

Philosophy 3400 - **Ethical Theory**

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Office Hours: **2:30-4:00 MW** and by appointment

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OBJECTIVE

A general objective is to acquire some familiarity with Western philosophy and some skill in philosophical thinking. A more specific objective is to acquire some familiarity with those classical theories of the origin and nature of morality that inform Western thought about ethics right down to the present.

TEXTS

Steven M. Cahn and Peter Markie, editors, *Ethics: History, Theory, and Contemporary Issues*, Second Edition (Oxford University Press)

REQUIREMENTS

1. A 5-minute, multiple-choice/true-false **reading quiz** will be announced for each reading assignment. No late reading quizzes will be accepted, but the worst two grades will be dropped. The average of the remaining grades will = 20% course grade.
2. **Three tests**—one after each course section outlined below—will be administered; each = 15% course grade.
3. **Friday discussion sessions**—attendance (more than two absences will result in a lowered grade for this item) and participation required = 20% course grade.

TENTATIVE SCHEDULE

Semester Weeks

Topics

1. Introduction to ethical theory: religion and ethics
Read: Exodus 19-23 (from any Bible) & Plato, Euthyphro, pp. 5-16.
2. Egoism and social contract theory
Read: Plato, Republic, Bks I and II, pp. 44-78
3. Egoism and the social contract continued
Read: Hobbes, Leviathan, pp. 224-245; Rawls pp. 541-556.
4. Plato's alternative theory
Read: Plato, Republic, Bks III and IV, pp. 79-103.
5. **REVIEW and FIRST TEST**

6. The moral sentiments
Read: Hume, Enquiry (excerpts), pp. 261-286.
7. An evolutionary account of ethics
Read: Darwin, Ch. 4, Descent of Man (handout).
8. Deontology
Read: Kant, Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals (first half), pp. 287-304.
9. Deontology continued
Read: Kant, Foundations (second half), pp. 304-325.
10. **REVIEW and SECOND TEST**
11. Utilitarianism
Read: Bentham, Principles of Morals and Legislation, pp. 326-342.
12. Utilitarianism continued
Read: Mill, Utilitarianism, pp. 343-364.
13. Virtue ethics
Read: Aristotle, Nichomachean Ethics, Bks I and II, pp. 130-146.
14. Virtue ethics continued
Read: Aristotle, Nichomachean Ethics, Bks VI and X, pp. 157-163; 175-183.
15. Catch up and Review
16. **THIRD TEST**

ATTENDANCE AND GRADING POLICIES

Regular attendance is strongly recommended. Because material on tests will draw from information and interpretation developed in class, absenteeism may seriously affect your grade. All graded work may be reviewed upon appeal to insure against error. 90-100 = A; 80-89 = B; 70-79 = C; 60-69 = D; 0-59 = F.