

THE UNIVERSITY OF WESTERN ONTARIO
DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY
Undergraduate Course Outline 2016-2017
Philosophy 3170F
Topics in the History of Ethics

Term: Autumn 2016
Meeting Times: M, 2:30-3:30; W, 1:30-3:30
Location: University Community Centre 54A
Instructor: Professor Anthony Skelton
Office Location: Stevenson Hall 2150C
Office Hours: M, 3:30-4:30; Th, 1:30-2:30
E-mail: askelto4@uwo.ca
Phone: 519-661-2111, 87953

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course is devoted to some of the main meta-ethical and normative ethical doctrines found in the works of Henry Sidgwick (1838-1900) and G. E. Moore (1873-1958). In Sidgwick, our focus will be on his arguments for the claim that the notion “ought” cannot be defined, that it is possible to establish the truth of utilitarianism (including hedonism), and that there is a dualism at the heart of practical reason (that utilitarianism and egoism are coordinate but conflicting requirements of reason). In Moore, our focus will be on his arguments for the claim that the notion “good” cannot be defined, that more than pleasure has intrinsic value, that egoism is self-contradictory, and that there are organic unities (that the value of a whole is not equivalent to the sum of the value of its parts). In the last few weeks of this course, some time will be devoted to some critical reaction to Sidgwick and Moore.

OBJECTIVES This course has four main objectives. The first is to acquaint students with the contributions to philosophical ethics made by Sidgwick and Moore. The second is to provide students with a deeper appreciation of the core concerns of moral philosophers working just before and just after the turn of the twentieth century. 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.

TEXTS

Henry Sidgwick, *The Methods of Ethics*, seventh edition (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1981).

G. E. Moore, *Principia Ethica*, revised edition (Cambridge: University Press, 1993).

All other readings found on-line through OWL.

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. To make this class a success, you must attend class on a regular basis, do the readings in advance of attending the lectures, and make a good faith effort to contribute to in-class discussion.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Week One (Sept 12): **Organization and Introduction**

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

Week Two (Sept 19): **Sidgwick's Meta-ethics**

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

Week Three (Sept 26): **Sidgwick on Common-sense morality**

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

Week Four (Oct 3): **Sidgwick's Axioms**

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

Week Five (Oct 10): **Sidgwick's Hedonism**

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

NOTE: First Essay Assignment is due on Friday, October 14, 2016.

Week Six (Oct 17): **Sidgwick's Dualism**

Reading: Sidgwick, *The Methods of Ethics*, Book IV, concluding chapter

Week Seven (Oct 24): **Moore's Naturalistic Fallacy**

Reading: Moore, *Principia Ethica*, chapter I

Week Eight (Oct 31): **Moore on Hedonism and Egoism**

Reading: Moore, *Principia Ethica*, chapter III

Week Nine (Nov 7): **Moore on The Ideal**

Reading: Moore, *Principia Ethica*, chapter VI

Week Ten (Nov 14): **Moore on Intrinsic Value**

Reading: Moore, *Ethics*, chapter VII

NOTE: Second Essay Assignment is due on Friday, November 18, 2016.

Week Eleven (Nov 21): **Does Moral Philosophy Rest on a Mistake?**

Reading: Prichard, "Does Moral Philosophy Rest on a Mistake?"

Week Twelve (Nov 28): **Ayer's Critique of Ethics and Theology**

Reading: Ayer, *Language, Truth, and Logic*, chapter VI

Week Thirteen (Dec 5): **Modern Moral Philosophy**

Readings: Anscombe, "Modern Moral Philosophy"

REQUIREMENTS

Your grade for this course will be based on two 1650-word essays and 10 responses to the course readings. Each paper is worth 45 percent of the final grade and the responses are

worth 10 percent of the final grade.

1. Essay

Due date: Friday, October 14, 2016

Length: No more than 1650 words

Value: 45 percent of final grade

2. Essay

Due date: Friday, November 18, 2016

Length: No more than 1650 words

Value: 45 percent of final grade

3. Responses

When: In class, at the beginning of the first class of each week, starting in week two of the term

Length: A response should be no more than 200 words in length

What: A response briefly outlines and critically engages with one of the main claims found in the readings assigned for that week

Number: 10

Value: 10 percent of final grade. Each response is worth one mark.

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

With respect to all 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 2016-17 Academic Calendar. For further information, contact the Philosophy Undergraduate Counselor, Professor Devin Henry, Stevenson Hall 3140, 519-661-2111, ext. 85876, 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.

A response is considered late if it is not handed in at the beginning of class. You are required to submit only ten responses. Therefore, in two weeks of the term you are not required to submit a response.

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. Scholastic offences are taken very seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence: http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf

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. Statement on Use of Electronic Devices

Feel free to use electronic devices in class but please use them for academic purposes only.

8. Prerequisites

Unless you have either the requisites for this course or written special permission form your Dean to enroll in it, you may be removed from this course and it will be deleted from your record. This decision may not be appealed. You will receive no adjustment to your fees in the event that you are dropped from a course for failing to have the necessary prerequisites.

9. 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.

10. 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. Immediate help in the event of a crisis can be had by phoning 519-661-3030 (during class hours) or 519-433-2023 (after class hours and on weekends and holidays).

The policy on Accommodation for Mental Illness is here:
[http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/
accommodation_medical.pdf](http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/accommodation_medical.pdf).

11. Support Services

Registrarial Services: <http://www.registrar.uwo.ca>
Student Support Services: <https://student.uwo.ca/psp/heprdweb/?cmd=login>
Services provided by USC: <http://westernusc.ca/services/>
Student Development Centre: <http://www.sdc.uwo.ca/>