Instructor: Jeramy S. Gee  
Email: jsg5@uw.edu  
Office: Savery Hall 378  
Office Hours: Tuesday 2:30-3:30 at the RC or by appointment in Savery Hall

Required Texts:

*The Classical Utilitarians: Bentham and Mill*, ed. by John Troyer  
*Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals*, Immanuel Kant, trans. by James W. Ellington  
*The Practice of Virtue: Classic and Contemporary Readings in Virtue Ethics*, ed. by Jennifer Welchman  
*Shiloh*, Phyllis Naylor

Any readings not found above are on e-reserve (ER) through the library website.

Course Description:

This course is designed to introduce students to normative ethics and value theory. By thinking about interesting thought experiments, moral problems, and by examining philosophical texts, we will address such questions as: why be moral? What makes an action right or wrong? What is a good life? The aims of this class are two-fold. On the one hand, students will practice philosophical skills. These include learning how to approach philosophical texts, identifying and evaluating arguments, formulating arguments of one’s own, and communicating one’s ideas cogently. On the other hand, students will be exposed to the basic outlines of some important normative moral theories.

Course Requirements and Grading:

Success in this course requires sustained grappling with the core ideas and themes of the course through consistent in-class participation, reading, and completing all assignments. The material presented in this course is not easy so it is important to think hard about what you read and to be prepared for discussion. In fact, active participation in discussion bolsters understanding and is good practice for written assignments. Grades will be assigned on the basis of your performance on short in-class assignments, two papers, a midterm exam, and a final exam.

*Papers: 2 of these, 30% of your grade*  
Prompts for the papers will be provided at least one week before each paper is due and the papers themselves should be about 1000 words in length. When writing papers, it is very important to be sure that you address the prompt. The second paper is weighted more heavily than the first. If
you require an extension, you need to ask for approval at least twenty-four hours before the paper is due. Papers must be turned in to the instructor’s mailbox on the proscribed due dates.

In-Class and Homework Assignments: 20% of your grade
These assignments may be oriented around one or more of three distinct aims: to check your understanding, to help you develop an important philosophical skill, or to help you prepare for discussion. They may come in the form of short written assignments, debates, and more. There will be five to seven of these. Typically, they should be turned in to your TA on the assignment’s due date.

Midterm: 20% of your grade
The midterm will consist of four or five questions that ask you to demonstrate your understanding of a philosophical position or argument and at least one of these questions will ask you to state and defend your own view about an argument or ethics problem. You will receive a review guide at least one week prior to the exam. At the end of class on Thursday of the exam week you will receive the exam. It is due in the instructor’s mailbox the next morning.

Final: 30% of your grade
You may be wondering why a children’s book is in the assigned reading. The reason for this is because addressing the central moral problem faced by the main character of this book is your final examination. Below is the prompt:

Does Marty, the main character of the story, act rightly or wrongly in his efforts to save Shiloh? Be sure to use at least three of the texts we have examined in this course. Raise and respond to a credible objection to your position, or the way in which you arrive at your position. You need not come to a decisive answer either way. Shoot for 1000-1200 words and have fun with this rather open-ended assignment.

Total Points: 500

General guidelines for grades are as follows:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4.0 (excellent)</td>
<td>2.5 (Developing)</td>
<td>1.0 (Struggling/Failing)</td>
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<tr>
<td>3.5 (good)</td>
<td>2.0 (Developing/Struggling)</td>
<td>0.7 (Failing)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.0 (competent)</td>
<td>1.5 (Struggling)</td>
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Late Work and Make-ups:

If, for some reason, you would like an extension on a due-date, let me know at least 24 hours in advance and I will determine whether to grant the extension, and how long it will be. In the advent of an emergency and you cannot make it to class, email me a copy of the paper. Generally, tests cannot be made up. If you will be away on the day of a test, you must notify me at least two weeks in advance so that you may take the test early. For special problems not covered here, contact me as soon as you can so that we can work something out.
Additional Remarks:

Students are encouraged to study together outside of class time. However, all work submitted must be your own. Make sure that you understand the material.

Schedule of Readings and Topics

I. The Good Life

Week 1 (January 7, 9): Pleasure or Getting What You Want?

Week 2 (January 14, 46) Self-Love, Selfless Care, and The Paradox of Hedonism
Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, pp. 3-7, 14-15, (CP)
Ayn Rand, *Atlas Shrugged*, 531-541 (CP)
James Rachels, *Egoism and Moral Skepticism*, pp. 480-491 (CP)

Week 3 (January 21, 23) Virtue?
David Hume, Selections from *An Inquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals*, pp. 102-104.

Paper 1 Due on January 24th

II. The Greatest Good for the Greatest Number

Week 4 (January 28, 30) Utilitarianism
Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 17-20 (CP) (Not really utilitarian, but a good set-up.)

Week 5 (February 4, 6) Utilitarianism and Moral Obligation
Peter Singer, “Famine, Affluence, and Morality” (CP)
Peter Singer, “All Animals are Equal” (CP)

Take-Home Midterm Due on February 7th

Week 6 (February 11, 13) Utilitarianism, Justice, and Integrity
John Stuart Mill, Chapter 5, pp. 127-145.
III. Duty and Respect

Week 7 (February 18, 20) Duty, Moral Worth, and Fairness

Week 8 (February 25, 27) Duty and Respect for Persons
Immanuel Kant, *Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals*, pp. 32-48

**Paper 2 Due on February 28th**

IV. Virtues and Vices

Week 9 (March 4, 6) What is a Virtue? What is a Vice?
Gabrielle Taylor, *Deadly Vices*, (CP)

Week 10 (March 11, 13) Applying Virtue and Vice Concepts

**Final Exam Due on March 19**

Do not forget to bring a typed copy of the “Shiloh” portion of the exam as specified above.