You can contact me by e-mail or phone to set an appointment time. I would prefer to handle substantive matters in person rather than by e-mail or on the phone, including questions or concerns about the readings, written assignments, and classroom discussions. This gives me a better opportunity to get to know you as individuals. I will, however, respond to short and simple requests via e-mail or phone.

Course Description

This course will introduce students to a variety of classic thinkers and texts in the Western tradition of philosophical and theological ethics. These sources will then serve as a resource for thinking critically about a variety of contemporary moral questions and problems. The final objective is to promote a more sophisticated grasp of the moral dimensions of human life and an increased awareness of our continued participation in a complex, living tradition of critical reflection on the good life. Students will be asked to engage one another and the instructor throughout the semester in a civil and critical dialogue as part of a project of mutual education.

Texts


2) Other materials will be available on the Web and through WebCT’s electronic reserve

Important Web Links

[Dr. Wilmot’s Homepage](http://www.homepage.villanova.edu/brett.wilmot/)
[Library Links for Ethics Research](http://library.villanova.edu/articles/databasesubject/ethics.htm)
[Ethics Program Homepage](http://www.ethics.villanova.edu/)
Course Requirements and Extra Credit Opportunities

a) Attendance and participation will constitute significant components of your final grade. You are expected to attend class and to be prepared to engage in critical discussion on the thinkers and topics assigned. This means that you need to read all of the material carefully prior to class. An inability to respond to my questions or to participate in our classroom conversations will adversely affect your final grade. Perfect attendance without active participation will get you no better than a “B-” for this portion of your final grade. Participation alone will constitute 10% of your final grade. Unexcused absences and chronic tardiness will also adversely affect your final grade. For each unexcused absence above 2, your participation grade will be lowered by a step. More than 6 unexcused absences will result in a failing grade for the course. Your presence and participation are for your own benefit and for the benefit of your classmates. Learning is a social activity; we learn best when we learn together.

b) You must write 2 critical response papers (~3–5 pages). The topics will be provided through WebCT. There will be 3 opportunities to write your short papers; you can decide when during the semester to complete this requirement based on the due dates on the syllabus. These short papers will each constitute 15% of your final grade. There are no extensions for any of the short papers. If you miss the due date for one option, then plan to write on one of the remaining assignments. Failure to complete at least one of these options will result in a failing grade for this section of the course.

I will allow you to write on more than one of these assignments, and I will use the best grade when calculating your final grade for the course.

A collection of writing resources will be made available to you on WebCT under the title “Help with Writing.” I will also be happy to discuss the writing assignments during my office hours and in the classroom.

c) You must submit a research paper of ~10–12 pages on the last day of the class. This paper will constitute 35% of your final grade. Your research paper must go through a draft process, which means that you need to receive feedback on a draft, make appropriate revisions, and then submit a final version for grading. The feedback on your draft can come from me or the Writing Center (Old Falvey Hall, Dalton Room 2002, ext. 9-4694). Please request one of the philosophy graduate students for your consultation as they will be in the best position to assist with this subject matter. You will need to make an appointment with the Writing Center well in advance for final papers, and it will become more difficult to get a consultation as the semester progresses. Your draft should be completed no later than Friday, April 21. Late papers will lose a grade step for each day beyond the deadline. No papers will be accepted more than 2 days after the deadline.

You will be working on these papers throughout the semester. The first step is to consult with me about a topic as soon as you identify an area of interest. The second step will be to produce a list of sources you plan to read as research. The third step is writing the draft. The fourth step will be to revise the draft based on critical feedback. The final step will be to submit the revised paper for grading.
A collection of writing resources will be made available to you on WebCT under the title “Help with Writing.” I will also be happy to discuss this assignment during my office hours and in the classroom.

d) There will be a midterm exam during the week before spring break. **This exam will constitute 10% of your final grade.** The midterm will be taken on WebCT. I will provide more detail about the midterm in class.

e) There will be a final exam held on the official day for final exams as indicated by the university schedule. **This exam will constitute 15% of your final grade.** The final exam will be taken on WebCT. I will provide more detail about the final exam in class.

f) There will be 2 opportunities for extra credit work. You may take advantage of both opportunities. In order to get extra credit, you must write a critical response paper (~2–3 pages) to a scheduled campus lecture that has ethical relevance (e.g., there are two scheduled talks in the 2005–2006 Ethics Lecture Series). In order to count as extra credit, this must represent thoughtful work on your part based on my judgment. Extra credit will work like this. If I accept the work as extra credit, then you will get a 1-step boost to your class participation grade (e.g., a “B+” would become an “A-”). If you have an “A” in class participation, then I will consider applying the extra credit to other assignments at my discretion.

**Numerical Grade Conversion**

The grades on individual components of this course will give as letter grades. At the end of the semester, each grade is converted into its numerical equivalent. The following is the breakdown:

- A = 4.00
- A- = 3.67
- B+ = 3.33
- B = 3.00
- B- = 2.67
- C+ = 2.33
- C = 2.00
- C- = 1.67
- D+ = 1.33
- D = 1.00
- D- = 0.67
- F = 0

I then multiply each assignment by the percentage of its worth and add up the components of the final grade. This is then reconverted to the equivalent letter grade. I will consider rounding grades that fall between two of the above grades based on my discretion.

**Students with Learning Disabilities**

It is the policy of Villanova University to make reasonable academic accommodations for qualified individuals with disabilities. If you are a person with a disability and wish to request accommodations to compete your course requirements, please make an appointment with me as soon as possible to discuss the request. If you would like information on documentation requirements, contact the Office of Learning Support Services at 610-519-5636. It is the student’s responsibility to request accommodations.
Academic Integrity

You are responsible for knowing and abiding by the Villanova Code of Academic Integrity (available at http://www.academics.villanova.edu/AcademicIntegrity.html). If you have questions regarding aspects of this code, please feel free to discuss them with me. Violation of this code may result in a failing grade for the course depending on the severity of the case; at the very least, violation of the code will result in a failing grade on the assignment and a very significant reduction in your final grade for the course.

Laptops in the Classroom

While I am generally a fan of technology, I’ve become concerned that the use of laptops in the classroom tends to undermine class participation. I realize that some students feel more comfortable taking notes on their computers; however, in an effort to encourage more participation, I would prefer that laptops and other electronic devices be stowed during class. If there is a particular reason why you believe you need to use a laptop during class, please arrange to meet with me to discuss this issue, and I will make a case-by-case decision.

Changes to the Syllabus

This syllabus is subject to change at my discretion. I will, however, communicate changes clearly to you in class and in writing, and such changes, if any, will hopefully be minor.

Class and Assignment Schedule (parenthetical number identifies the textbook in which the reading can be found and are for the day indicated)

Week 1
JANUARY
Tu. 1/17
Introduction to course: objectives, requirements, and expectations (discussion of academic integrity)

Required: “Introduction” to Fides et Ratio (available here)

Suggested: Solomon and Martin, “Introduction,” pp. 1–25 (read this material when you have a chance; it provides some helpful, general information about the academic study of ethics)

Aristotle and Augustine: Two Classic Teleological Approaches to Ethics

Suggested reading for this section: “Virtue Ethics” (available here)

See WebCT assignments for writing options based on this section of the syllabus

Th. 1/19
Required: “Aristotle’s Ethics,” sections 1–3 (available here)
Required: Aristotle’s Nicomachean Ethics (Solomon and Martin, pp. 106–22)
### Week 2

**Tu. 1/24**
- Required: “Aristotle’s Ethics,” sections 1–3 (available [here](#))
- Required: Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics* (Solomon and Martin, pp. 106–22)

**Th. 1/26**
- Required: “Aristotle’s Ethics,” sections 4 and 5 (available [here](#))
- Required: Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics* (Solomon and Martin, pp. 123–36)

### Week 3

**Tu. 1/31**
- Required: “Aristotle’s Ethics,” section 9 (available [here](#))
- Required: Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics* (Solomon and Martin, pp. 136–47)

**FEBRUARY**

**Th. 2/2**
- Required: “Catholic Virtue Theory” (available [here](#))


### Week 4

**Mon. 2/6**
- Highly recommended: Lecture by Dr. Larry Rasmussen, 3:30 pm (Connelly Center Cinema)

Extra credit associated with this lecture (more information TBA in class)

**Tu. 2/7**
- Required: Augustine’s *City of God* (Solomon and Martin, pp. 148–63)

Suggested: “Will,” in “St. Augustine” (available [here](#))

**Th. 2/9**
- Required: (1) Augustine’s *City of God*, pp. 164–78

**Fri. 2/10**
- First writing option due on WebCT by 5 pm: Critical response to Aristotle’s account of happiness as the end of the moral life (see WebCT assignment for specifics)

**Applied Topic: Introduction to Sexual Ethics**

### Week 5

**Tu. 2/14**
- Required: *Persona Humana* (available through WebCT’s electronic reserves)

**Th. 2/16**
- Required: Alan H. Goldman, “Plain Sex” (available through WebCT’s electronic reserves)
**Week 6**

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<th>Date</th>
<th>Assignment</th>
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<tr>
<td>Th. 2/23</td>
<td>Required: John Finnis, “Law, Morality, and ‘Sexual Orientation’” (available through WebCT’s electronic reserves)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fri. 2/24</td>
<td>Second writing option due on WebCT by 5 pm: Critical response to Augustine’s critique of pagan <em>eudaimonia</em> as the <em>summum bonum</em> (see WebCT assignment for specifics)</td>
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**Kant and the Ethics of Duty: A Nonteleological Approach**

See WebCT assignments for writing option based on this section of the syllabus

**Week 7**

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<th>Date</th>
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<tr>
<td>Tu. 2/28</td>
<td>Required: “Kant’s Moral Philosophy,” section 1 (available here) Required: Kant’s <em>Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals</em> (Solomon and Martin, pp. 259–67)</td>
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<tr>
<td>MARCH</td>
<td>Required: “Kant’s Moral Philosophy,” sections 2 and 3 (available here) Required: Kant’s <em>Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals</em> (Solomon and Martin, pp. 267–81)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fri. 3/3</td>
<td>Midterm exam The exam will be available via WebCT starting at 6 am. You must take and complete the exam by 5 pm. You will have 1 hour and 15 minutes for the exam. Once you access the exam through WebCT, the clock will begin. You cannot log in and out more than once, so make sure that you have a quiet location and sufficient time to take the exam once you decide to access it through WebCT. The exam is closed book and closed note (you’re on the honor system).</td>
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Mon.–Fri. 3/6–3/10 | No classes—spring break

**Week 8**

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<th>Date</th>
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<tr>
<td>Tu. 3/13</td>
<td>Required: “Kant’s Moral Philosophy,” sections 4 and 5 (available here) Required: Kant’s <em>Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals</em> (Solomon and Martin, pp. 281–90)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Th. 3/16</td>
<td>Required: “Kant’s Moral Philosophy,” sections 6–8 (available here) Required: Kant’s <em>Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals</em> (Solomon and Martin, pp. 290–301)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Week 9
Tu. 3/21  Required: “Kant’s Moral Philosophy,” section 10 (available here)
Required: Kant’s *Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals* (Solomon and Martin, pp. 301–12)

Applied Topic: The Death Penalty

Th. 3/23  Required: Ernest van den Haag, “On Deterrence and the Death Penalty” (available through WebCT’s electronic reserves)

Week 10
Tu. 3/28  Required: Michael L. Radelet and Ronald L. Akers, “Deterrence and the Death Penalty: The View of the Experts” (available through WebCT’s electronic reserves)

Th. 3/30  Required: Jeffrey H. Reiman, “Justice, Civilization, and the Death Penalty: Answering van den Haag” (available through WebCT’s electronic reserves)

Week 11
APRIL
Tu. 4/4  Required: Burton M. Leiser, “Capital Punishment and Retributive Justice: A Reasoned Response to Crime” (available through WebCT’s electronic reserves)

John Stuart Mill’s Utilitarianism: Weighing Consequences

Th. 4/6  Required: “John Stuart Mill,” section 12 (available here)
Required: John Stuart Mill’s *Utilitarianism* (Solomon and Martin, pp. 315–39)

Fri. 4/7  Third writing option due on WebCT by 5 pm: Critical response to the different role of reason in the moral life according to Aristotle and Kant (see WebCT assignment for specifics)

Week 12
Tu. 4/11  Required: John Stuart Mill’s *Utilitarianism* (Solomon and Martin, pp. 339–52)

Thurs.–Mon.
4/13–4/17  No classes—Easter recess

Week 13
Tu. 4/18  Required: “John Stuart Mill,” section 13 (available here)
Required: John Stuart Mill’s *Utilitarianism* (Solomon and Martin, pp. 352–59)
Th. 4/20 Required: “John Stuart Mill,” section 13 (available here)
Required: John Stuart Mill’s *Utilitarianism* (Solomon and Martin, pp. 352–59)

Fri. 4/21 Drafts of research papers should be complete (or nearly so). Begin making appointments now with the Writing Center (or with me) in order to get critical feedback for revisions.

**Week 14**
Tu. 4/25 Required: John Stuart Mill’s *Utilitarianism* (Solomon and Martin, pp. 359–71)

Th. 4/27 Review for final exam
CATS

**Week 15**
MAY
Tu. 5/2 No class—Friday schedule

Th. 5/4 Wrap up

Fri. 5/5 Research paper due on WebCT by 5 pm (see WebCT assignment for specifics)

**Final Exam Schedule:**

The exam will be available via WebCT. It will be open book and open notes. You will have 90 minutes for the exam. Once you access the exam through WebCT, the clock will begin. You cannot log in and out more than once, so make sure that you have a quiet location and sufficient time to take the exam once you decide to access it through WebCT.

HON 1380-002

| TR 2:30 | Mon, May 8 | 1:30 - 4:00 |