

**THE UNIVERSITY OF WESTERN ONTARIO**  
**DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY**  
**Philosophy 2700F (650): Introduction to Ethics and Value Theory**  
**Course Outline Summer 2016, Distance Studies**

Instructor: Dr. Ryan Robb  
Office: Stevenson Hall, room 4126  
Office Hours: by appointment

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course content: OWLSakai

**OBJECTIVES**

This course seeks to achieve two goals. The first, and most important, is to help students identify and distinguish between good and bad arguments. Assessing the quality of arguments is the most fundamental skill a philosopher must possess, a skill which when developed allows philosophers to critically engage the many disparate views they encounter in their daily lives, and helps them become less prone to error when making arguments of their own. Students will improve their ability to determine what it is that makes the set of reasons that support the conclusions of one argument more compelling than those presented in competing arguments, and to articulate their assessments in the writing assignments for the course.

The second goal of this course is to explore the ways in which the aforementioned philosophical skill (identifying and producing good arguments) has been applied by scholars to human actions and the subsequent accounts of responsibility it is claimed humans bear for their actions. The arguments surveyed include attempts to answer the following questions: Do humans have universal and objective ethical/moral duties toward one another, toward themselves, toward animals? Or do they just have ethical responsibilities to satisfy their cultural norms, their own self-interests, or to follow God's commands? If humans do have objective moral duties, on what grounds do they have them? Are ethical/moral duties grounded in the consequences of our actions, or are they grounded in the motives that explain why we act the way we do?

**TEXTS**

*Moral Philosophy: A Reader*, **Fourth edition**, eds. Louis P Pojman and Peter Tramel (Hackett Publishing, 2009), available on-line and from the UWO Bookstore

**REQUIREMENTS**

1. Five 250 – 500 word discussion postings: 6% each for a total of 30%, due at the mid-point of each Unit of the course.
2. Participation in online discussions: 10%.
3. One 1250 – 1500 word essay: 30%.
4. Final exam: 30% - to be scheduled at a time and place determined by the registrar during the 2016 Spring/Summer Distance Studies final exam period.

**Late penalty policy:**

The 250 – 500 word discussion posts are subject to a **1 out of 6 mark per day** deduction up to a **maximum of 6 days**, at which point a grade of 0 will automatically be entered.

The term paper will be subject to a **5% penalty (out of 100%) on the first day** that it is late, and a further **1% penalty for each subsequent day** the paper is late (including each day of the weekend) **until the last day of the term**, at which point a grade of 0 will be automatically entered.

**Students are directed to view the Policy on Accommodation for Medical Illness**

(<https://studentservices.uwo.ca/secure/index.cfm>).

**Policy on accommodation for medical illness of work worth less than 10% of the total course grade:**

Medical documentation will be required; such documentation must be submitted by the student directly to the appropriate Faculty Dean's office and not to the instructor. It will be the Dean's office that will determine if accommodation is warranted.

**Policy on Academic Offences:**

Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, at the following Web site: [http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic\\_policies/appeals/scholastic\\_discipline\\_undergrad.pdf](http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf).

**Support Services:**

Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to Mental Health@Western <http://www.uwo.ca/uwocom/mentalhealth/> for a complete list of options about how to obtain help.

**Statement on Use of Plagiarism Software:**

All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between The University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com (<http://www.turnitin.com>).

**Statement on Use of Electronic Devices:**

The use of electronic devices will not be permitted for the final exam in this course.

**Additional Links:**

Registrarial Services (<http://www.registrar.uwo.ca>)

Student Support Services (<http://westernusc.ca/services/>)

**Distance Studies and OWLSakai:**

Students are advised to log onto the Distance Website at [http://www.registrar.uwo.ca/applying/distance\\_studies/](http://www.registrar.uwo.ca/applying/distance_studies/). Here you will find the Student Handbook, online instructions, examination schedules, instructor information, and a link to OWL.

This course is conducted almost exclusively using OWLSakai (though I am available for in person meetings with those in and around the London area). All lectures, discussion questions, readings, and essay questions are posted there. If you are experiencing problems with OWLSakai, please direct them to the ITS Help Desk at (519) 661-3800.

**Audit:**

Students wishing to audit the course should consult with the instructor prior to or during the first week of classes.

The **Department of Philosophy Policies** which govern the conduct, standards, and expectations for student participation in Philosophy courses is available in the Undergraduate section of the Department of Philosophy website at <http://www.uwo.ca/philosophy/undergraduate/policies.html>. It is your responsibility to understand the policies set out by the Senate and the Department of Philosophy, and thus ignorance of these policies cannot be used as grounds of appeal.