

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

Philosophy 3170F: Topics in the History of Ethics

<p>Autumn 2015 T, 11:30-12:30 & Th, 10:30-12:30 Location: Talbot College 303 Instructor: Professor Anthony Skelton</p>	<p>Office Location: Stevenson Hall 2131 Office Hours: M, 9:30-10:30 & Th, 3:30-4:30 E-mail: anthonyjskelton@gmail.com Phone: 519-661-2111, ext. 87953</p>
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COURSE DESCRIPTION

Classical utilitarianism is the view according to which the only fundamental requirement of morality is to maximize surplus aggregate well-being. The historically most important defense of this view appears in Henry Sidgwick's (1838-1900) The Methods of Ethics. While The Methods of Ethics has influenced many important philosophers, including G. E. Moore, John Rawls and Derek Parfit, its main meta-ethical and normative theses are not widely known. Accordingly, this course is designed to familiarize students with the nature and significance of those theses.

OBJECTIVES

This course has four main objectives. The first is to acquaint students with Henry Sidgwick's contribution to philosophical ethics. The second is to provide students with a deeper appreciation of the aims and ambitions of the utilitarian tradition of moral thought. The third is to equip students with some of the skills required for conducting philosophical research in ethics and its history. The fourth is to help students develop the ability to express complex philosophical ideas and arguments clearly and economically in writing.

TEXT

Henry Sidgwick, The Methods of Ethics, seventh edition (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1981) (This text is available at the UWO Bookstore.)

COURSE PRESUPPOSITIONS

This course will presuppose some familiarity with the basic concepts and main problems of contemporary moral philosophy. For those wishing to be reminded of these, a good source is R. Shafer-Landau, The Fundamentals of Ethics, second edition. If you wish to possess a greater understanding of utilitarianism and its problems, see William H. Shaw, Contemporary Ethics: Taking Account of Utilitarianism. These are on reserve at Weldon Library.

This is a serious course about a serious subject. To thrive in it you must do the course readings in

advance of class, you must attend class, and you must make a good faith effort to contribute to in-class discussion.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Week One (Sept 10): **Organization and Introduction**

Reading: None

Week Two (Sept 14): **Sidgwick and the Aim of The Methods of Ethics**

Readings: Sidgwick, The Methods of Ethics, Preface to the Sixth Edition, xvi-xxiii & Book I, ch. i

Background Readings: Bart Schultz, [Henry Sidgwick](#)
Anthony Skelton, [Henry Sidgwick](#)

Week Three (Sept 21): **Sidgwick's Meta-ethics**

Reading: Sidgwick, The Methods of Ethics, Book I, ch. iii

Week Four (Sept 28): **Sidgwick on Free Will**

Reading: Sidgwick, The Methods of Ethics, Book I, ch. v

Week Five (Oct 5): **Sidgwick on Egoism**

Readings: Sidgwick, The Methods of Ethics, Book I, ch. vii & Book II, chs. i-iii

NOTE: First Essay Assignment is due on Friday, October 9, 2015.

Week Six (Oct 12): **Sidgwick on Intuitionism**

Readings: Sidgwick, The Methods of Ethics, Book I, ch. viii & Book II, ch. i

Week Seven (Oct 19): **Sidgwick on Promise Keeping**

Reading: Sidgwick, The Methods of Ethics, Book III, ch. vi, 303-311

Week Eight (Oct 26): **Sidgwick on Common Sense**

Reading: Sidgwick, The Methods of Ethics, Book III, ch. xi

NOTE: Fall Study Break, October 29-30, 2015: No Class

Week Nine (Nov 2): **Catch-up**

Reading: No New Reading

NOTE: Second Essay Assignment is due on Friday, November 6, 2015.

Week Ten (Nov 9): **Sidgwick's Axioms**

Reading: Sidgwick, The Methods of Ethics, Book III, xiii

Week Eleven (Nov 16): **Sidgwick's Hedonism**

Reading: Sidgwick, The Methods of Ethics, Book III, xiv

Week Twelve (Nov 23): **Sidgwick's Utilitarianism**

Reading: Sidgwick, The Methods of Ethics, Book IV, chs. ii-iii

Week Thirteen (Nov 30): **Sidgwick's Dualism**

Reading: Sidgwick, The Methods of Ethics, Concluding Chapter

NOTE: Third Essay Assignment is due on Friday, December 4, 2015.

Week Fourteen (Dec 7): **Sidgwick's Dualism**

Reading: Sidgwick, The Methods of Ethics, Concluding Chapter

REQUIREMENTS

Your grade for this course will be based on three 1200-word essays and five in-class quizzes. Each paper is worth 30 percent of the final grade and the quizzes are worth 10 percent of the final grade.

1. Essay

Due date: Friday, October 9, 2015
 Length: No more than 1200 words
 Value: 30% of final grade

2. Essay

Due date: Friday, November 6, 2015
 Length: No more than 1200 words
 Value: 30% of final grade

3. Essay

Due date: Friday, December 4, 2015
 Length: No more than 1200 words
 Value: 30% of final grade

4. In-class Quizzes

When: Sept. 24, Oct. 15, Nov. 5, Nov. 26, and Dec. 8.
 Value: 10% of final grade (best four of five will be counted)
 Format: Quizzes are based on the readings and the lectures. Each quiz will have two questions. You will be asked, for example, to define a key term, to describe a philosophical position or outlook, to briefly outline an argument, to briefly detail an objection to an argument, etc.

REGULATIONS

1. Submission of essays

Please submit your assignments electronically. Do not submit a paper copy.

In order to submit your assignment, visit the OWL site for this course. On the left-hand navigation menu you will find the assignment tool. Click on this tool and you will find the assignment guidelines and basic instructions for submitting your assignment. To submit your assignment upload it and click on the submit button at the bottom of the page.

A corrected version of your paper will be returned to you through the OWL site.

2. Turnitin.com

All required papers will 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 will be included as course 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>).

3. Extensions

If you miss a quiz, you will **NOT** be permitted to make it up. However, with respect to the remainder of the course work, exceptions to the above work submission dates may be granted only as a result of petition to the Academic Counselor of the student's faculty. **Instructors have no authority to waive this requirement, and any unofficial arrangements they make with students will not be respected by the administration.**

All course work (with the exception of final examinations) must be submitted by the last day of classes.

Academic policies on examinations, appeals, absences due to illness, etc. may be found in the 2015-16 Academic Calendar. For further information, contact the Philosophy Undergraduate Counselor, Professor Andrew Botterell, Stevenson Hall 3140, 519-661-2111, ext. 85758, your Faculty's Academic Counselor or the Ombudsperson.

4. Late essays and penalties

An essay will be considered late if it is handed in after the due date without a prearranged extension (or after the extended date, in the case of an extension). Late essays will be penalized at the rate of **three** percentage points per day late. Essays more than ten days late will not be accepted.

5. Plagiarism

Plagiarism is a form of cheating. Plagiarism is unacknowledged copying or paraphrasing of the words or ideas of another person. In general, anyone who learns something from a source (other than course lectures or general background knowledge any student of the course could reasonably be expected to have) and then presents that knowledge as their own discovery is considered to have plagiarized, even if the words used to express the ideas are not exactly the same.

Examples of plagiarism include: misrepresenting co-authored or group work as individually done, cutting and pasting copied or paraphrased work by others in with your own work, paraphrasing or otherwise altering the order of words or phrases and/or substituting words or phrases of similar meaning without acknowledgement that you are doing so, aiding and abetting such offences, among others.

Students must write their essays and assignments in their own words. Whenever students take an idea, or a passage from another author, they must acknowledge their debt both by using quotation marks where appropriate and by proper referencing such as footnotes or citations. Plagiarism is a MAJOR academic offence (see Scholastic Offence Policy in the Western Academic Calendar).

6. E-mail policy

I am **not** able to respond to philosophical concerns or questions over e-mail. I will deal with such concerns or questions during my office hours **only**. If you have a problem turning in an assignment on time or you need to make an appointment with me or you have some private issue you would like to communicate to me, feel free to use e-mail. Otherwise, please attend my office hours or make an appointment to see me.

7. Prerequisites

You are responsible for ensuring that you have successfully completed all course prerequisites and that you have not taken an antirequisite course. Lack of prerequisites may

not be used as a basis of appeal. If you are not eligible for a course, you may be removed from it at any time, and you will receive no fee adjustment. These decisions cannot be appealed.

8. 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.
9. 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.