

## **PHIL 2200: Introduction to Ethics**

**Dr Piers Stephens**

**Course Description:** In this course, we shall begin by looking at some of the history and key thinkers in the Western tradition of ethics, in the process examining the most important theoretical frameworks by which moral problems have been conceived. Our initial focus will be on the challenge posed by moral scepticism – the question of *why* we should be good – and after using this as a guiding question, we shall turn to examining practical contemporary moral issues through the lenses of the ethical traditions already discussed. Students will be encouraged to explore and systematically develop their own views and arguments in relation to the theories and issues involved, especially by engaging critically with the classic perspectives, and should thus develop a deeper philosophical understanding both of the field of ethics itself and some particular contemporary moral concerns by the conclusion of the course.

### **Required Reading**

Duncan Richter, *Why Be Good? A Historical Introduction to Ethics* (abbreviated as WBG).

Hugh LaFollette (Ed), *Ethics in Practice* (3<sup>rd</sup> edition), (abbreviated as EIP).

Students may also find helpful tips about creative thinking and approaches to problem solving in ethics from Anthony Weston's *A Practical Companion to Ethics* (3<sup>rd</sup> edition). Students who are inexperienced in essay writing and/or philosophical argument may also find another book helpful, namely *A Rulebook for Arguments*, also by Anthony Weston.

### **Course Requirements:**

Two short essays (5-7 pages each) - 25% each

Four quizzes – 3.75% each (15% total)

Breakout session attendance – 5%

Research essay (9 – 11 pages) – 30%

### **Contact Details, Reading Requirements, etc**

My office hours, in Peabody Hall room 121, are from 11.30am-1.00pm on Mondays and Wednesdays, or by appointment. Gregory Moss's office hours are from 2.30-3.30pm on Thursdays and Fridays. I can also be contacted at other times if urgent, so please do feel free to contact me with any questions or worries. The reading allocated below on a session by session basis is required and will be central to the business of each session. My email address is piers@uga.edu

## **Attendance & Essay Submission Policy**

Essays should be submitted to Gregory Moss via email on his address of greg@uga.edu by midnight on the deadline date given below, with a hard copy to follow at your earliest opportunity. Unexcused lateness in emailed essay submissions will be dealt with via a docking system, in which 5% is removed from the essay grade for each day late; however, extensions may be negotiated if absolutely necessary so long as prior notice is given, ideally at least 24 hours *before* the essay deadline in question. Attendance is mandatory at breakout sessions, and a register will be taken at these smaller gatherings, with 5% of final grade dependent on good attendance. Attendance is not technically mandatory at lectures; however, please note that *relevant extra material not present in the set reading will be presented and explained in the lectures. This material will be strongly represented in the quizzes, and so students who skip lectures do so at their own risk in terms of impact on their grades. Reading the set material is thus the basis upon which the lectures build; the lectures and the reading are set up to complement each other and both are necessary for full understanding of the course.*

## **Assignments, Integrity and Academic Honesty Issues**

Intellectual integrity is the foundation of the academic community, and thus of the value of your work and grades. Violations of academic honesty and integrity therefore strike at the heart of the UGA learning community and constitute a serious offence against your fellow students and instructors. Such violations include cheating, plagiarism, fabrication and misrepresentation of work (e.g. by distorting sources or claiming sole authorship of a collective work), submitting the same paper or extremely similar papers for two different courses without the consent of both instructors, the obstruction or sabotaging of others' work, or assisting others in engaging in any of these breaches of academic honesty. You should inform yourself of the UGA Honor Code and Honesty Policy to this end. Full details of the UGA Academic Honesty Policy, "A Culture of Honesty" are given at [http://www.uga.edu/honesty/ahpd/culture\\_honesty.htm](http://www.uga.edu/honesty/ahpd/culture_honesty.htm) and you are encouraged to view it. *All academic work must meet the standards contained in "A Culture of Honesty." All students are responsible to inform themselves about those standards before performing any academic work.* If students are in any doubt as to the validity of their likely actions in constructing a piece of work, they should please see me for advice first. You will find below the detailed syllabus in terms of scheduling and reading obligations. *The course syllabus is a general plan for the course; deviations announced to the class by the instructor may be necessary.*

## **Quizzes**

Four quizzes will be carried out during breakout sessions over the course of the semester. These will test your knowledge both of the set reading and of the material presented in the lectures. In order to encourage you to make your set reading a regular routine rather than have you do pre-test cramming, and to maximally ensure that diligent students are rewarded, the timing of these quizzes will remain unscheduled. *Accordingly, your best*

*basic strategy for success in the quizzes and the course overall is to ensure that you stay up to date with your reading and lecture attendance.*

### **Grades and Grading Rationale: Essays**

The basic grading scheme and rationale for the essays is as follows:

<i>Grade</i>	<i>Qualitative rationale</i>
A, A-	Excellent grasp of essential information, well supported use of materials to argue logically to a well developed conclusion, strong critical reasoning, good use of secondary sources and examples, presence of intelligent originality and good writing skills
B++, B+ B+?	Sound grasp of essentials, clear basic argument, presence of acceptable critical reasoning and use of secondary sources, articulate and coherent writing
B, B-	Broadly sound grasp of essentials but argumentative direction of essay unclear, incomplete or flawed; competent but limited use of sources, acceptable writing standards
C+, C, C-	Basic grasp of essentials present but questionable level of overall understanding; lack of clear argument/direction; quality of source use uneven or poor; writing quality uneven or poor
D	Barely adequate knowledge and understanding of essentials; minimally acceptable use of argument and sources; uneven or poor writing quality
F	Fail. Inadequate knowledge, understanding and/or argument; uneven or poor writing quality

### **Withdrawal Policy**

Early semester departures aside, the withdrawal deadline is October 22<sup>nd</sup>. If you wish to withdraw and are in good standing in terms of the course requirements (i.e. all required work has been submitted and is of pass quality, and your attendance record is acceptable), then a grade of WP will be allocated. Similarly, if you anticipate a possible need to withdraw on compassionate grounds (e.g. verifiable illness, employment or other pressures, etc) then please contact either Gregory Moss or me to discuss the issue and we will do our best to help you resolve the issue without disadvantage. However, if a student's work record does not pass the basic course requirements and no mitigating

circumstances have been reported as present, then a WF will have to be issued. The reasoning for this is simple: grades exist to reflect diligence and the ability shown in assignments, and it is unfair to students who have worked hard to keep up but who, for whatever reason, feel the need to withdraw if they then see equivalent WP grades given to other students who have failed to fulfil basic course requirements. So please keep up with the duties, but feel free to contact me or Gregory swiftly if you are experiencing difficulties – we are happy to help, but we can't do so unless we know there's a problem.

### **Detailed Schedule of Reading and Assignments**

8/17 Syllabus outline and thematic introduction.

8/19 Reading: WBG 1-28

8/24 WBG 29-46

8/26 EIP 45-55

8/31 WBG 47-66

9/2 WBG 67-85 **Short Essay 1 Assigned**

9/7 Labor Day – holiday

9/9 WBG 86-104

9/14 WBG 105-122

9/16 WBG 123-141

9/21 EIP 31-44

9/23 WBG 142-159

9/28 EIP 22-30 **Essay 1 Deadline; Essay 2 Assigned**

9/30 WBG 160-178

10/5 WBG 179-208

10/7 EIP 117-125

10/12 EIP 137-147

10/14 EIP 171-180

10/19 EIP 181-191

10/21 EIP 233-241

10/26 EIP 242-253 **Essay 2 Deadline; Essay 3 Options Assigned**

10/28 EIP 254-274

11/2 EIP 373-376, 411-420

11/4 EIP 470-491

11/9 EIP 562-577

11/11 EIP 578-90

11/16 EIP 611-632

11/18 EIP 633-656

11/23-11/27 **Thanksgiving Break**

11/30 EIP 657-679

12/2 EIP 680-700

12/7 EIP 701-725 **Essay 3 Deadline**