

PHIL 534  
Fall 2010  
Wednesdays 9:35-11:25 am  
office hours: Th. 1-3 pm and by appointment

Seminar: Ethics  
Prof. S. Stroud  
Leacock 927  
office: Leacock 942, 398-3250

### **Course Description**

topic for 2010: *moral demandingness*

Is it a problem if the requirements of morality place great burdens on us? If so, why is this a problem, and what kind of problem is it? Issues about the potential demandingness of morality have sparked some of the best writing in contemporary ethical theory, and we will explore them in the seminar. We will endeavour in particular to get clearer on whether and why it is an objection to a conception of morality if on that conception the requirements of morality are extremely demanding. (This has often been raised as an objection to particular moral theories, but it admits of a variety of interpretations, and some authors have contested whether it is a cogent objection at all.)

#### Course readings

Readings for the seminar will be drawn from the contemporary literature. We will start with some classic texts by Peter Singer and Bernard Williams which in effect pose the problem of moral demandingness. We will carefully analyse the sustained treatments of the problem offered by Liam Murphy and Garrett Cullity. We will read some of the wealth of material on this issue which has appeared in just the last few years and which has substantially broadened the parameters of the debate. A full bibliography will be distributed; students will be expected to download or otherwise obtain journal articles and other electronically available resources themselves. Items available only in hard copy will be made available to students.

#### Course requirements and method of assessment

Short presentation to the seminar on one of the readings, 15%

Class participation, 10%

Final paper of 5000-6000 words, 75%

You must complete all requirements in order to pass the course.

#### Prerequisites

- PHIL 334 (Ethical Theory) or equivalent
  - ideally, at least one further course in moral philosophy at or above the intermediate level
  - note: this seminar will assume familiarity with leading issues in contemporary analytic ethical theory
  - enrolment in Philosophy Department seminars is limited to Philosophy graduate students and to final-year Philosophy undergraduates, except by written permission of the instructor
- Please see me if your background does not correspond to the above description.

### Required syllabus statements

In accord with McGill University's Charter of Students' Rights, students in this course have the right to submit in English or in French any written work that is to be graded.

McGill University values academic integrity. Therefore, all students must understand the meaning and consequences of cheating, plagiarism and other academic offences under the Code of Student Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures (see [www.mcgill.ca/students/srr/honest/](http://www.mcgill.ca/students/srr/honest/) for more information).

In the event of extraordinary circumstances beyond the University's control, the content and/or evaluation scheme in this course is subject to change.