

## **PHIL 3302: ETHICAL THEORY**

The University of Texas at El Paso

Semester: Fall 2018

Location: UGLC, Rm. 210

Times: Monday & Wednesday, 1:30-2:50 pm

### **INSTRUCTOR: DR. CAROLINE T. ARRUDA**

Office Hours:

- Wednesdays, 3:00-5:30 pm
- Other times by pre-arranged appointment

Office: Worrell Hall, Room 306

E-mail: [ctarruda@utep.edu](mailto:ctarruda@utep.edu)

**Course Description:** In this course, we will focus on both normative ethics, which seeks to explain how we ought act, and value theory, which investigates whether the things that we claim to be valuable—say, happiness—are in fact valuable and whether they ought play a role in determining how we ought act. Drawing on resources from both the history of philosophy and contemporary philosophy, we will consider the competing answers to the central questions of each of these subfields of ethics.

**Course Objectives and Goals:** The objectives of this course are fourfold: first, students will gain an understanding of the classical theories in normative ethics (deontology, consequentialism, contractarianism, virtue ethics, among others); second, students will become facile with the contemporary philosophical research on these classical theories with the aim of understanding how (or whether) the former seeks to correct problems with the latter; third, students will develop their argumentation and reasoning skills in the evaluation of the various accounts under consideration.

### **Required Texts (available at the University Bookstore):**

1. *Ethical Theory*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, ed. Russ Shafer-Landau
2. Online course reserves accessible through the Blackboard site for this course.

### **COURSE RESOURCES:**

1. Blackboard site for this course
2. The Writing Center
  - Located in Library 227
  - Visit their website at:  
<http://academics.utep.edu/Default.aspx?alias=academics.utep.edu/writingcenter>
3. Jim Pryor's "Guidelines on Writing a Philosophy Paper":
  - <http://www.jimpryor.net/teaching/guidelines/writing.html>
4. Purdue University Library's Citation Guide:
  - <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/section/2/>
5. UTEP's Instructional Support Services Module "How to Avoid Plagiarism":
  - [http://dmc.utep.edu/home/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=390:part-3-citations&catid=109:internet-research&Itemid=539](http://dmc.utep.edu/home/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=390:part-3-citations&catid=109:internet-research&Itemid=539)

### **MISCELLANEOUS NOTES:**

1. Any changes made to this syllabus will be announced in class.

2. If you contact me by email, I need *at least twenty-four hours* to respond.
3. If you want me to read a paper draft, I need *at least one week* to do so. Please plan ahead.
4. Only students registered for the class are allowed in the class.

### **Grading:**

Class Participation: 10% of semester grade

Weekly Reading Summaries: 2% each x 10 summaries= 20% of semester grade

Take Home Essay Exam #1: 20% of semester grade

Take Home Essay Exam #2: 20% of semester grade

Term Paper: 30% of semester grade

## **COURSE ASSIGNMENTS & REQUIREMENTS**

### **CLASS PARTICIPATION:**

- Students are expected to complete the reading for each class meeting, and they must bring their books (or a photocopy of the reading assignment) to class.
- They will be called upon in class to answer questions about the reading and are expected to make thoughtful comments or to ask well-formulated questions. No question is too simple or naïve to ask!
- Students are expected to maintain a respectful demeanor in class, although they should feel free to criticize and question one another as long as it is done in a respectful fashion.

### **WEEKLY ARGUMENT SUMMARIES:**

- You will write **ten** argument summaries over the course of the semester.
- Your argument summaries **MUST** cover the readings that are designated for argument summaries in the schedule on this syllabus (see below).
- Argument summaries must:
  1. **Be approximately 350-450 words in length per article/reading assignment, but no less than 300 words.**
  2. Be divided or organized by article under discussion.
  3. Cover the designated assigned readings for that class meeting.
  4. Explain the basic thesis of the article, the claims used to support the thesis and the ways in which these claims support the thesis.
  5. Use clear, simple, non-technical language.
  6. Explain any complicated or technical aspects of the main argument.
  7. Define/explain technical terms in simple language.
  8. Summarize any other major arguments that the author discusses, such as refutations of competing views **WHERE SPACE PERMITS.**
  9. **NOT USE ANY OUTSIDE SOURCES.**
  10. NOT cover every detail of the article.
  11. NOTE: Although the primary function of these summaries is for you to take a first pass at explaining the argument, you can, where space permits, raise one objection to the argument.
  12. Be uploaded to Blackboard by class time on the day that the article(s) in question will be discussed.

- Argument summaries will be graded on a Pass/Fail basis. If you meet the requirements above, you pass. Note that **you do not have to correctly summarize the argument to pass. You merely need to make a good faith effort to summarize the argument and meet requirements listed above. This requires, however, that the summary is on the assigned reading; it is not an opportunity for you to write about unrelated topics.**
- For the purposes of calculating your semester grade, this means that you either receive 100% or 0% on the assignment.

**TAKE HOME SHORT ANSWER ESSAY EXAMS:**

- You will write **two** take home short answer essay exams for this course. The essay topics will vary from those that ask you to explain a particular philosopher’s view of, say, moral obligation to those that ask you to compare and to evaluate two philosophers’ views on a question or concept. You will also be asked to formulate objections to arguments, defend arguments against important objections, among other tasks.
- Topics, extensive directions and a rubric will be posted for each exam on the dates listed below under ‘Schedule’.
- Please see the section “Directions for Accessing and Handing in Take Home Exams” on this syllabus.
- In addition to the specific directions for each take home exam, you will be expected to meet all of the requirements for a traditional essay, as specified in the “General Requirements for Writing Assignments” on this syllabus.
- The start dates (the dates on which the exams become available on Blackboard) and the due dates for each exam are listed on the schedule on this syllabus.
- The exams are as follows:
  - **Essay Exam #1:** You must write a minimum of **650 words per essay and you will write two essays**. This assignment is worth **20%** of the semester grade.
  - **Essay Exam #2:** You must write a minimum of **650 words per essay and you will write two essays**. This assignment is worth **20%** of the semester grade.

**TERM PAPER:**

You will write a **1500 word term paper** for this course from a list of assigned topics. See the schedule below for due dates. Also see the section ‘General Requirements for Written Assignments’ on this syllabus.

This paper will require that you do the following (**but please see the more detailed assignment directions posted on Blackboard**):

1. Choose a topic from a list that I provide (or get my approval for a topic).
2. **Read at least one *reputable***, academic source on the topic (e.g., a recent journal article on the topic in an academic journal) and **include it in your paper**.
3. Use the relevant assigned course readings in the paper.
4. See the specific assignment directions under the ‘Assignments’ tab on Blackboard.

**Directions for accessing and handing in all assignments:**

- You must hand in your papers under the ‘Assignments’ tab on the Blackboard site for this course.
- They will be submitted to ‘SafeAssign,’ a database that checks your papers and exams for plagiarism.
- The due dates for each essay exam or paper are listed on the schedule on this syllabus.
- I will return graded assignments through Blackboard, where you can **view the comments and the grade.**

### Grading Scale:

- A 90-100%
- B 80-89%
- C 70-79%
- D 60-69%
- F 59% and below

## COURSE POLICIES

### CLASS PROTOCOL AND CONDUCT:

- Students are expected to arrive on time to class. **Any students arriving to class more than 10 minutes late or leaving more than 10 minutes early will be considered absent.**
- Students must turn off all cell phones, iPads, etc. during class. If your cell phone rings during class, you will be asked to leave.
- Students are expected to refrain from chatting with their neighbors during class. If you do so, you will be asked to leave.

### LAPTOPS, RECORDING DEVICES AND CELL PHONES:

- Using laptops, your cell phone (including text messaging), audio or video recorders or other digital devices during class **is prohibited** (except in individual cases where I have granted permission)
- **Lectures cannot be recorded** (except in individual cases where I have granted permission).

### MAKE-UP POLICY:

- Students will be allowed to make up missed work, including quizzes, ONLY in the case of documented individual or family emergency or illness. Documentation need not and should not contain any personal or private information.
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### LATE ASSIGNMENTS:

- I will deduct one letter grade for each calendar day that an assignment is late.

### EMAIL:

- All class email correspondences will be conducted exclusively through our UTEP email addresses.
- As noted above, if you contact me by email, I need **at least twenty-four hours** to respond.

### BLACKBOARD:

- We will be using the Blackboard shell for our class throughout the semester.
- If you have not done so, you should learn how to use Blackboard.
- I will be using Blackboard to post course materials, including the syllabus, essay topics and your grades for your assignments.

### ATTENDANCE POLICY:

- Attendance is mandatory.

- To account for emergencies, illness, among other possibilities, you are allowed **2 absences.**
- Any absence(s) after your allowed absence will result in the **deduction of one full letter grade from your semester grade.**
- If you miss **4 or more classes, you will automatically fail this course.**

**CENTER FOR ACCOMMODATIONS AND SUPPORT SERVICES (CASS) :**

- “UTEP seeks to provide reasonable accommodations for all qualified individuals with disabilities, including learning disabilities. This university will adhere to all applicable federal, state, and local laws, regulations and guidelines with respect to providing reasonable accommodations as required affording equal educational opportunity. It is the student’s responsibility to register with the CASS Office in the East Union Bldg., Room 106 within the first two weeks of classes, and inform the faculty member to arrange for appropriate accommodations.”
- The CASS Office can also be reached in the following ways:  
 Web: [www.sa.utep.edu/cass](http://www.sa.utep.edu/cass)  
 Phone: (915) 747-5148 voice or TTY  
 Fax: (915) 747-8712  
 E-Mail: [cass@utep.edu](mailto:cass@utep.edu)

**ACADEMIC INTEGRITY:**

- **UTEP’s Policy:** “Scholastic dishonesty (which includes the attempt of any student to present the work of another as his or her own, or any work which s(he) has not honestly performed, or attempting to pass any examination by improper means) is a serious offense and will subject the student to disciplinary action. The aiding and abetting of a student in any dishonesty is held to be an equally serious offense. All alleged acts of scholastic dishonesty should be reported to the Dean of Students for disposition. It is the Dean of Students’ responsibility to investigate each allegation, dismiss the allegation, or proceed with disciplinary action in a manner which provides the accused student his or her rights of due process.” See the Dean of Students office for further information at <http://www.utep.edu/dos/acadintg.htm>.
- **Students who violate the above policy will be reported to the appropriate academic office, may receive a zero or ‘F’ for the assignment in question and may receive a zero or ‘F’ for the semester.**

**GENERAL REQUIREMENTS FOR ALL WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS:**

(IN ADDITION TO THE SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS FOR EACH ASSIGNMENT)

- Essays should be written using a formal tone, must be edited for spelling and grammatical errors, and should include a clear thesis statement that answers the assigned question.
- Essays must make use of the relevant assigned course readings.
- *Reputable, academic sources* may be used **ONLY FOR THOSE ASSIGNMENTS WHERE DOING SO IS EXPLICITLY ALLOWED.**
- **Some assignments for this course prohibit the use of outside sources. Please follow this requirement where applicable.**
- Essays must have internal citations and include a formal bibliography. Both MLA and Chicago Style formatting are acceptable.
- Essays must be double-spaced, have a 1-inch margin, and be written using a 12 point font. They should include page numbers in the bottom right-hand corner of the page.
- Essays must include a word count underneath the author’s name.
- Essays will be handed in on the Blackboard site for this

course.

## **TENTATIVE SCHEDULE**

Note: Reading assignments are listed on the day for which they should be completed.

Key:

\*= Reading available on Blackboard

^ = Must be subject of weekly reading/argument summary

### **Week 1: Introduction**

08/27: Introduction to the course

08/29: Preface to *Ethical Theory* (ed. R. Shafer-Landau)

“Introduction” to *The Fundamentals of Ethics* by R. Shafer-Landau\*

### **Week 2: Ethics and Religion**

09/3: No Class (University Holiday)

09/5: “Euthyphro” by Plato

### **Week 3: Value Theory**

09/10: “Hedonism” by J.S. Mill ^

09/12: “The Experience Machine” by R. Nozick ^

### **Week 4: Value Theory**

09/17: “What Makes Someone’s Life Go Best” by D. Parfit ^

09/19: “What Things Are Good?” W.D. Ross

### **Week 5: Consequentialism**

09/24: “Utilitarianism” by J.S. Mill ^

09/26: “Extreme and Restricted Utilitarianism” by J.J.C. Smart ^

**09/29: Take Home Short Answer Essay Exam #1 available on Blackboard at 9 pm**

### **Week 6: Consequentialism**

10/01: “Rule-Consequentialism” by B. Hooker ^

10/03: [Catch up day in case we are behind in our discussion of the readings; no reading assignment]

**10/04: Take Home Short Answer Essay Exam #1 DUE via Blackboard at 9 pm**

### **Week 7: Consequentialism (continued)**

10/08: "What is Wrong with Slavery" by R.M. Hare

10/10: "What is Wrong with Slavery" by R.M. Hare (continue discussion)

### **Week 8: Deontology**

10/15: "Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals" by I. Kant

10/17: "The Rationality of Side Constraints" by R. Nozick ^

### **Week 9: Contractarianism and Contractualism**

10/22: "Leviathan" by T. Hobbes ^

10/24: "Psychological Egoism" by J. Feinberg

**10/26: Take Home Short Answer Essay Exam #2 available on Blackboard at 9 pm**

### **Week 10: Contractarianism and Contractualism**

10/29: "Why Contractarianism" by D. Gauthier

10/31: "A Theory of Justice" by J. Rawls ^

**11/2: Take Home Short Answer Essay Exam #2 DUE via Blackboard at 9 pm**

### **Week 11: Virtue Ethics**

11/5: "The Nature of Virtue" by Aristotle

**-Term Paper Topics Available on Blackboard at 9:00 pm**

11/7: "The Nature of Virtue" by Aristotle (continue discussion)

### **Week 12: Virtue Ethics**

11/12: "Normative Virtue Ethics" by R. Hursthouse ^

11/14: [Catch up day in case we are behind in our discussion of the readings; no reading assignment]

### **Week 13: Why Be Moral?**

11/19: "The Immoralist's Challenge" by Plato

11/21: "Morality as a System of Hypothetical Imperatives" by P. Foot

### **Week 14: Why Be Moral?**

11/26: "Ethical Egoism" by J. Rachels

11/28: "Moral Saints" Susan Wolf

**Week 15:**

**12/3: Term paper group work; please bring a copy of your term paper draft. It will be collected.**

**12/5: Term paper group work; please bring a copy of your term paper draft. It will be collected.**

**12/10: TERM PAPERS DUE BY 9:00 PM VIA BLACKBOARD (NO LATE PAPERS ACCEPTED)**