PHIL 7010

Plans, Commitments, and Practical Reason

Tuesdays, 2:00-5:00 – CTIHB 406 – 3 units

Professor: Chrisoula Andreou
Office: CTIHB 415
Office Hours: Tuesdays 5:00pm-6:00pm; and by appointment
E-mail Address: c.andreou@utah.edu*

*Do not email me via Canvas. Use the email address provided above. When contacting me, be sure to allow sufficient time for a reply. If, for example, you e-mail me the night before your presentation, it’s possible that I won’t get your message or that I won’t have time to reply until it’s too late.

Also, to ensure that your e-mail messages don’t get lost in a pile of spam, always use the subject heading “PHIL 7010” when you e-mail me.

To avoid having your message blocked out by the college’s spam filter, use your University of Utah e-mail address.

Course Description:

This course will focus on a few puzzles concerning rational decision-making. In exploring strategies for solving the puzzles, we will think about the roles of intentions, plans, and commitments in proper reasoning about what to do. Readings will include, among other things, papers by Quinn, Kavka, Bratman, Gauthier, and Velleman.

Course Objectives:

The aim of the course is to get you thinking and communicating about issues in contemporary action theory in a careful, critical, and creative manner. Successful completion of the course requires that you be able to:

1. identify and describe the main elements of the philosophical positions studied;
2. compare and contrast the different philosophical positions studied;
3. analyze and critically evaluate the philosophical arguments studied;
4. demonstrate an appreciation of the subtlety and complexity of the philosophical works studied;
5. produce philosophically subtle, argumentatively complex writings of your own.

Our weekly meetings include lectures, discussion, presentations, and in-depth analysis.

Prerequisites:

Some familiarity with ethical theory or rational choice theory.
Course Requirements:

50%: mid-term essay (Tentative Due Date: October 3 via email) and 8-page final essay (Tentative due date: TBA)
   OR
   12-page term paper (Tentative due date: TBA)
25%: end of term in-class test (Tentative date: TBA)
25%: participation and participation assignments (including, most notably, a substantial presentation and regular brief reaction pieces)

Both you and your participation assignment should be in-class when a participation assignment is due. Come talk to me in advance or else as soon as possible if special circumstances warrant special accommodations.

If an emergency forces you to miss a class, please let me know as soon as you can and I can help you make sure you get completely caught up. Don’t forget to find out if any assignments or handouts were provided.

Reading Assignments:

The assigned readings will be available on Marriott Library’s electronic reserve system. To access the readings, use “Andreou 7010” in the course reserves search field. Don’t use “PHIL 7010” since that may get you readings from other instructors as well. For each class, be sure to bring an electronic or hard copy of the assigned reading with you.

Tentative Reading List and Reaction Piece Schedule:

September Dates TBA
   Nozick. "Newcomb's Problem" (from The Nature of Rationality)* [no earlier than Sept. 10]
   Broome, “Private Morality” (from Climate Matters)* [no earlier than Sept. 10]
   Sinnott-Armstrong, “It's Not My Fault”*
   Temkin, “A “New” Principle of Aggregation”*
   Slote, "Rational Dilemmas and Rational Supererogation”*
October & November Dates TBA
   Gauthier. “Assure and Threaten”
   Gauthier. “Why Contractarianism?”
   Velleman. “Deciding How to Decide”
   Ainslie, "The Warp in How We Evaluate the Future" (from Breakdown of Will)*
   Greene and Sullivan, "Against Time-Bias”*
   Davis, "How to Enforce a Ulysses Contract When Ulysses is Competent to Refuse”*
   Thaler and Sunstein. “Libertarian Paternalism is not an Oxymoron”*
   TBA*
Instructions for reaction pieces:

Each reaction piece should be about ½ a page double-spaced. You should think of your reaction pieces as constituting a running journal. The point is for you to engage with the reading before we discuss it in class, so (except for when there are special circumstances that warrant special accommodations) late assignments will receive little or no credit. (Actually, there’s one more exception: once during the term, you can hand in a reaction piece late, no questions asked.) You can use your ½ a page to identify the premises and conclusion of a main argument in the paper, to add to the case for the author’s position, or to raise a potential objection to the author’s reasoning. I will collect your reaction pieces and add them to the running journal that I will create for each of you. So long as you’ve made a reasonable effort at engaging with the assigned reading, you will get full credit for each reaction piece you submit. It’s no problem if your reaction pieces do not display a refined understanding of the assigned readings. The idea is for your reaction pieces to prepare you for the in-class discussion and debate that will help you improve your understanding of the readings. Of course, even initially unrefined ideas may serve as the inspiration for a subtle paper, so you are more than welcome to use some of your reaction pieces as the basis for your paper(s).

Note:

I may use the class e-mail list to send out announcements, so you should check your university e-mail account regularly.

General Information:

*The Americans with Disabilities Act.* The University of Utah seeks to provide equal access to its programs, services, and activities for people with disabilities. If you will need accommodations in this class, reasonable prior notice needs to be given to the Center for Disability Services, 162 Olpin Union Building, (801) 581-5020. CDS will work with you and the instructor to make arrangements for accommodations. All written information in this course can be made available in an alternative format with prior notification to the Center for Disability Services.

*Faculty and student responsibilities.* “All students are expected to maintain professional behavior in the classroom setting, according to the Student Code, spelled out in the Student Handbook. Students have specific rights in the classroom as detailed in Article III of the Code. The Code also specifies proscribed conduct (Article XI) that involves cheating on tests, plagiarism, and/or collusion, as well as fraud, theft, etc. Students should read the Code carefully and know they are responsible for the content. According to Faculty Rules and Regulations, it is the faculty responsibility to enforce responsible classroom behaviors, beginning with verbal warnings and progressing to dismissal from class and a failing grade. Students have the right to appeal such action to the Student Behavior Committee.”

(http://www.humis.utah.edu/humis/docs/organization_269_1233080547.pdf)
**DRAFT**

**Diversity/Civility Statement.** Be courteous and respectful toward your fellow classmates. During discussion, try to listen attentively, be flexible and patient, try not to monopolize conversation, etc.

**Grading.** Grades will be assigned in accordance with the letter grade system (A-E) described in the student handbook (http://registrar.utah.edu/handbook/grading.php). For precision and ease with respect to the task of combining grades and applying late penalties (when late work has been explicitly permitted), corresponding number grades will be determined and recorded according to the following range scale:

A <94-100>; A-<90-93.9>; B+<87-89.9>; B<84-86.9>; B-<80-83.9>; C+<77-79.9>
C<74-76.9>; C-<70-73.9>; D+<67-69.9>; D<64-66.9>; D-<60-63.9>; E<0-59.9>.

**Addressing Sexual Misconduct.** Title IX makes it clear that violence and harassment based on sex and gender (which includes sexual orientation and gender identity/expression) is a civil rights offense subject to the same kinds of accountability and the same kinds of support applied to offenses against other protected categories such as race, national origin, color, religion, age, status as a person with a disability, veteran’s status or genetic information. If you or someone you know has been harassed or assaulted, you are encouraged to report it to the Title IX Coordinator in the Office of Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action, 135 Park Building, 801-581-8365, or the Office of the Dean of Students, 270 Union Building, 801-581-7066. For support and confidential consultation, contact the Center for Student Wellness, 426 SSB, 801-581-7776. To report to the police, contact the Department of Public Safety, 801-585-2677(COPS).

**University Safety Statement.** The University of Utah values the safety of all campus community members. To report suspicious activity or to request a courtesy escort, call campus police at 801-585-COPS (801-585-2677). You will receive important emergency alerts and safety messages regarding campus safety via text message. For more information regarding safety and to view available training resources, including helpful videos, visit safeu.utah.edu.