PHIL 140: Ethics and Community
Philosophy | Allegheny College
MWF 11:00AM-11:50AM
Oddfellows 105A
Spring 2016

Dr. Tal Correm
Office: Oddfellows 116
Office hours: MWF 10:00-11:00AM, MW 1:00-2PM, F 1:30-2:30PM; and by appointment.
E-mail: tcorrem@allegheny.edu

Course Overview:
An examination of contemporary challenges facing democracy as an ideal for the moral life and the moral community. Not open to seniors.

Course Description:
How should one live in a community and what are some of the ideals around which communities ought to be constructed? What is involved in living ethically with others who are different from us (culturally or otherwise)? How do we transform problematic social structures and relations? These, among others, are questions that we will explore in this course by drawing on writings from a variety of philosophical traditions. We will move gradually and discuss issues at the intersections of ethics and social philosophy, such as justice, poverty, violence, and social change, to better understand the human world at the individual and collective levels.

Course Objectives:
Upon completion of this course, students will be able to:
• Acquire skills to read, interpret, and evaluate philosophical texts.
• Develop your skills to think critically about philosophical issues and argue your point in discussion with others and in writing.
• Know and understand some of the central issues, problems, and arguments in ethics and social philosophy.

Course Materials:
• All required and recommended readings, interactive, audio and visual materials will be available online, through the Sakai course website.

Course Requirements and Evaluation:
• Summary of Assignments
  o Class Participation: 15 points
  o Writing Assignments (x5): 15 points
  o Take-Home Exams (x2): 30 points
  o Course Project: 15 points
  o Final Paper: 25 points
• **Class Participation:**
  o Participation is based upon active involvement in discussion and group work, engaged reading and preparing for class, answering questions when called upon, and attendance (see the Attendance guidelines below). You have to complete the required readings for each session, bring the assigned reading to class, and write down at least two questions for classroom discussion.
  o A grading rubric for Class Participation will be provided on Sakai.

• **In/Out-of-Class Writing Assignments:**
  o These will take a variety of forms. Some will be in-class short assignments that will require familiarity and reflection on the assigned reading for the week. You must bring the assigned reading for the week and your notes and questions about the reading to class, as some written assignments will be open note/book. Other will require participation in activities or events outside the classroom. See the scheduled events below. You need to submit 5 written assignments out of 7 throughout the semester. The first required written assignment will address Unit I: The Examined Life: Philosophy Past and Present and is DUE on Monday, February 8.

• **Take-Home Exams:**
  o There will be two take-home exams in which you will address essay questions that require an analysis of the problems we learned and discussed. The first take-home exam will cover Unit II: Traditional Ethical Theories and is DUE on Monday, February 29. The second take-home exam will cover Unit III: Rethinking Ethical Theory and is DUE on Wednesday, March 30.

• **Course Project:**
  o Course projects examine one contemporary event and connect it to a theme from the course. You are required to write a proposal for your project. The Course Project Proposal is DUE on Monday, April 11. Failure to submit a proposal will reduce 3 points from the Course Project grade. I encourage you to talk with me about your project to ensure you are making the most of your effort.
  o Students will be given time to present their projects to the class on one of the last days of class. You must be present for all project presentations or you will lose points on your own project.
  o A handout describing the possibilities for course projects and a grading rubric will be provided on Sakai and discussed in class closer to the due date.

• **Final Paper:**
  o You will need to write one longer paper, minimum 5 pages, double-spaced, consists of a critical comparison between the theories of at least two authors on one of the topics of the course.
  o Specific questions and a grading rubric will be provided on Sakai and discussed in class closer to the due date.
  o Final paper is DUE on Tuesday, May 10.

At the end of the course letter grades will be assigned approximately according to the following scale:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Points</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A= 94 or higher</td>
<td>B=83 or higher</td>
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<tr>
<td>A-=90 or higher</td>
<td>B-=80 or higher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B+=88 or higher</td>
<td>C+=78 or higher</td>
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Course Policies:

- **Attendance:** Students are expected to attend all class meetings. Attendance is necessary to maintain your participation grade. Arrive and be prepared by the beginning of the class. Tardiness, leaving early, or texting will affect participation for that day. I allow three missed classes without penalty; however, there will be a 3 points reduction in your overall grade for every additional day missed. You have three days to miss for any reason, including sickness, sports, travel, family emergencies, etc. For example, if your final grade is a 90 (A-) but you missed four classes, then your final grade is 87 (B). I will be taking attendance each class, but it is your responsibility to keep track of your own absences. If you cannot attend class please send me an email ahead of time and get in touch with another student for notes or discussion in order to be prepared for the next class you attend. If you are an athlete or you have a religious holiday, which will require your absence, please tell me at the beginning of the semester.

- **Course Website on Sakai:** We will use Sakai for our course schedule, assignment submission, grades, required texts and additional materials.

- **Lateness:** It is important for all of us to be working on the same material at the same time. The assignments are central to class participation therefore they will be marked down a full letter grade for every day they are late (first day late from an A to a B etc.). If for some reason you cannot complete an assignment it is your responsibility to notify me in advance and to provide proper documentation. Technical issues are not acceptable excuses for late work.

- **Cell Phones and other Electronic Devices:** Cell phones must be turned off for class. Laptops or other electronic devices can be used only for class materials and taking notes. Class disruptions from cell phones, laptop, or other electronic devices will negatively impact your participation grade for the day. Again, cell phone must be turned off.

- **Communication:** Check your Allegheny e-mail regularly. Class announcements such as updates, cancellations or assignment changes will be communicated by e-mail and/or Sakai. When you email me (tcorrem@allegheny.edu) please type “PHIL.140” followed by a brief description of the email’s topic in the subject area. In general, I will respond to emails within 24 hours. Although I often check email during the weekend, I cannot guarantee that I will respond to emails sent over the weekend.

- **Academic Conduct:** It is crucial that everyone be very respectful of each other in class. Counterarguments are always welcome, and in fact are encouraged; but when we disagree it is important to do so in a productive manner.

- **Caveat:** I reserve the right to modify the syllabus, schedule, and grading schema as the circumstances dictate. Any significant changes will be relayed to you in advance.

Resources:

- **Allegheny’s Learning Commons**
The Maytum Learning Commons is located in Pelletier Library. Drop-in consultation hours are from 3-5pm and 7-11pm Sunday through Thursday. You may stop by the Learning Commons at any time to meet with a consultant on a first-come, first-served basis, or you may schedule an appointment at your convenience using our online scheduling service.
Handouts and resources for writers are available here: [http://sitesALLEGHENY.EDU/LEARNINGCOMMONS/WRITING/HANDOUTS-AND-RESOURCES-FOR-WRITERS/](http://sitesallegheny.edu/learningcommons/writing/handouts-and-resources-for-writers/).
Find more information here: [http://sitesALLEGHENY.EDU/LEARNINGCOMMONS/WRITING/](http://sitesallegheny.edu/learningcommons/writing/).
• **Philosophy Resources:**
  - Philosopher's Index through the Library Website: [http://library.allegheny.edu/databases](http://library.allegheny.edu/databases).

**Academic Honesty:** Plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty will not be tolerated. I expect you to follow the Allegheny honor code and I will report all suspected cases of academic dishonesty to the Honor Code Committee. Please see the college policy on plagiarism at: [http://webpub.allegheny.edu/dept/writingcenter/Links/plagiarism.htm](http://webpub.allegheny.edu/dept/writingcenter/Links/plagiarism.htm). If you have any questions about plagiarism, please come see me.

**Statement on Disability:** Students with disabilities who believe they may need accommodations in this class are encouraged to contact Disability Services at (814) 332-2898. Disability Services is part of the Learning Commons and is located in Pelletier Library. Please do this as soon as possible to ensure that such accommodations are implemented in a timely fashion.

**Extenuating Circumstances:** If you should find yourself in difficult circumstances that significantly interfere with your ability to prepare for this class and to complete assignments, please inform me immediately so that we can work something out together. Do not wait until the last day of class to ask for exceptions to what is stated in this syllabus. In such a situation, you may also find it helpful to contact the campus Counseling Center (332-4368) in 304 Reis Hall.

**Course Schedule and Reading Assignments:**
You are expected to have read the assigned materials *before* class and bring the assigned texts to every class. Come prepared with questions and be ready to participate in discussions.

**Week 1 (January 20)**

**I. The Examined Life: Philosophy Past and Present**
  Welcome and Course Overview.
  Plato, from *Republic*.

**Week 2 (January 25)**
  Plato, continued.

*** January 27-February 8: Rwanda Study Trip***

**Week 3 (February 1)**
  February 1: Deadline for Adding and Dropping.
  The Examined Life (No reading assignments, prep time for the 1st Writing Assignment).

**II. Traditional Ethical Theories**

**Week 4 (February 8)**

**Required: 1st Writing Assignment DUE: Monday, Feb 8 at 11:59 PM.**
  Virtue Ethics
  Aristotle, from *Nicomachean Ethics*. 
Week 5 (February 15)
Deontological Ethics
Immanuel Kant, from *Groundwork of the Metaphysic of Morals*.

Week 6 (February 22)
Consequentialism
John Stuart Mill, from *Utilitarianism*.

III. Rethinking Ethical Theory
Week 7 (February 29)
1st Take-Home Exam DUE: Monday, February 29 at 11:59 PM.
Care Ethics
Nel Noddings, “Why Care about Caring?”

Week 8 (March 7)
Critical Race Theory
Charles Mills, “‘Ideal Theory’ as Ideology.”
Friday, March 11: Arendt Circle: NO CLASS.

Week 9 (March 14)
Ubuntu Ethics
Mluleki Munyaka and Mokgethi Mothhabi, “Ubuntu and Its Socio-moral Significance.”

March 19-27: Spring Break: NO CLASSES.

IV. Applied Ethics
Week 10 (March 28)
Peter Singer, “Famine, Affluence and Morality.”
2nd Take-Home Exam DUE: Wednesday, March 30 at 11:59 PM.

Week 11 (April 4)
Martha Nussbaum, “Capabilities and Social Justice.”
Tuesday, April 5: (Gator Day): “Reconciliation After Genocide Workshop.”
Thursday, April 7: Lewis Gordon, “Philosophy from Small Places.”

Week 12 (April 11)
Course Project Proposals DUE: Monday, April 11 in class and on Sakai.
Amartya Sen, “Violence, Identity and Poverty.”

Week 13 (April 18)
Linda Alcoff, “The Problem of Speaking for Others.”
Project Workshop.

Week 14 (April 25)
Project Presentations.
Week 15 (May 2)
  Project Presentations.
  Tuesday, May 3: Last day of classes.

Final Paper DUE: Tuesday, May 10 at 9:00 AM.