

THE UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY  
DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY

PHILOSOPHY 599 Lec 01 Topic 01  
*Advanced Topics in Philosophy: Morality, Rationality, and Agency*  
Fall 2009

(Offered jointly with PHIL 601 Lec 02)

**Location:** EDT 723

**Time:** Fridays, 11:00am-1:30pm

**Instructor:** David G. Dick

**Office:** SS 1224

**Email:** [dgdick@ucalgary.ca](mailto:dgdick@ucalgary.ca)

**Office Hours:** M and W 11:00am-12:00pm and by appointment

Overview:

This course will focus on the relationship between morality and rational agency. One strategy for grounding moral normativity is to claim that it is just nothing more than what is required by reason. Rational agency, on this view, is the source and vindication of morality. We will examine some of the roots of, strengths of, and complaints with this strategy as well as Christine Korsgaard's recent employment of it in her latest book, *Self-Constitution*.

Required Texts:

*Self-Constitution: Agency, Identity, and Integrity*

Korsgaard, Christine M., Oxford UP, 2009. ISBN 13: 978-0199552801

*The Importance of What We Care About*

Frankfurt, Harry G., Cambridge UP, 1988. ISBN 13: 978-0-521-33611-6

Additional materials will be posted to the Blackboard site for this class.

Available at: <https://blackboard.ucalgary.ca/webapps/login/>

Evaluation:

Weekly Questions: 20%

Short Paper 30% Due: Friday, October 23<sup>rd</sup>

Long Paper 50% Due: Friday, December 11<sup>th</sup>

All evaluated material will be graded on a scale from A+ to F. To weight assignments and calculate the final grade, these letter grades will be converted into the standard 4.0 scale:

4.3 – A+      3.3 – B+      2.3 – C+      1.3 – D+      0.0 – F

4.0 – A      3.0 – B      2.0 – C      1.0 – D

3.7 – A–      2.7 – B–      1.7 – C–      0.7 – D–

The arithmetic that will calculate your final grade will follow this formula:

$(\text{Weekly Questions}).20 + (\text{Short Paper}).30 + (\text{Long Paper}).50 = \text{Final Grade}$

## Weekly Questions:

Each week, I'd like you to submit a question based on the week's reading. The question you write should convince me that you've read the week's reading, at least well enough to be confused by it. Confusion is a philosophical heuristic, it either helps you identify a place where you don't understand, or where the argument doesn't make sense. Either one of these counts as philosophical progress.

These questions and their explanations need not be any longer than about half a page. (I'll post an example of what I mean to Blackboard.)

Questions are due to me, via email, no later than the Thursday evening before class, at 5 pm. This is to give me enough time to read them and let them help structure our discussion the next day.

Late questions will be read for philosophical content, but will receive no credit.

There are 11 sessions beyond the initial one, but I'll only be asking for 10 weekly questions from you this semester. It's entirely up to you which day you'd like to pass on.

## Papers:

I will not be distributing paper topics for this class, since to get into it you have to be fairly far along in your philosophical education, and it is time for you to get some practice in identifying what makes for a promising paper topic. (The weekly questions are a good tool for scaring up such ideas.)

Instead, you've got to propose your paper idea to me before you write it and have me sign off on it. I think the most productive way to do this will be in person, but I'd like us to finalize the deal by email, so we both have record of our agreement.

The short paper should be about 10-12 pages (i.e. conference-submission length).

The long paper should be about 20-25 pages (i.e. writing-sample length).

I'll be perfectly delighted if your long paper is an expansion and refinement of the topic you started investigating in your short paper.

## **INTELLECTUAL HONESTY**

Intellectual honesty is the cornerstone of the development and acquisition of knowledge and requires that the contribution of others be acknowledged. As a result, cheating or plagiarism on any assignment or examination is regarded as an extremely serious academic offence, the penalty for which may be an F on the assignment and possibly also an F in the course, academic probation, or requirement to withdraw. The University Calendar states that plagiarism exists when:

- *the work submitted or presented was done, in whole or in part, by an individual other than the one submitting or presenting the work (this includes having another impersonate the student or otherwise substituting the work of another for one's own in an examination or test;*
- *parts of the work are taken from another source without reference to the original author;*
- *the whole work (e.g., an essay) is copied from another source; and/or*
- *a student submits or presents work in one course which has also been submitted in another course (although it may be completely original with that student) without the knowledge of or prior agreement of the instructor involved.*

While it is recognized that scholarly work often involves reference to the ideas, data and conclusions of other scholars, intellectual honesty requires that such references be explicitly and clearly noted. Plagiarism is an extremely serious offence. Plagiarism occurs not only when direct quotations are taken from a source without specific acknowledgement, but also when original ideas or data from the source are not acknowledged. A bibliography is insufficient to establish which portions of the student's work are taken from external sources; footnotes or other recognized forms of citation must be used for this purpose.

## **ACADEMIC ACCOMMODATION**

It is the student's responsibility to request academic accommodation. If you are a student with a documented disability who may require academic accommodation and have not registered with the Disability Resource Centre, please contact their office at 220-8237. Students who have not registered with the Disability Resource Centre are not eligible for formal academic accommodation. You are also required to discuss your needs with your instructor no later than fourteen (14) days after the start of this course.

## **STUDENTS' UNION REPRESENTATIVE**

The Humanities Representative is Britney Luimes, MSC 251, [humanitiesrep@su.ucalgary.ca](mailto:humanitiesrep@su.ucalgary.ca) or 220-3913.