

# Huron University College

## Department of Philosophy

### Philosophy 3720F

### Normative Ethics



**Professor:** Dr. Steve D'Arcy  
**Course Time & Location:** Wednesdays 9:30-11:30am;  
Fridays 9:30-10:30pm, in Huron Room W108  
**E-mail Address:** [sdarcy@huron.uwo.ca](mailto:sdarcy@huron.uwo.ca)  
**Telephone:** (519) 438-7224 ext. 606  
**Web Site:** <http://sdarcy.edublogs.org>  
**1st Term Office Hours:** Mondays and Tuesdays, from  
2:30pm to 4:30pm (Huron, Room A303)

## Course Description

When moral philosophers engage in normative ethical theory, they seek to articulate and justify the systems of normative standards – for the assessment of action or of character – that we use to guide our moral lives. This course is an advanced study of theoretical frameworks in normative ethical theory, such as consequentialism, deontology, and virtue ethics. Before turning to leading contemporary formulations of these theoretical standpoints, however, we spend the first part of this course on an examination of various ways of interpreting ethical deliberation as a reason-guided process.

## Required Readings

1. Course readings are compiled in a **Coursepack**, available for purchase from InPrint, downstairs in the UCC (near the Bookstore).

## Grade Components

### 1. Five Comment Sheets

Each Comment Sheet is worth 10% of the final grade (for a total of **50%**). Each is to be single-spaced, and a maximum of one page in length (Times New Roman font, size 12, with standard one-inch margins). These are to be submitted no later than the beginning of the *first class* in which the relevant reading is to be discussed. Each Sheet should summarize the argument of the reading, and also offer critical commentary of some kind, indicating a thoughtful engagement with the material. Late submissions cannot be graded.

### 2. Final Examination

Worth **40%** of final grade  
Written as scheduled by the Registrar during the December Examination Period

### 3. Class Participation

Worth **10%** of final grade  
Based on overall assessment by the instructor, taking attendance, pre-class preparation, and quality of classroom contributions into account.

## **Prerequisite Information**

Students are responsible for ensuring that they have successfully completed all course prerequisites. Unless you have either the requisites for this course or written special permission from 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.

**Antirequisite:** Philosophy 3700E.

**Prerequisite:** Philosophy 2700F/G or 2800F/G or 2801F/G or 2821F/G or 2822F/G.

## **Policy on Accommodation for Medical Absences**

For all work in this course, a student who is unable to complete the assigned work for a medical reason must present documentation indicating that the student was seriously affected by illness and could not reasonably be expected to meet his/her academic responsibilities. Huron students should take their medical documentation to the Academic Counsellor, Academic Services Centre at Huron University College, together with a Request for Relief specifying the nature of the accommodation requested. Documentation for non-Huron students must be submitted as soon as possible to the student's Faculty Dean's office. The request and documentation will be assessed and appropriate accommodation will be determined by the Dean's office in consultation with the instructor. Academic accommodation will be granted ONLY where the documentation indicates that the onset, duration and severity of the illness are such that the student could not reasonably be expected to complete his/her academic responsibilities.

The UWO Student Medical Certificate (SMC)

([https://studentservices.uwo.ca/secure/medical\\_document.pdf](https://studentservices.uwo.ca/secure/medical_document.pdf)) and Request for Relief (<http://www.huronuc.ca/pdf/AcademicCounsellingRequestforReliefFormMar08.pdf>) are available at the Student Centre Website (<https://studentservices.uwo.ca/secure/index.cfm>), the Huron University College Academic Counselling website ([http://www.huronuc.ca/faculty\\_arts\\_social\\_science/academic\\_counselling/](http://www.huronuc.ca/faculty_arts_social_science/academic_counselling/)) or from the Academic Services Centre at Huron.

## **Policy on Accommodation for Non-Medical Absences**

Documentation and a request for relief must be submitted to the Academic Services Centre in advance in order for accommodation for non-medical absences from tests and examinations to be considered.

All written submissions, in the absence of medical accommodation, will receive a deduction of 2% of the assignment grade, per weekday, after the deadline. Work submitted after the last day of class, without a medical accommodation, will not receive a grade.

## **Technology**

It is not appropriate to use technology (such as, but not limited, to laptops, PDAs, cell phones) in the classroom for non-classroom activities. Such activity is disruptive and is distracting to other students and to the instructor, and can inhibit learning. Students are expected to respect the classroom environment and to refrain from inappropriate use of technology and other electronic devices in class.

## **Statement on Academic Offences**

Plagiarism: 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. 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/handbook/appeals/scholoff.pdf> .

Plagiarism is an academic offence and will be treated as such. Students who are in doubt as to the nature of this offence should consult their instructor, Department Chair or the Dean, as well as the *Huron University College Statement on Plagiarism*, available at the reference desk in the HUC Library and at <http://www.huronuc.on.ca/pdf/FASSonPlagiarism.pdf>. In addition, students may seek guidance from a variety of current style manuals available at the Reference Desk in the HUC Library. Information about these resources can be found at:  
[http://www.huronuc.ca/library/research\\_guides\\_and\\_handouts/](http://www.huronuc.ca/library/research_guides_and_handouts/).

## Plagiarism Detection Software

All required papers (or assignments) 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> ).

## Support Services

Students in the Department of Philosophy requiring academic counselling concerning courses and modules in Philosophy should see the Chair, Department of Philosophy, Dr. David Conter.

Other academic services such as academic counselling, community-based learning, career development, writing services, cross-cultural services, international opportunities are available through the Academic Services Centre: West Wing, Huron University College, and  
[http://huronuc.ca/faculty\\_arts\\_social\\_science/academic\\_counselling/](http://huronuc.ca/faculty_arts_social_science/academic_counselling/).

## Course-related Resources

The following web site directs students to resources related to this course:  
<http://sdarcy.edublogs.org>

See also the WebCT course site, to which assignments must be submitted:  
<http://webct.uwo.ca/>

---

## Tentative Schedule of Readings:

### 5 September: Introduction to the Course

- *Reading:* Syllabus

### PART ONE: MORALITY AND PRACTICAL REASON

#### 10 September: Three dimensions of practical reasoning

- *Reading:* Jürgen Habermas, "On the Pragmatic, the Ethical, and the Moral Employments of Practical Reason"

#### 12 September: Three dimensions of practical reasoning, continued

- *Reading:* Jürgen Habermas, "On the Pragmatic, the Ethical, and the Moral Employments of Practical Reason"

#### 17 September: Are some ethical views rationally superior to others?

- *Reading:* Charles Taylor, "Explanation and Practical Reason"

#### 19 September: Are some ethical views rationally superior to others?

- *Reading:* Charles Taylor, "Explanation and Practical Reason"
- 24 September: Rationality**
- *Reading:* David Gauthier, "Why Contractarianism?"
- 26 September: A contractarian approach to practical reasoning**
- *Reading:* David Gauthier, "Why Contractarianism?"
- 1 October: "Non-cognitivism" and "prescriptivism"**
- *Reading:* R.M. Hare, "A Moral Argument"
- 3 October: Universalization in ethics**
- *Reading:* R.M. Hare, "A Moral Argument"

## **PART TWO: CONSEQUENTIALIST THEORIES OF OBLIGATION**

- 8 October: Act utilitarianism**
- *Reading:* J.J.C. Smart, "Extreme and Restricted Utilitarianism"
- 10 October: Rule utilitarianism**
- *Reading:* John Rawls, "Two Concepts of Rules"
- 15 October: Rule utilitarianism, continued; some influential criticisms of utilitarianism**
- *Reading:* John Rawls, "Two Concepts of Rules"
- *Reading:* Bernard Williams, "A Critique of Utilitarianism"

## **PART THREE: DEONTOLOGICAL THEORIES OF OBLIGATION**

- 17 October: What is deontological ethics?**
- *Reading:* Nancy Ann Davis, "Contemporary Deontology"
- 22 October: The "trolley problem" thought-experiment**
- *Reading:* Judith Jarvis Thomson, "The Trolley Problem"
- 24 October: The "trolley problem" thought-experiment, continued**
- *Reading:* Judith Jarvis Thomson, "The Trolley Problem"
- 29 October: The basis for deontological constraints**
- *Reading:* Thomas Nagel, "Personal Rights and Public Space"
- 31 October: The basis for deontological constraints, continued**
- *Reading:* Thomas Nagel, "Personal Rights and Public Space"
- 5 November: Contractualism**
- *Reading:* Thomas Scanlon, "Contractualism and Utilitarianism"
- 7 November: Contractualism, continued**
- *Reading:* Thomas Scanlon, "Contractualism and Utilitarianism"
- 12 November: Discourse ethics**
- *Reading:* Jürgen Habermas, "A Genealogical Analysis of the Cognitive Content of Morality"
- 14 November: Discourse ethics**
- *Reading:* Jürgen Habermas, "A Genealogical Analysis of the Cognitive Content of Morality"

## **PART FOUR: NEO-ARISTOTELIAN THEORIES OF VIRTUE**

- 19 November: A return to Aristotle?**
- *Reading:* Elizabeth Anscombe, "Modern Moral Philosophy"
- *Reading:* Martha Nussbaum, "Non-Relative Virtues: An Aristotelian Approach"
- 21 November: A non-relativist virtue ethics**
- *Reading:* Martha Nussbaum, "Non-Relative Virtues: An Aristotelian Approach"
- 26 November: MacIntyre's virtue ethics**
- *Reading:* Alisdair MacIntyre, "The Nature of the Virtues"
- 28 November: MacIntyre's virtue ethics**
- *Reading:* Alisdair MacIntyre, "The Nature of the Virtues"
- 3 December: Is there a distinctively female kind of ethics or ethical theory?**
- *Readings:* Annette C. Baier, "What Do Women Want in a Moral Theory?"
- *Reading:* Jean Grimshaw, "The Idea of a Female Ethic"