Syllabus

Instructor Information

Instructor: Andrew Russell Platt  
Office: 242 Harriman Hall  
Philosophy Department Phone: (631) 632-7570  
Email: andrew.platt@stonybrook.edu  
Office hours: TuTh 2:30-3 pm, W 10:00 am-Noon, or by appointment  
Course website: Available at www.blackboard.stonybrook.edu

Course Description, Objectives & Prerequisites

Description from the course catalog: “An introduction to philosophy through inquiry into the formation, justification, and evaluation of moral judgments. Students are introduced to the major theories and problems of ethics, such as utilitarianism, Kant's categorical imperative, ethical relativism, egoism, and classical conceptions of the good and virtue. Against this background students engage in discussions of contemporary moral issues.”

This course will examine what makes an action morally right, what makes a human life (or for that matter any life) a good life, and what it means for a person to be virtuous. We will survey ethical theories, including those of Aristotle, Thomas Aquinas, Francis Hutcheson, Immanuel Kant, J.S. Mill and W.D. Ross. We will also discuss how these ethical theories apply to contemporary moral issues regarding topics such as genetic engineering, cloning, abortion or environmentalism.

Course Objectives: Students in this course will (1) critically evaluate ethical arguments and theories; (2) understand different approaches to moral reasoning; (3) reflect on ethical problems.  

This course satisfies Diversified Education Curriculum (D.E.C.) Category B, Interpreting Texts in the Humanities. According to the D.E.C., Category G courses “help students develop skills of interpretation and analysis that will enable them to examine subject matter critically, not only in the humanities, but in all other college courses.”
Required Texts:


Additional readings will be made available through the course website on BlackBoard.

Course Requirements

**Attendance:** Your learning experience in this class will depend on your being present and intellectually engaged during class sessions. You are expected to attend all class meetings. Attendance will not be recorded, but excessive absences will seriously undermine your ability to satisfactorily complete the course.

**Participation:** No individual student is expected to speak in class on a given day. However, the class as a whole will be expected to raise questions and make comments that contribute to understanding the course material. If the class as a whole is unresponsive, each individual’s grade may be negatively impacted, and the course as a whole will suffer. It is your responsibility as a student to be engaged in this course through paying attention when the instructor or your classmates are speaking, asking questions, or making appropriate comments.

Regular *reading assignments*: Class sessions will consist of in-depth discussions of the reading assigned for that day. The quality of this course will depend on your ability to speak in an informed manner about the readings.

**Quizzes and/or homework assignments.** The instructor may give quizzes or homework assignments at his discretion.

**In-class group discussion assignments.** Class members will be asked to discuss a series of case studies in small groups. You will complete a worksheet that asks you to consider how the topics discussed in class apply to those cases, and that invite you to consider your opinions about them and the opinions of your classmates.

**Three exams.** The first two exams will be administered in class; the third exam will be administered during the scheduled finals period. A study guide will be distributed before each exam. The majority of your grade for the course will be determined by the three exams.
Grading Policies

Grades will be calculated using a point system. Each assignment (e.g. exams, quizzes or in-class assignments) will be worth a certain number of points. The total number of points you earned throughout the semester will determine your final grade for the course. At the end of the semester the instructor will assign grades based on the score-distribution of the class as a whole.

Scores will be posted on the course website on BlackBoard. The instructor will not assign a grading scale to these scores. This means that you will not receive a letter grade (like A, B, C or D) on assignments.

Letter grades will be assigned to point-totals only at the end of the semester. As a result the instructor cannot tell you what your final grade will be for this course before grades are submitted at the end of the semester.

Policy on Extra Credit

There will be no extra credit assignments in this class.

Policy on Make-Up’s

It is in your best interest to complete assignments when scheduled. A missed assignment counts as a zero. If you miss an exam, you should contact the instructor in a timely manner to arrange for a make-up.

There are no make-up’s for quizzes or other assignments (besides exams). Exceptions will be made only in cases where the assignment is missed due to a medical or personal emergency; the assignment time conflicts with a religious holiday or observance; or the assignment time conflicts with an official University function, such as an athletic event held off campus.

Policy on Academic Honesty

Violations of university regulations concerning academic honesty will not be tolerated in this course, and will be reported in accordance with SBU policy. For further information see the university’s statement on academic integrity, printed below.
Electronic Communication Statement

Email and especially email sent via Blackboard (http://blackboard.stonybrook.edu) is one of the ways the faculty officially communicates with you for this course. It is your responsibility to make sure that you read your email in your official University email account. For most students that is Google Apps for Education (http://www.stonybrook.edu/mycloud), but you may verify your official Electronic Post Office (EPO) address at http://it.stonybrook.edu/help/kb/checking-or-changing-your-mail-forwarding-address-in-the-epo.

If you choose to forward your official University email to another off-campus account, faculty are not responsible for any undeliverable messages to your alternative personal accounts. You can set up Google Mail forwarding using these DoIT-provided instructions found at http://it.stonybrook.edu/help/kb/setting-up-mail-forwarding-in-google-mail.
If you need technical assistance, please contact Client Support at (631) 632-9800 or supportteam@stonybrook.edu.

Americans with Disabilities Act

If you have a physical, psychological, medical or learning disability that may impact your course work, please contact Disability Support Services, ECC (Educational Communications Center) Building, room 128, (631) 632-6748. They will determine with you what accommodations, if any, are necessary and appropriate. All information and documentation is confidential.

Academic Integrity

Each student must pursue his or her academic goals honestly and be personally accountable for all submitted work. Representing another person's work as your own is always wrong. Faculty are required to report any suspected instances of academic dishonesty to the Academic Judiciary. Faculty in the Health Sciences Center (School of Health Technology & Management, Nursing, Social Welfare, Dental Medicine) and School of Medicine are required to follow their school-specific procedures. For more comprehensive information on academic integrity, including categories of academic dishonesty, please refer to the academic judiciary website at http://www.stonybrook.edu/uaa/academicjudiciary/

Critical Incident Management

Stony Brook University expects students to respect the rights, privileges, and property of other people. Faculty are required to report to the Office of Judicial Affairs any disruptive behavior that interrupts their ability to teach, compromises the safety of the learning environment, or inhibits students' ability to learn. Faculty in the HSC Schools and the School of Medicine are required to follow their school-specific procedures.