

**UMBC UGC New Course Request: PHIL 451: Consequentialism and its Critics**

Date Submitted: 2/8/2016

Proposed Effective Date: immediately

	Name	Email	Phone	Dept
Dept Chair or UPD	Steve Yalowitz	yalowitz@umbc.edu	5-2108	Philosophy
Other Contact	Nafi Shahegh	shahegh@umbc.edu	5-2103	Philosophy

**COURSE INFORMATION:**

Course Number(s)	PHIL 451
Formal Title	Consequentialism and its Critics
Transcript Title (≤30c)	Consequentialism and its Critics
Recommended Course Preparation	PHIL 150 or PHIL 152 or PHIL 350 or PHIL 355
Prerequisite NOTE: Unless otherwise indicated, a prerequisite is assumed to be passed with a "D" or better.	One course in Philosophy with a grade of C or better
Credits	3
Repeatable?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Max. Total Credits	<small>This should be equal to the number of credits for courses that cannot be repeated for credit. For courses that may be repeated for credit, enter the maximum total number of credits a student can receive from this course. E.g., enter 6 credits for a 3 credit course that may be taken a second time for credit, but not for a third time. Please note that this does NOT refer to how many times a class may be retaken for a higher grade.</small>
Grading Method(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Reg (A-F) <input type="checkbox"/> Audit <input type="checkbox"/> Pass-Fail

**PROPOSED CATALOG DESCRIPTION** (no longer than 75 words):

According to Consequentialism, the rightness or wrongness of an action, law, or institution is determined by the value of its consequences. While typically taken for granted in public policy debates, it is often rejected as an adequate moral theory, because it is too demanding in what it requires of moral agents and deviates too far from commonsense morality. This course starts with its classical formulation – Utilitarianism – and then looks at contemporary variants developed in response to these and other criticisms.

**RATIONALE FOR NEW COURSE:**

Consequentialism is one of the three major ethical schools of thought, along with virtue theory (deriving from Aristotle) and deontology (deriving from Kant), and has had an enormous impact both within and outside of philosophy. There is persistent student interest in a course focused on it, and so we are offering it in Fall 2019, and intend to offer it every two years thereafter. We expect PHIL 451: Consequentialism and its Critics to draw full enrollments from across the campus. We therefore need to have it available as a regular course in the catalog. The course will be taught at the 400-level so that students will have sufficient background in philosophy for engaging with a complex issue and debate. The recommended course preparations are our key introductory ethics courses -- PHIL 150: Contemporary Moral Issues, PHIL 152: Introduction to Moral Theory – as well as PHIL 350: Ethical Theory and PHIL 355: Political Philosophy, both of which address consequentialism less fully at the intermediate level as part of survey courses. All these courses will provide solid preparation for PHIL 451, because of their

content and also their emphasis on writing. As with all our courses, we want students to have the option of auditing, taking P/F or for a grade.

**ATTACH COURSE OUTLINE (mandatory):**

See attached syllabus

**PHIL 451: Consequentialism and its Critics**  
**Fall 2019**

Patrick Mayer  
[pmayer1@umbc.edu](mailto:pmayer1@umbc.edu)  
office: PAHB 458  
phone: 410-455-2103  
office hours: TTh 4-5pm and by appointment

**Functional Competency Satisfied by this Course: Critical Analysis and Reasoning**

**Texts (available for purchase at the UMBC bookstore; other readings will be made available through Blackboard):**

J.S. Mill, Utilitarianism  
Samuel Scheffler, Consequentialism and its Critics (CAC)

**Course Goals and Expectations:**

According to Consequentialism, the rightness or wrongness of an action, law, or institution is determined by the value of its consequences. While typically taken for granted in public policy debates, it is often rejected as an adequate moral theory, because it is too demanding in what it requires of moral agents and deviates too far from commonsense morality. This course starts with its classical formulation – Utilitarianism – and then looks at contemporary variants developed in response to these and other criticisms.

This course will provide students with a strong background on one of the three major secular theories of ethics in the western philosophical tradition, Consequentialism (the other two are Deontology and Virtue Ethics). While the history of this theory almost certainly goes back farther, we will begin our study with the Utilitarians of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. They still serve, in many ways, as the archetype and paradigm of consequentialist thought. We will take a very detailed look at the classic work from that group of thinkers, John Stuart Mill's *Utilitarianism*, as well as the history of utilitarianism both before and after Mill. We then move on to more contemporary critique and defense of consequentialist thought, ending with some suggested significant changes in the structure of the theory.

Philosophical growth and progress, both personal and interpersonal, occurs in dialogue and discussion. For that reason, discussion will play a central role in the course, both in the way we spend class time and how students are evaluated. So it will be vital that students keep up with the readings, some of which can be quite dense. Each student will once during the semester present a synopsis of the reading for that day's class.

**Methods of Evaluation:**

Two Papers	30% of your grade (each)
Exam	10% of your grade
Presentation	10% of your grade
Participation	20% of your grade

Papers will be on topics developed by the student with the advice and approval of the instructor. The Exam will be a short essay exam taken in class, and will cover only the material from the first part of class, on Mill's Utilitarianism.

Presentations will be 10-15 minutes long and will present a synopsis of the reading for the day as well as questions for class discussion. These presentations will take place after the first exam, and may be converted to presentations by teams of two depending on the number of students enrolled. Students will meet with the instructor prior to finalizing paper topics and prior to their presentation date. This means students will meet with the instructor outside of class at least three times. Attendance at such meetings will be part of the participation grade. The remainder of the participation grade will be determined by attendance and attentiveness in class and contribution to class discussions.

**Course Schedule:**

Readings in Italics will be provided by me

Thu. 8/29	Course Introduction	
<b>Part One</b>	<b>A History of Utilitarianism</b>	
Tue. 9/3	<i>Colin Heydt "Utilitarianism before Bentham"</i> <i>Jamie Crimmins "Bentham and Utilitarianism in the early nineteenth century"</i>	
Thu. 9/5	Mill, Utilitarianism chs. 1 & 2 <i>Wendy Donner "Mill's Theory of Value"</i> <i>Alan Fuchs "Mill's Theory of Morally Correct Action"</i>	
Tue. 9/10	Mill, Utilitarianism chs. 1 & 2 <i>Wendy Donner "Mill's Theory of Value"</i> <i>Alan Fuchs "Mill's Theory of Morally Correct Action"</i>	
Thu. 9/12	Mill, Utilitarianism chs. 3 & 4 <i>Dale Miller "Mill's Theory of Sanctions"</i> <i>Henry West "Mill's 'Proof' of the Principle of Utility"</i>	
Tue. 9/17	Mill, Utilitarianism chs. 3 & 4 <i>Dale Miller "Mill's Theory of Sanctions"</i> <i>Henry West "Mill's 'Proof' of the Principle of Utility"</i>	
Thu. 9/19	Mill, Utilitarianism ch. 5 <i>L.W. Sumner "Mill's Theory of Rights"</i>	
Tue. 9/24	Mill, Utilitarianism ch. 5 - <i>L.W. Sumner "Mill's Theory of Rights"</i> <i>Crisp "Sidgwick and Utilitarianism in the Nineteenth Century -</i> <i>Krister Bykvist, "Utilitarianism in the twentieth century"</i>	
Thu. 9/26	<b>Essay Exam</b>	<b>Exam</b>
<b>Part Two</b>	<b>Critiques and Alternatives</b>	
Tue. 10/1	John Rawls "Classical Utilitarianism" CAC pgs. 14-19	
Thu. 10/3	Bernard Williams "Consequentialism and Integrity" CAC pgs. 20-50	

Tue. 10/8	Thomas Nagel "War and Massacre" CAC pgs. 51-73	
Thu. 10/10	Robert Nozick "Side Constraints" CAC pgs. 134-141	
Tue 10/15	Thomas Nagel "Autonomy and Deontology" pgs. 142-172	
Thu. 10/17	Amartya Sen "Rights and Agency" CAC pgs. 187-223	
Tue. 10/22	Philippa Foot "Utilitarianism and the Virtues" CAC pgs. 224-242	
Thu. 10/24	Scheffler "Agent-Centred Restrictions, Rationality and the Virtues" CAC pgs. 243-260	
<b>Part Three</b>	<b>Responses to Criticisms</b>	
Tue. 10/29	T.M. Scanlon "Rights, Goals and Fairness" CAC pgs. 74-92	<b>Paper One Due</b>
Thu. 10/31	Peter Railton "Alienation, Consequentialism, and the Demands of Morality" CAC pgs. 93-133	
Tue. 11/5	Derek Parfit "Is Common Sense Morality Self-Defeating" CAC pgs. 173-186	
Thu. 11/7	Conrad Johnson "The Authority of the Moral Agent" CAC pgs. 261-287	
<b>Part Four</b>	<b>Innovations</b>	
Tue. 11/12	<i>Robert Adams "Motive Utilitarianism"</i>	
Tue. 11/14	<i>Peter Railton "How Thinking about Character and Utilitarianism Might Lead to Rethinking the Character of Utilitarianism"</i>	
Tue. 11/19	<i>Michael Slot "Satisficing Consequentialism"</i>	
Thu. 11/21	<i>Philip Pettit "Satisficing Consequentialism"</i>	
Tue. 11/26	<i>Judith Jarvis Thomson "On Some Ways in Which a Thing Can be Good"</i>	
Thu. 11/28	<b>No Class</b>	
Tue. 12/3	<i>James Griffin "The Human Good and the Ambitions of Consequentialism"</i>	
Thu. 12/5	<i>Shelly Kagan "The Limit of Well-Being"</i>	
Tue. 12/10	Course Recap	
		<b>Paper Two Due during Finals Week</b>

## UMBC Statement of Values for Academic Integrity

By enrolling in this course, each student assumes the responsibilities of an active participant in UMBC's scholarly community in which everyone's academic work and behavior are held to the highest standards of honesty. Cheating, fabrication, plagiarism, and helping others to commit these acts are all forms of academic dishonesty, and they are wrong. Academic misconduct could result in disciplinary action that may include, but is not limited to, suspension or dismissal. To read the full Student Academic Conduct Policy, consult the UMBC Student Handbook, or the Office of Undergraduate Education.

### Disclosures of Sexual Misconduct and Child Abuse or Neglect

As an instructor, I am considered a Responsible Employee, per UMBC's Policy on Prohibited Sexual Misconduct, Interpersonal Violence, and Other Related Misconduct (located at <http://humanrelations.umbc.edu/sexual-misconduct/umbc-resource-page-for-sexual-misconduct-and-other-related-misconduct/>). While my goal is for you to be able to share information related to your life experiences through discussion and written work, I want to be transparent that as a Responsible Employee I am required to report disclosures of sexual assault, domestic violence, relationship violence, stalking, and/or gender-based harassment to the University's Title IX Coordinator.

As an instructor, I also have a mandatory obligation to report disclosures of or suspected instances of child abuse or neglect ([www.usmh.usmd.edu/regents/bylaws/SectionVI/VI150.pdf](http://www.usmh.usmd.edu/regents/bylaws/SectionVI/VI150.pdf)).

The purpose of these reporting requirements is for the University to inform you of options, supports and resources; you will not be forced to file a report with the police. Further, you are able to receive supports and resources, even if you choose to not want any action taken. Please note that in certain situations, based on the nature of the disclosure, the University may need to take action.

#### **If you need to speak with someone in confidence about an incident, UMBC has the following Confidential Resources available to support you:**

The Counseling Center: 410-455-2472

University Health Services: 410-455-2542

(After-hours counseling and care available by calling campus police at 410-455-5555)

#### **Other on-campus supports and resources:**

The Women's Center, 410-455-2714

Title IX Coordinator, 410-455-1606

Additional on and off campus supports and resources can be found at: <http://humanrelations.umbc.edu/sexual-misconduct/gender-equitytitle-ix/>.

### Student Disability Services (SDS)

UMBC is committed to eliminating discriminatory obstacles that may disadvantage students based on disability. Services for students with disabilities are provided for all students qualified under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990, the ADAAA of 2009, and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act who request and are eligible for accommodations. The Office of Student Disability Services (SDS) is the UMBC department designated to coordinate accommodations that would allow students to have equal access and inclusion in all courses, programs, and activities at the University.

If you have a documented disability and need to request academic accommodations, please refer to the SDS website at [sds.umbc.edu](http://sds.umbc.edu) for registration information and to begin the process, or alternatively you may visit the SDS office in the Math/Psychology Building, Room 212. For questions or concerns, you may contact us through email at [disAbility@umbc.edu](mailto:disAbility@umbc.edu) or phone (410) 455-2459.

If you require accommodations for this class, make an appointment to meet with me to discuss your SDS-approved accommodations.

