

Philosophy of Volunteer Service (Spring 2010—University of Maine at Augusta)

PHIA 389 Topics in Philosophy                      Professor Gregory Fahy  
Thursdays: 1:00-2:30 and online              email: [gregory.fahy@maine.edu](mailto:gregory.fahy@maine.edu)  
Office Hours:    Tel: 621-3517  
Tuesdays 11:00-1:00 (in Bangor)              1-877-UMA-1234 (ex. 3517)  
Thursdays: 10:00-11:00 & 4:00-5:00 (in JWTH 115)  
Fridays: 9:00-11:00 (in JWTH 115)  
Other times by appointment

Materials & Texts:

Adam Davis and Elizabeth Lynn, The Civically Engaged Reader (The Great Books Foundation, 2006).

Various handouts by Nel Noddings, Peter Singer, Thomas Pogge, John McMillan

Description:

Through writings of literature, history and philosophy, this course explores the philosophical underpinnings of volunteer service. We will wrestle with issues about how best to serve, whom to serve, and most importantly, why (and whether) individuals should perform service. Students are expected to engage in at least two different types of service during the semester and bring their experiences to bear in class discussion and assignments. This course is a hybrid course and approximately half of students' coursework will be completed on Blackboard. This course is part of a nine credit course cluster and designed to be part of this cluster course and so POI is required if students are not enrolled in the other two courses. Prerequisites: PHIXXX or POI

Objectives:

This course will acquaint students with a variety of philosophical perspectives on volunteer service. It will develop students' capacity to critically and speculatively reflect on human knowledge and the world.

- 1) Knowledge objectives:
  - a. Students will understand fundamental concepts, terminology and methods of important positions on volunteer service.
  - b. Students will integrate the concepts of diverse philosophical systems.
  - c. Students will understand the principles of critical thought.
- 2) Performance objectives:
  - a. Students will apply general philosophical concepts and principles to specific social and cultural issues.
  - b. Students will be able to express philosophical concepts as they relate to service.
  - c. Students will demonstrate critical thinking in everyday life.

### Requirements:

- 1) There will be two open-book-and-note essay exams during the semester. You will have a week to answer these essay questions. One exam will be due on March 8, and the second one on May 3. These exams will test your understanding of the positions and arguments of the various philosophers we have read. Each exam will be worth 15% of your grade.
- 2) You will write a twelve to fifteen page paper due at the end of the semester. The paper will address one of the topics from our discussion or our textbook and extend your knowledge of this topic to other approaches and disciplines. It will have an exposition element, where you explain the arguments of a philosopher and a critical element, where you evaluate these arguments. I suggest you contact me with a paper proposal well in advance of the due date so that I can help you develop your paper. It will be worth 30% of your grade, and it will be due on April 26.
- 3) This leaves 40% of your grade for participation, broadly construed. For each class unit, I will ask you to respond critically to the readings and lecture materials. These responses may take the form of brief papers, group debates, a group discussion reported back to the entire class, etc. You should be prepared to contribute to classroom participation on a weekly basis. I will be grading your participation based on your understanding of the material, your concise expression of ideas, your support of these opinions with examples and argumentation, your logical consistency and your willingness to engage others constructively with their arguments and opinions. Philosophy is dialectical; this means that students are expected to ask questions, debate issues, challenge opinions, try on various approaches, and otherwise actively contribute.

### Other Issues:

All written work submitted for this class should be wholly and solely your own. Any thoughts or words of other people should be clearly noted as such. I take plagiarism extremely seriously and any evidence of it will be dealt with in accordance with university policy. Penalties for plagiarism include failing the paper, the course, and administrative separation from UMA. Plagiarism is often difficult to define. So if you have questions about what constitutes plagiarism, I would be happy to discuss the matter with you prior to your submission of the assignment.

If you miss an exam or paper deadline, you will have an opportunity to make up the assignment only if you have a documented, legitimate excuse. Otherwise you will receive no credit for that assignment. You will be required to discuss the matter with me outside of class.

There will be no withdrawal passing grades issued by me after the midterm exam is graded. If you are considering withdrawing from the course, please discuss the matter with me.

If you are a student with a documented disability and wish to have reasonable accommodation made for you in this class, please contact me immediately.

If you are seeking an incomplete for this class, arrangements must be made with me prior to the scheduled final exam due date.

## Schedule of Class Discussions

### Week of:

### Readings discussed in that unit:

January 11	Introductions and Definitions What is Volunteer Service?	--
January 18	Why should we give and serve?	Aristotle; Noddings(H); Pogge(H); Nietzsche(H)
January 25	Why should we give and serve?	Addams; Smith; Hobbes(H); James
February 1	Equality: How much should we serve? How much is enough?	Barbusse; Singer(H); Parker(H)
February 8	Equality and Service: Does service address inequality?	Davis; Morrison
February 22	Leadership and Service: What is the Value of Opposition?	Williams; Rodriguez
March 1	Leadership and Responsibility; The role of fear and humility	Collins; Hawthorne
March 8	Midterm Exam	---
March 15	When does service drain us? When does it strengthen us?	Wilkins-Freeman; Akhmatova
March 29	How should we serve? Giving or changing social conditions	Brecht; Maimonides; Carnegie
April 5	The role of pride in service?	King; Angelou
April 12	Is service self-defeating?	Emerson; McMillan
April 19	What is compassion and what is its role in service?	Sogyal Rinpoche; Rousseau; Comte-Sponville(H)
April 26	The role of fear and the experience of difference	Brooks; Obama; Cavafy
May 3	Final Exam	--