

**FSYM 1209-A: SEMINAR IN CONTEMPORARY MORAL, SOCIAL,  
AND RELIGIOUS ISSUES**

Fall 2015/Winter 2016  
Tuesday/Thursday 10:05 – 11:35  
SA (Southam Hall) 402

Dr. Katherine Wayne  
Office: PA (Paterson Hall) 329B  
Office hours: Tuesdays 1:30-2:30, Thursdays 12:30-1:30, and by appointment  
E-mail: [katherine.wayne@carleton.ca](mailto:katherine.wayne@carleton.ca) or via cuLearn

**CONDITIONS FOR ENROLMENT**

Precludes additional credit for PHIL 1500 and PHIL 1550.

Prerequisite(s): normally restricted to students entering the first year of a B.A., B.Cog.Sc. or B.G.In.S. program.

**COURSE DESCRIPTION**

This course serves, most broadly, as an introduction to the philosophical study of ethical issues. We will examine questions regarding the nature of the good and the right, and in particular, what it means to live a worthwhile life. Our primary area of study will be contemporary moral philosophy, where we will consider both theoretical and applied dimensions of ethics. The course will also cover related concerns in political philosophy, such as the meaning and scope of justice.

We begin the first term by examining key debates in theoretical ethics, guided by these basic questions: What is the morally good life? And what is its relationship to the good life—or are they equivalent? Considering these questions responsibly will require examination of some more fundamental issues, such as the objectivity (or not) of morality, the nature of moral concepts and prescriptions, the grounds for moral truth, value, and motivation, the conditions of moral responsibility, and the primary target of moral evaluation (e.g., outcomes, intentions, or character). We will also examine contemporary critiques of traditional approaches to ethics and alternative accounts of well-being and moral goodness. You will be encouraged to ask yourself, throughout the course, what living a worthwhile life means to you, and what role the good plays in that life.

In the second term we will begin by considering what it means to help and harm others and contemporary debate surrounding the relationship between doing harm and doing wrong. We then turn to a sustained philosophical engagement with currently pressing issues that will draw on this debate and the previous term's exploration of theories, as well as introduce new challenges to traditional ways of delineating the moral and political community.

## LEARNING OBJECTIVES

This course aims to help students:

- Develop a reflective and attentive stance toward complex ethical and political issues
- Develop a working familiarity with and understanding of some central problems, concepts, and debates in contemporary moral and political philosophy
- Become more aware of common biases and preconceptions at play in typical ethical and political discussions, and ideas of the good life in particular
- Develop critical thinking skills that can be applied to analyze and critique arguments in texts and discussion
- Increase skill and confidence in expressing ideas clearly, both orally and in writing
- Reflect on and enrich their personal views of what constitutes and is required for a moral life and a good life

## CLASS TEXTS

In the first term there is no text to purchase. (This is likely to be true for the second term as well, TBD). **Our class readings will be accessed through the Library Reserve system Ares, and Ares is accessible through our course cuLearn page.** Readings can be accessed at any time. You are encouraged to print off the readings rather than only read them on your screen (note: double-sided printing is made easy at MacOdrum library).

Some required readings may be posted outside of Ares, but will still be clearly indicated on and available (at least as links) through cuLearn. I will also distribute handouts in class from time to time, which will also be posted on cuLearn. Keep in mind, however, that the cuLearn site cannot be guaranteed to include all class material, and lecture notes will not be posted online.

## EXPECTATIONS

### cuLearn

Regular visits to the course website are required, as is regular class attendance.

### Class format and protocol

As a seminar, this course will involve a great deal of student participation in discussion. It will also involve lecturing, independent and interactive exercises, and some use of other media, e.g. film clips. You are expected to arrive to class having completed the assigned readings and to bring the assigned reading(s) to class, ideally in hard copy. You should be prepared to contribute to class discussions, including those led by fellow student presenters, and to participate in interactive tasks.

Students are expected to arrive to class on time and stay until the end of class, barring extenuating circumstances. While class is in session, please avoid any activities that may be distracting to yourself or those around you, including talking outside class discussion,

using your cell phone, or using your laptop for purposes other than note-taking (research shows that multi-tasking on a laptop negatively affects both you and those around you, even when the distraction is not obvious).

### **Feedback, guidance, and learning assistance**

Students will likely find that the unfamiliar and challenging nature of the course material demands careful and sustained attention. The course is structured in such a way to provide you with early, clear, and ongoing feedback, and to motivate you to keep up with the course readings and to be actively engaged in class.

Each graded portion of the course will include clear instructions, turnover time estimates, and an explanation of how you are being assessed. You can expect to receive detailed feedback from me on your work. You can also expect in class opportunities (e.g., through learning exercises and mini workshops) to develop general academic skills that will help you succeed in this class and beyond. And through cuLearn, you will have access to a number of resources geared toward junior philosophy students. Students are also encouraged take advantage of my office hours; you are welcome to discuss any course-related questions, thoughts, or concerns with me during these set hours, or by appointment. I also encourage you to discuss the class material with your fellow students beyond the classroom, and to this end I will create online discussion forums on cuLearn.

You can get in touch with me via e-mail and cuLearn messaging, but note that e-mail and cuLearn inquiries are best reserved for brief and simple questions for matters not covered in course documents, arranging appointments, and the like. Content-heavy questions and feedback requests should generally be reserved for in-person discussion. I check my e-mail regularly during the work week so online inquiries will typically receive a response within twenty-four hours between Monday and Friday.

### **EVALUATION**

The grading scheme for this course is made up of three major components:

#### **1) Comment sheets: 30% (15% per term)**

Students are expected to write and submit a comment sheet each week of class (Tuesday or Thursday), with the exceptions of the first two weeks and last week of each term. This adds up to ten comment sheets per term, and your best seven of each term will count toward your final grade. Students will also have the option of revising one comment sheet per term in light of instructor feedback for a small bonus grade. You may submit only one comment per week and per class, and all comment sheets must be submitted in hard copy, by you, at the end of class. Late comment sheets will not be accepted.

Comment sheets are essentially very short discussion papers—typically no longer than one page single-spaced—in which you explain and address/provide insight into a question or concern from the reading(s). Students are expected to provide

thoughtful, informed, and clearly written commentaries; otherwise the way you approach these comment sheets is largely up to you.

Detailed instructions will be provided in a separate document on cuLearn.

## **2) Presentations and presentation write-ups: 40% (20% per term)**

Students will give one presentation in each term, in the Fall as an individual and in the Winter as part of a small group. Presenters choose the portions of the reading(s) they wish to focus on, and will notify the instructor of their topic as well as consult with any other presenters for that date so that significant overlap is avoided.

In both terms, presentations will draw directly from the class reading material, and will typically take place on Tuesdays. On the Tuesday following their presentation, students will submit a short (approximately 1000 words) description and reflection piece on the presentation and relevant class discussion, which may draw on secondary sources as well as the relevant class texts. The oral and written portions of the presentation grade will be weighted equally.

Detailed instructions will be provided in separate documents (one for each term) on cuLearn.

## **3) Take-home exams/reflection essays: 10% (Fall) and 20% (Winter)**

Students will complete a take-home exam/reflection essay at the end of both terms, of approximately 1500 and 3000 words respectively. These will involve extensive use of class readings as well as build on in-class reflective writing exercises completed throughout the term. The Winter term exam will, in addition, involve use of secondary sources. Deadlines for each of these will fall during the final exam periods, precise dates TBA.

Detailed instructions will be provided in separate documents (one for each term) on cuLearn.

## **POLICIES**

### **General accommodations**

If you have any concerns about your ability to fulfill course requirements, but are unsure of how to proceed, please speak with me as soon as possible. Students who think they may need accommodations are also encouraged to be in touch with the Paul Menton Centre as soon as possible (see below for contact).

For all students: please be careful to inform yourself on relevant departmental and university policies, accommodations services, and other helpful university services such as health and counselling. There is a complete list of these on the last pages of this syllabus.

## **Late or missed work**

As indicated above, late comment sheets will not be accepted.

Presentation dates will generally be held firm. If, after scheduling your presentation, you encounter an urgent matter that would likely prohibit you from presenting that day, you must be in touch with the instructor right away. Missed presentations will be granted a zero for the oral portion of the grade, except in cases where you can provide documentation of a medical or family/loved one emergency. Make-up presentations or alternative arrangements will typically be permitted only in these situations.

## **READINGS SCHEDULE**

The reading schedule is not an exhaustive plan for the course; sometimes the class will read another short text together, briefly consider a distinct topic, or have a short lesson or workshop geared toward developing academic skills. Readings are divided by week rather than by class to allow for flexibility. Students will ideally have read through all the week's readings in preparation for Tuesday's class, and should at least have read the first reading indicated for the week.

### **WEEK 1: No class**

Thursday September 3:

Class cancelled, no readings (instructor out of country; please see cuLearn page and if you require further information e-mail instructor)

### **WEEK 2: Introduction to normative ethics**

Tuesday September 8

Introduction to the course and in-class writing exercise and discussion on the good life: no assigned readings

Thursday September 10

John Stuart Mill's *Utilitarianism* chapter 2

### **WEEK 3: The importance of pleasure, pain, and consequences**

Tuesday September 15

Mill's *Utilitarianism* chapters 3 and 4

Thursday September 17

Bernard Williams: "Utilitarianism and Integrity"

### **WEEK 4: Inherent value and moral duty**

Tuesday September 22 and Thursday September 24

Immanuel Kant, Preface and Section 1, "Transition from common rational moral cognition to philosophical moral cognition"

### **WEEK 5: Questioning morality**

Tuesday September 29 and Thursday October 1

Philippa Foot: "Morality as a system of hypothetical imperatives"

Gertrude Elizabeth Anscombe: "Modern moral philosophy"

### **WEEK 6: Turning to virtue**

Tuesday October 6 and Thursday October 8

Aristotle: *Nicomachean Ethics* Books 1-3 (only up to end of chapter 5 in book 3)

### **WEEK 7: The centrality of character**

Tuesday October 13 and Thursday October 15

Julia Annas: "Virtue, character, and disposition"

Gilbert Harman: "Moral philosophy meets social psychology: Virtue ethics and the fundamental attribution error"

### **WEEK 8: Determinism, agency, and morality**

Tuesday October 20 and Thursday October 22

Thomas Nagel: "Moral Luck"

Harry Frankfurt: "Freedom of the Will and the Concept of a Person"

### **\*FALL BREAK, NO CLASSES\***

October 26-30

### **WEEK 9: Luck, inequality, and justice**

Tuesday November 3 and Thursday November 5

John Rawls: "Justice as Fairness"

Susan Moller Okin: "Justice as Fairness: For Whom?"

### **WEEK 10: The source and impact of "difference" in moral reasoning**

Tuesday November 10 and Thursday November 12

Carol Gilligan: "In a Different Voice: Women's Conceptions of Self and Morality"

Claudia Card: "Gender and Moral Luck"

### **WEEK 11: Autonomy to (inter)dependence**

Tuesday November 17 and Thursday November 19

Susan Wendell: "Who is Disabled? Defining Disability"

Eva Feder Kittay: "The Ethics of Care, Dependence, and Disability"

### **WEEK 12: Rationality and moral worth**

Tuesday November 24 and Thursday November 26

Rebecca Dresser: "Dworkin on Dementia: Elegant Theory, Questionable Policy"

Stephen Post: “*Respectare*: Moral Respect for the Lives of the Deeply Forgetful”

**WEEK 13: The good beyond the right**

Tuesday December 1 and Thursday December 3 (last class of Fall term)

Judith Jarvis Thomson: “A Defense of Abortion”

Iris Murdoch: “The Sovereignty of Good over Other Concepts”

**WINTER TERM**

The Winter term reading schedule will be available on cuLearn shortly before classes begin. Readings will focus on themes of:

- The nature and moral significance of harm and benefit, with regard to current and future individuals
- Poverty and homelessness
- Reproductive ethics, including antinatalism, procreative beneficence, and new reproductive technologies
- Environmental philosophy
- Animal ethics and politics

**NOTE:** This syllabus is as complete as possible, but some details will be filled in as the class progresses, and minor changes may be implemented as necessary.

On the following page you will find the full list of policies of Carleton’s philosophy department.

## Department of Philosophy and Carleton University Policies (2015-16)

### **Assignments:**

Unless specifically told otherwise by their instructors, students:

- must not use a plastic or cardboard cover or paper clips
- must staple the paper (there is a stapler on the essay box)
- must include the following:
  - student name
  - student number
  - course number and section
  - instructor's name
- No assignments will be accepted after the last day for handing in term work – see dates in next column.
- Assignments handed in through the essay box (just inside the glass doors, Paterson Hall, Floor 3A) must be dropped into the box by **4:15** on a regular business day in order to be date-stamped with that day's date. Assignments handed in after 4:15 or on a non-business day will be stamped as having been handed in on the next business day.
- Students are required to keep copies of their assignments. If your paper is lost at any point, you will be considered not to have submitted it if you cannot produce a copy immediately on request.

### **Deferrals for Term Work:**

If you miss a final examination and/or fail to submit a final assignment by the due date because of circumstances beyond your control, you may apply for a deferral of examination/assignment. For deferred examinations, you must apply within 5 working days after the scheduled date of your exam. To apply for deferral of a final assignment, you must apply within 5 working days of the last scheduled day of classes. Visit the Registrar's Office for more information.

### **Plagiarism:**

It is the responsibility of each student to understand the meaning of 'plagiarism' as defined in the Undergraduate or Graduate Calendars, and to avoid both committing plagiarism and aiding or abetting plagiarism by other students. (Undergraduate Calendar Academic Regulations, section 14.3, or <http://calendar.carleton.ca/undergrad/regulations/academicregulationsoftheuniversity/acadregsuniv14/>)

### **Academic Accommodation:**

You may need special arrangements to meet your academic obligations during the term. For an accommodation request the processes are as follows:

**Pregnancy obligation:** write to your professor with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist. For more details visit the Equity Services website: <http://www2.carleton.ca/equity/>

**Religious obligation:** write to your professor with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist. For more details visit the Equity Services website: <http://www2.carleton.ca/equity/>

**Academic Accommodations for Students with Disabilities:** The **Paul Menton Centre** for Students with Disabilities (PMC) provides services to students with Learning Disabilities (LD), psychiatric/mental health disabilities, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD), chronic medical conditions, and impairments in mobility, hearing, and vision. If you have a disability requiring academic accommodations in this course, please contact PMC at 613-520-6608 or [pmc@carleton.ca](mailto:pmc@carleton.ca) for a formal evaluation. If you are already registered with the PMC, contact your PMC coordinator to send your **Letter of Accommodation** at the beginning of the term, and no later than two weeks before the first in-class scheduled test or exam requiring accommodation (*if applicable*). After requesting accommodation from PMC, meet with your professor to ensure

accommodation arrangements are made. Please consult the PMC website for the deadline to request accommodations for the formally-scheduled exam (*if applicable*) at <http://www2.carleton.ca/pmc/new-and-current-students/dates-and-deadlines/>

You can visit the Equity Services website to view the policies and to obtain more detailed information on academic accommodation at <http://www2.carleton.ca/equity/>

### **Important Dates:**

Sept. 2	Classes start.
Sept. 4	Classes follow a Monday schedule.
Sept. 7	Labour Day - University closed.
Sept. 18	Last day for registration and course changes in Fall and Fall/Winter courses.
Sept. 30	Last day for entire fee adjustment when withdrawing from Fall term or two-term courses.
Oct. 12	Thanksgiving Day – University closed.
Oct. 26-30	Fall Break – no classes.
Nov. 24	Last day for tests or examinations in courses below 4000-level before the Final Examination period.
Dec. 7	Last day of classes, Fall term. Last day for handing in term work and the last day that can be specified by a course instructor as a due date for Fall term courses.
Dec. 7	Last day to withdraw from Fall term courses (academic purposes only).
Dec. 8	No classes or examinations take place. Review classes may be held, but no new material may be introduced.
Dec. 9-21	Final examinations for Fall courses, mid-terms for Fall/Winter courses. Exams are normally held all seven days of the week.
Dec. 21	Take-home exams are due.
Jan. 6	Winter term classes begin.
Jan. 19	Last day for registration and course changes in Winter term classes.
Jan. 31	Last day for entire fee adjustment when withdrawing from winter courses or winter portion of two-term courses.
Feb. 15-19	Winter Break, no classes.
Mar. 24	Last day for tests or examinations in courses below 4000-level before the Final Examination period.
Mar. 25	Good Friday – University closed.
Apr. 8	Last day of Fall/Winter and Winter term classes. Last day for handing in term work and the last day that can be specified by a course instructor as a due date for term work for Fall/Winter and Winter term courses.
Apr. 8	Last day to withdraw from Fall/Winter and Winter term courses (academic purposes only).
Apr. 9-10	No classes or examinations take place. Review classes may be held, but no new material may be introduced.
Apr. 11-23	Final Examinations. Exams are normally held all seven days of the week.
Apr. 23	Take-home exams are due.

### **Addresses:**

Department of Philosophy:	3A35 Paterson Hall <a href="http://www.carleton.ca/philosophy">www.carleton.ca/philosophy</a> 520-2110
Registrar's Office:	300 Tory <a href="http://www.carleton.ca/registrar">www.carleton.ca/registrar</a> 520-3500
Student Academic Success Centre:	302 Tory <a href="http://www.carleton.ca/sasc">www.carleton.ca/sasc</a> 520-7850
Writing Tutorial Service:	4 <sup>th</sup> Floor, Library <a href="http://www1.carleton.ca/sasc/writing-tutorial-service/">http://www1.carleton.ca/sasc/writing-tutorial-service/</a> 520-6632
MacOdrum Library	<a href="http://www.library.carleton.ca/">http://www.library.carleton.ca/</a> 520-2735