

## VALUES AND SOCIETY (FALL 2016)

MWF 3: 00PM - 3: 50PM

[Being taught at MacEwan University, Canada]

### Calendar Description

This course provides an introduction to philosophy through a study of issues in ethics and social-political philosophy. Topics may include relativism, justice, rights, obligation, utilitarianism, deontology and social contract theory. Contemporary issues in ethics and politics may also be discussed.

### Course Description

In this section, you will be introduced to the discipline of philosophy as a study of one's relation to oneself, to others, and to the society. Our inquiries on ethics and social-political philosophy will be shaped by questions about value stemming from the influential philosophical works we cover. The course will be divided into three main sections: Philosophy and Life – Living with oneself, Ethics – Living with others, and Social-Political Philosophy – Living as a Community. In the first section, we will focus on such questions as what makes a life worth living and whether the meaning or value of one's life is given or created. In other two sections, the underlying guiding question will be how our interaction with others and our place in the society shape what is of value and what should be of value in our lives. In the ethics section, we are going to investigate how our moral conduct should be determined and we will read general moral theories of what makes it morally right or wrong to do something and why we should be moral. In the social-political philosophy section, we will look at theories geared to understanding what our political communities are and what they ought to be. We will focus on the question of justice and the phenomenon of oppression and examine criticisms of racism, capitalism, and patriarchy.

### Course Objectives

Upon completion of this course, students will be able to:

- Identify several main problems and questions in ethics and social-political philosophy
- Interpret the responses of philosophers to the identified philosophical questions
- Analyze and assess the consistency and plausibility of the philosophies included in the course readings
- Compare and contrast diverse philosophical positions
- Compose consistent and persuasive essays

### Required Texts

Plato, *Symposium*, trans. Alexander Nehamas and Paul Woodruff (Indianapolis/Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company, 1989).

Other required readings will be available on Ares Course Reserves, to which you will have access through Blackboard.

### Course Requirements

Weekly Take-Home Questions	20% (2% each)
Plato Test	10%
Essays	40% (20% each)
Final Exam	30%

### Attendance and Participation

Even though there is no official grade assigned for attendance and participation, please do not forget that much of the value you will get from this class will come from your interaction with your classmates and myself. Regular attendance and active participation is important to the class dynamic and to your learning process.

Weekly Take-Home Questions (THQs) (20% [2% each])

During the term you will be asked to write 12 short responses to questions assigned about the reading(s) prior to the lecture covering that reading/those readings. You can choose either of two options: (1) You can submit 10 THQs and your grade will be based on them or (2) You can submit more than 10 THQs, and 10 of the THQs you got the highest grades on will count towards your grade. The THQs will be posted on Blackboard a week in advance, and are due the following Monday at the beginning of the class (with the exception of Week 6 – THQ5). After the lecture starts, namely after 3:00PM, you can no longer hand them in. They can be hand-written or typed but should not exceed one page in length. There is absolutely no possibility of extension or make-ups. You should keep them for exam review and in case I make a mistake calculating your final THQ-grade.

The THQs, which will normally include at least two questions, are graded in the following way:

2 = both questions are answered and answers show good understanding of the reading material;

1.50 = both questions are answered but there are signs of minor confusion;

1 = only one question is answered, or both questions are answered but one is wrong or both show that the student has read the material (or parts of the material) but there is lack of understanding;

0.5 = only one question is answered and the answer is confused or both questions are answered but shows significant misunderstanding in such a way that it is unclear whether the student has read the material carefully.

0 = no answer or answer does not show that the student has read the material.

Some Tips on THQs

- Answer the THQs in your own words; do not simply quote some passage of the text but include in parentheses the number(s) of the page(s) where you found the answer.
- Your responses to the THQs should be short and to the point. Don't waste words simply explaining everything in the readings. The questions are asking specific things about the readings. Read them carefully, answer directly to the question and avoid irrelevant details. These are very short pieces of writing and you can't afford to ramble.
- Write as clearly as possible. Avoid jargon, long words, and convoluted sentences. Don't try to sound sophisticated or 'philosophical': convey what you have to say as explicitly and unambiguously as you can. Keep sentences and paragraphs relatively short.
- Be sure to proofread your final draft: missing words, misspellings, and poor syntax all serve to undermine the reader's confidence.

Reading Assignments

Students are expected to read the material we cover in depth. The THQs are designed to foster a more directed reading of the texts prior to lectures. During the lectures, we will go through the texts in more detail to help you develop a deeper understanding. If you do not read the texts prior to the lectures, it will be difficult to achieve this goal. In order to get the most out of this class, it will also be prudent to reread the texts after the lectures. While reading the material, always note the parts that you are having difficulty with or that you find problematic. Ask me about them during the class or in my office hours. I am here to help you.

Plato Test (10%)

You will write an in-class test on Plato's *Symposium* and the parts of the *Republic* we will cover in class. It will be administered at the beginning of class on September 26. I will provide further information about the test as the date approaches.

Essays (40% [20% each])

You will write two essays (900-1250 words in length, typed, double-spaced, with normal margins and font) on a question from a list of topics assigned by me. The first paper topics will be distributed on Sep-

tember 19 and they are due on October 7. The second paper topics will be distributed on October 17 and they are due on November 4. Papers that are handed in late will be docked 5% per day. Papers will not be accepted more than 5 days after the deadline. So please make sure to hand the assignments in on time. I will hold a paper-writing workshop on September 23. You are also encouraged to come to the office hours to discuss drafts of your paper with me.

### Final Exam (30%)

There will be a final, cumulative exam during the exam period at the end of the term. On the last day of class (December 5), there will be a review to prepare you for the exam.

SCHEDULE		
PHILOSOPHY AND LIFE		
Living with oneself		
WEEK 1	Sep 7-9 Wed, Fri	Introduction
WEEK 2	Sep 12-14-16 Mon, Wed, Fri	<b>What's love got to do with it: Beauty, virtue, knowledge, and the good life</b> Plato, <i>Symposium</i> THQ1 due at the beginning of class on Sep 12, Mon
WEEK 3	Sep 19-21 Mon, Wed	Plato, <i>Symposium</i> , cont. Plato, <i>Republic</i> , Book V, 474c-480a (pp. 167-175); Book VI, 506d-511e (pp. 201-207); Book VII, 514a-520a (pp. 208-213) Plato, <i>Apology</i> , pp. 21-22; 35e-38b (pp. 39-41) THQ2 due at the beginning of class on Sep 19, Mon First Essay Topics distributed on Sep 19, Mon
	Sep 23 Fri	Paper Writing Workshop
WEEK 4	Sep 26-28-30 Mon, Wed, Fri	<b>The meaning of life: Given or Created?</b> Albert Camus, "The Myth of Sisyphus" Thomas Nagel, "The Absurd" Plato Test at the beginning of class on Sep 26, Mon THQ3 due at the beginning of class on Sep 26, Mon
ETHICS		
Living with others		
WEEK 5	Oct 3-5-7 Mon, Wed, Fri	<b>Duty, Absolute Moral Principles and Moral Perfection</b> Immanuel Kant, <i>Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals</i> , Selections from the Preface and Section I, 4:387-4:402 (pp. 43-57) THQ4 due at the beginning of class on Oct 3, Mon First Essay due at the beginning of class on Oct 7, Fri
WEEK 6	Oct 10 Mon	<b>THANKSGIVING – UNIVERSITY CLOSED</b>
	Oct 12-14 Wed, Fri	Immanuel Kant, <i>Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals</i> , Selections from Section II, 4:412-4:424 (pp. 66-75); 4:427-4:430 (pp. 78-81) THQ5 due at the beginning of class on Oct 12, Wed

WEEK 7	Oct 17-19-21 Mon, Wed, Fri	<b>Happiness and How to Calculate Our Actions' Moral Worth</b> John Stuart Mill, "What Utilitarianism is," in <i>Utilitarianism</i> THQ6 due at the beginning of class on Oct 17, Mon <b>Second Essay Topics distributed on Oct 17, Mon</b>
WEEK 8	Oct 24-26-28 Mon, Wed, Fri	<b>Virtue Ethics</b> Julia Annas, "Being Virtuous and Doing the Right Thing" THQ7 due at the beginning of class on Oct 24, Mon
SOCIAL-POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY Living as a community		
WEEK 9	Oct 31, Nov 2-4 Mon, Wed, Fri	<b>Neo-liberalism and Distributive Justice</b> John Rawls, Selections from <i>Theory of Justice</i> THQ8 due at the beginning of class on Oct 31, Mon <b>Second Essay due at the beginning of class on Nov 4, Fri</b>
WEEK 10	Nov 7-9 Mon, Wed	<b>Racism and Oppression</b> Kwame Anthony Appiah, "Racisms" THQ9 due at the beginning of class on Nov 7, Mon
	Nov 11 Fri	<b>REMEMBRANCE DAY – UNIVERSITY CLOSED</b>
WEEK 11	Nov 14-16-18 Mon, Wed, Fri	<b>Capitalism and Oppression</b> Karl Marx, Alienated Labor Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, <i>Communist Manifesto</i> THQ10 due at the beginning of class on Nov 14, Mon
WEEK 12	Nov 21-23-25 Mon, Wed, Fri	<b>Feminism and Oppression</b> Marilyn Frye, "Oppression" Iris Marion Young, "Five Faces of Oppression" THQ11 due at the beginning of class on Nov 21, Mon
WEEK 13	Nov 28-30, Dec 2 Mon, Wed, Fri	Sally Haslanger, "Future Genders? Future Races?" THQ12 due at the beginning of class on Nov 28, Mon
WEEK 14	Dec 5 Mon	Exam Review
<b>FINAL EXAM TBA*</b> *BE SURE TO VERIFY THE TIME, DATE AND LOCATION OF THE FINAL EXAM WHEN THE FINAL EXAM SCHEDULE IS POSTED ONLINE AT <a href="http://MacEwan.ca/Exams">MacEwan.ca/Exams</a> .		