own topics. All topics should be on issues we discuss in class, or on issues in their close neighborhood. I will be glad to consult with you as you focus in on a topic on which you're interested in writing. The paper will be due on **Wednesday, April 19. It should be submitted to me electronically through Sakai Assignments by 11:55 P.M. on April 19. Please if at all possible submit it in Word, rather than as a pdf, since Word better facilitates electronic comments.** In order to assure you of protection against plagiarism, all papers will be reviewed by Turnitin.com.

(3) Final examination. The final examination will be held in our classroom on **Wednesday, May 9, from 4:00 to 6:00 PM**. It will primarily emphasize the material after the midterm examination, but will assume your familiarity with material from the earlier part of the course as well. It, too, will be an essay exam. Note the exam will only be two hours, not the three hours announced in the official final exam schedule.

E. Grading

The rubric I will use for evaluating your papers is available in the "Grading information" folder on the Sakai site under "Resources." You should read this before starting to write your paper.

All grading will be done "blind" to avoid any inadvertent biases in assessing your work. Your papers and examinations will be identified by your student number, not your name.

The grading scale (A+ = 96 – 100, A = 90 – 95.99, etc.) is also available in the "Grading information" folder on the Sakai site under "Resources."

In calculating your overall grade, weights ascribed to each of the assignments for the course are as follows:

Mid-term examination.....	25 %
Term paper.....	40 %
Final examination.....	35 %

In addition, if your overall grade is on a borderline, I will favorably take into account your classroom participation. In other words, if you have been an active and constructive participant in classroom discussion, this will help your grade if it would otherwise be on the borderline between two grades. You can't be penalized for your contributions – so plunge into the discussions!

Your grades will be available through the Sakai Gradebook.

NOTE: You must submit the paper and take both examinations to pass the course. A paper will only count as “submitted” if it involves substantial engagement with a topic relevant to the course.

F. Attendance

University policy states that students are expected to attend all classes. If you miss one or two classes, you may use the University absence reporting website <https://sims.rutgers.edu/ssra/> to indicate the date and reason for your absence. An email will automatically be sent to me as the course instructor.

As advanced students, you are strongly encouraged but not required to attend the lectures in Philosophy 441. As you know, philosophy is best learned by engaging in discussions about it. Your role in discussion is not only to enhance your own learning, but also to help other students learn by engaging *them* in discussion.

Students sometimes encounter personal or family emergencies, or serious illness, which prevent them from attending class. I ask you to use your own good judgment in such cases, and to secure a set of class notes from one of your classmates if you must miss class. For any prolonged absence, please consult with me either before or after the absence.

G. Policy on laptops

Because student use of laptops to take notes can be distracting to other students, any student who wishes to use a laptop for note-taking purposes ***must sit in the back row of the classroom.*** Please do not distract yourself or those around you by checking Facebook, playing video games, and so forth during class. Note that research shows students who take notes on a laptop wind up getting lower grades than students who take notes by hand; and students who multi-task by checking Facebook, etc., during class earn even lower grades. Be forewarned!

H. Late submissions and missed examinations

There is a two day grace period for turning papers in late without any penalty.

After that, if you are still having trouble turning in the assignment, you must meet with me to go over an outline of your ideas and set a schedule for getting the paper done. If you do not meet with me to discuss this, and do not have an appropriate excuse (see below) the grade on your paper will be discounted according to the policy below. It will not be possible to rewrite your paper (whether submitted late or on time) for a different grade.

An appropriate excuse could be a doctor's letter, suitable letter from a college dean, or other documentation of a serious issue excusing your late submission of the term paper. If you have such an excuse, you will not be penalized for later submission of the paper. It is very helpful if you can alert me to such events beforehand. If you submit the paper after the two day grace period *without* having met with me, and without an appropriate excuse, your grade will be lowered as follows:

You will lose 3 points for each day it is submitted late, counting from the end of the grace period. (For example, suppose your paper is due on Wednesday, and you submit it without excuse on the following Sunday. The paper has been submitted two days after the end of the grace period on Friday. If you would have received a grade of 82 on the paper if it had been submitted by Friday, it will receive a grade of 76.

If you have an exam conflict, or a doctor's or other official excuse for having to miss the mid-term examination or the final examination, I will arrange for you to take a make-up examination at a different time.

I. Disability accommodation

If you need a disability accommodation, please make arrangements with me at the beginning of the semester, or (for newly arising conditions) as soon as you become aware that your situation requires accommodation. You must present an official Letter of Accommodation to be entitled to accommodation services.

J. Cheating

Cheating on tests or plagiarizing materials in your papers deprives you of the educational benefits of preparing these materials appropriately. You and your family are making a major financial investment so that you acquire those benefits. Moreover, it is personally dishonest to cheat on a test or to hand in a paper based on unacknowledged words or ideas that someone else originated. It is also unfair, since it may give you an undeserved advantage over your fellow students who are graded on the basis of their own work. I take cheating very seriously. Fortunately, in a course like this one, cheating rarely occurs. All suspected cases of cheating and plagiarism will be automatically referred to the Office of Judicial Affairs, and I will recommend penalties appropriate to the gravity of the infraction. To help reassure you, and future students,

that others are not unfairly benefiting from plagiarism, I require all papers to be submitted through Turnitin.com.

As advanced students you should already be familiar with the University's policy on Academic Integrity, but if you are not, I strongly advise you to become acquainted with it. The policy on Academic Integrity is available at <http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/academic-integrity-policy/>. Please make sure you understand what actions count as plagiarism. If your earlier education occurred in a different cultural context, you may need to familiarize yourself with American expectations. You will be held responsible for doing so.

A SPECIAL NOTE: Students sometimes assume that because information is available on the Web it is public information, does not need to be referenced, and can be used without attribution. This is a mistake. *All* information and ideas that you derive from other sources, whether written, spoken, or electronic, must be attributed to their original source. Such sources include not just written or electronic materials, but people with whom you may discuss your ideas, such as your roommate, friends, or family members. They deserve credit for their contributions too! You should also cite points that were raised by the instructor or other class members in this course. You may use any standard citation system.

Judgments about plagiarism can be subtle. If you have any questions, please feel free to ask me.

K. Other

The *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (<http://plato.stanford.edu>) and the *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (<http://www.iep.utm.edu/>) contain extremely useful summary discussions of many of the topics we will cover, as well as excellent beginning bibliographies that will assist you as you work on your papers. The *Philosopher's Index* indexes all philosophy articles by author and topic, and is an excellent resource (to access it electronically, log in through the Rutgers library, and under "journals" find *Philosopher's Index*).

The Sakai folder "Writing Tips" contains several pieces of advice on how to write a philosophy paper and how to deal with common puzzlements about apostrophes, gender-neutral pronouns, etc.

CLASS SCHEDULE BEGINS ON FOLLOWING PAGE

Philosophy 441 Advanced Topics in Ethical Theory
CLASS SCHEDULE
1-15-2017

January 18: Introduction

January 20: Basic Consequentialism and Deontology

[SAK] William Haines, "Consequentialism," *The Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, <http://www.iep.utm.edu/conseque/>, pp. 1-18.

[SAK] James Feiser, "Ethics" (including Deontology), *The Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy* <http://www.iep.utm.edu/ethics/#H2>, pp. 1-4.

January 25: The Structure of Moral Theories

[SAK] Shelly Kagan, "The Structure of Normative Ethics," in James Tomberlin, ed., *Philosophical Perspectives 6 Ethics* (Atascadero, California: Ridgeview Publishing Company, 1992), 223 – 242

CONSEQUENTIALISM

January 27: Satisficing Consequentialism

[SAK] Slote, Michael, 1984. "Satisficing Consequentialism," *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, 58: 139-63. [The Sakai document includes a commentary by Philip Pettit, but you are not required to read this.]

February 1: Consequentialism and Population Size

[SAK] Thomas Hurka, "Value and Population Size," *Ethics*, Vol. 93 (April, 1983), 496-507.

February 3: The Epistemic Objection to Consequentialism A

[SAK] James L. Hudson, "Subjectivization in Ethics," *American Philosophical Quarterly* Volume 26, Number 3, July 1989, pp. 221-229

[SAK] Michael Zimmerman, *Living with Uncertainty* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 17 – 20

February 8: The Epistemic Objection to Consequentialism B

Graham, Peter, "In Defense of Objectivism about Moral Obligation," *Ethics* Vol. 121, No. 1 (October 2010), 88-115.

February 10: The Demandingness Objection to Consequentialism

[SAK] Bernard Williams, "A Critique of Utilitarianism," in J. J. C. Smart and Bernard Williams, *Utilitarianism: For and Against* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973), 93 – 118. [Focus especially on George and Jim examples, pp. 97-99, and Section 5 *Integrity*, pp. 108 – 118.]

February 15: Indirect Consequentialism—Motive Consequentialism

[SAK] Robert Adams, "Motive Utilitarianism," *The Journal of Philosophy* Vol. 73, No. 14 (August 12, 1976), 467 – 481

February 17: Rule Utilitarianism A

[SAK] Brad Hooker, "Rule-Consequentialism," in Hugh LaFollette, *The Blackwell Guide to Ethical Theory* (Malden, Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishing Ltd., 2000), 183 – 204.

February 22: Rule Utilitarianism B

[SAK] Michael Ridge, "Introducing Variable-Rate Rule-Utilitarianism," *The Philosophical Quarterly*, Vol. 56, No. 223 (April 2006), 242 – 253.

[SAK] Holly Smith, "Measuring the Consequences of Rules," *Utilitas*, Vol.22, No. 4, December 2010, 413 – 433.

February 24: Inequality

[SAK] Larry S. Temkin, "Inequality," in *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, Vol. 15, No. 2 (Spring, 1986), pp. 99-121.

March 1: MIDTERM EXAMINATION

DEONTOLOGY

March 3: Rossian Pluralism and Prima Facie Duties

[SAK] W.D. Ross, *The Right and the Good* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1930), Chapter II "What Makes Right Acts Right?" pp. 16 – 47

March 8: Constraints and Options

[SAK] Samuel Scheffler, *The Rejection of Consequentialism* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982), pp. 4- 5

[SAK] Samuel Scheffler, *The Rejection of Consequentialism* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982), Chapter Four “The Defense of Agent-Centered Restrictions: Intuitions in Search of a Foundation,” pp. 80 – 114

March 10: Trolley Problems

[SAK] Judith Thomson, “Turning the Trolley,” *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 36, no. 4, 359-374.

MARCH 15 & 17: SPRING BREAK

March 22: Retributionism

[SAK] Shaun Nichols, “Brute Retributivism,” in T. Nadelhoffer (ed.) *The Future of Punishment*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1-18.

March 24: Preventing Deontological Wrong-Doing

[SAK] Re’em Segev, “Should we prevent deontological wrongdoing?” *Philosophical Studies* (2016) 173:2049–2068 DOI 10.1007/s11098-015-0596-9, pp. 2049-2068.

March 29: Asymmetrical Deontic Values

Holly M. Smith, “The Asymmetrical Values of Fulfilling and Violating Duties,” unpublished manuscript

March 31: The Problem of Risk for Absolute Deontological Moral Theories

[SAK] Frank Jackson and Michael Smith, “Absolutist Moral Theories and Uncertainty,” *The Journal of Philosophy*, Vol. CIII, No. 6 (June 2006), 267 – 283

April 5: The Duty to Acquire Information

Holly Smith, “The Subjective Moral Duty to Inform Oneself before Acting,” *Ethics* 125 (October, 2014), 1 – 28.

TRANS-THEORETICAL ISSUES

April 7: Actualism vs. Possibilism

[SAK] Holly S. Goldman, "Dated Rightness and Moral Imperfection," *The Philosophical Review*, Vol. LXXXV (October, 1976), pp. 449-487.

April 12 & 14: No class

April 19: The Relevance of the Agent's Mental States to whether her Acts are Right or Wrong
TERM PAPER DUE 11:55 PM

[SAK] W. D. Ross, *Foundations of Ethics* (Oxford at the Clarendon Press, 2000), pp. 115-124.

[SAK] Steven Sverdlik, "Motive and Rightness," *Ethics* Vol. 106, No. 2 (Jan., 1996), pp. 327-349

April 21: Is the Consequentialism/Deontology Distinction an Important One?

[SAK] Jamie Drier, "In Defense of Consequentializing," in Mark Timmons, ed., *Oxford Studies in Normative Ethics*, Vol. 1 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 97 – 119.

April 26: How to Deal with Uncertainty about Which Moral Theory is Correct

[SAK] Jacob Ross, "Rejecting Ethical Deflationism," *Ethics* 116 (July 2006): 742-768.

April 28: Does Morality Trump All Other Considerations?

[SAK] Susan Wolf, "Moral Saints," *The Journal of Philosophy*, Vol. 79 (August 1982), 419-439.

Wednesday, May 9, 4:00 to 6:00 PM: Final examination. Held in our regular classroom