

**WESTERN UNIVERSITY
DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY
Undergraduate Course Outline 2015-2016**

Philosophy 2703G (001): Modes of Normative Reasoning II

Winter Term, 2016

Tu 1:30-2:30 & Th 1:30-3:30

Classroom: HSB 236

Office Hours: Tu 12:30-1:30 & Th 10:30-11:30 & by appointment

Instructor: Barry Hoffmaster

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

The goal of this course and its predecessor companion course (Philosophy 2702F) is to understand the rationality of morality, law, and bioethics by examining the various modes of reasoning used in those domains. This course begins by studying narratives and contextualism. Narrative reasoning inheres in the telling of stories, but how can telling stories be reasoning, and how can that reasoning be rational? Because the real problems that arise in morality, law, and bioethics are highly contextual, how can their abstract principles handle the specificity, particularity, and complexity of those problems? Normative decision making requires judgment, but philosophers ignore judgment because it is not reasoning and because they have no way of accounting for the rationality of judgment. The remainder of the course is devoted to developing a more expansive account of rationality – non-formal reason – that locates the rationality of judgment in the processes from which judgments emanate. At the end of the course, the film, “Twelve Angry Men,” is shown to illustrate, surprisingly, the rationality of the process the jurors used in reaching their verdict. Their verdict might not be right, but it is rational. Judgment is ubiquitous in our lives, and there is more rationality in our lives than in our philosophy.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

This course has three principal objectives:

- 1) To give students an understanding of the different approaches to decision making that are used in ethics, law, and bioethics and the implications these approaches have for our conceptions of these domains;
- 2) To improve students’ comprehension and critical reading skills; and
- 3) To enhance students’ capacities to develop and defend their own positions on issues and to present them in clear, organized, well argued, and well written essays.

TEXT

A Custom Course Book available from the Book Store

REQUIREMENTS

A draft of an essay on an assigned topic, worth 20% of the mark

A revised, expanded version of the draft essay, worth 40% of the mark

A registrar-scheduled April exam (essay format), worth 40% of the mark

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://uwo.ca/philosophy/undergraduate/proceduresappeals.html>. It is your responsibility to understand the policies set out by the Senate and the Department of Philosophy, and thus cannot be used as grounds of appeal.

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.