

Contemporary Moral Issues

PHIL 211 (001-006), Fall 2014

Course Lectures

Professor: Dr. Jennifer A. Frey

Class Meetings: MW, 1:10-2:00, Callcot Social Science Center 011 (behind Bookstore)

Office Hours: MW, 12-1 or by appointment

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Discussion Sections

Sections 001-002

Class Meetings

001: F 9:40-10:30, Jones Physical Science, 115

002: F 10:50-11:40, Darla Moore Business School, 118

Instructor: Jeremy Weissman

Office Hours: MW 12-1

Office: 443 Byrnes Building

Email: weissman.jeremy@gmail.com

Sections 003 and 005

Class Meetings

003: F 12-12:50, Darla Moore Business School, 126

005: F 1:10-2:00, Jones Physical Science, 115

Instructor: Adam Omelianchuk

Office Hours: MW 12-1

Office: 447 Byrnes Building

Email: omelianchuk@gmail.com

Sections 004 and 006

Class Meetings

004: F 12-12:50, Jones Physical Science, 115

006: F 1:11-2:01, Darla Moore Business School, 119

Instructor: Keisha Ray

Office Hours: MW 12-1

Office: 411 Byrnes Building

Email: keish.ray@gmail.com

Course Description

This is an introductory course that presupposes no prior knowledge of philosophy. The goal of this class is to learn to analyze and discuss contemporary moral issues in a philosophically informed manner. Our central concerns are to understand our disputed moral beliefs and practices in terms of the variety of theoretical presuppositions and commitments we have regarding good and evil, right and wrong, the permissible and the prohibited. We will consider different forms of moral reasoning and how we might apply these to contemporary moral issues about which we, as a society, disagree profoundly. We will also hold our own pre-theoretical moral commitments up to standards of rational scrutiny.

Learning Outcomes

By taking this course, each student will be able to:

1. Identify several difficult and disputed moral controversies
2. Identify some of the main positions taken regarding these moral controversies
3. Identify and critically analyze the main arguments for these positions
4. Critically evaluate and argue cogently for your own views
5. Identify important moral principles/theories and apply them in the context of arguments regarding moral controversies
6. Identify, explain and analyze an argument from a philosophical text.
7. Regularly participate in class discussion of disputed topics in an informed and respectful manner.
8. Reflect on our values and learn how to articulate and defend them in light of principles of sound argument and reasoning.

Course Requirements

Homework	20%
Midterm Exam	25%
Media Analysis	15%
Final Exam	25%
Class Participation	15%

Homework

There will be weekly homework assignments for this course (13 in total), designed to show that you have read and comprehended the material assigned for that week. The homework questions will be posted on Blackboard, and you will be expected to upload your homework assignments to Blackboard every week. Homework is due BEFORE CLASS on the dates indicated on the syllabus, in order to ensure that you come to class prepared to learn. If you are having trouble with BB, you can email the homework to

your TA. **I will not accept late homework without a doctor's excuse.** This means that if you submit homework after the class meeting on the day assigned, you will not get credit for it (I do not give "partial" credit).

Midterm Exam

There will be an in-class midterm exam. This exam will be a mixed short answer, short essay exam, and will cover all readings up to the date of the exam. The exam is designed to demonstrate that you have read, understood, and are ready to critically evaluate the material covered in the first half of the course. If a student has an excused absence that is cleared with the professor before the administration of the exam, the student can re-schedule a make-up exam within one week. If you are absent without a written and approved medical excuse, you will receive an F for the exam. Re-examination for the purpose of raising or changing a grade is strictly prohibited.

Media Analysis

In this class you will be required to read popular print media (e.g., newspapers, online or print magazines, popular blogs, etc) and identify two separate examples of moral reasoning about one of our disputed moral issues discussed in class. The goal of this assignment is to show that you can identify and analyze a bit of moral reasoning in terms of the theories we have identified in class. This assignment must be downloaded from Blackboard and turned in at the appropriate time indicated on the syllabus. Both media analyses must be uploaded to Blackboard in order to receive a grade. **I will not accept late assignments without a doctor's excuse.**

Final Exam

The final exam will function as a second mid-term exam; thus, it will not be a comprehensive exam, and will only cover class material post-midterm. It will be a mixed short answer, short essay exam, designed to demonstrate that you have read, understood, and are ready to critically evaluate the material covered since the midterm. If you miss the final exam but have an excused absence, you will receive an "I" or incomplete for the course and will have to arrange a make-up final with the professor the following semester. If you miss the final without an excuse, you will receive an F for the exam. Re-examination for the purpose of raising or changing a grade is strictly prohibited.

Class Participation

Please note that class participation is a full **15% of your final grade**. Please do not underestimate the importance of this in determining your final grade. Participation should be an easy A. However, in order to earn an A in class participation, you must not only come to class and lectures prepared, but you must also *actively participate in the class discussion in a productive and informed way*. Class participation includes: helping to explain, analyze, and critically evaluate the author's position, asking questions about the material under discussion, helping to clarify another's point, responding to the

professor's questions, and so on. You have three opportunities to participate every week: in my main lectures MW, in your Friday discussion section with your TA, or in my office hours or your TAs office hours. It is expected that you will form opinions in this class and that you will be willing to share them with your professor, your TAs, and your class peers. A reasonable goal would be to make at least one contribution during each discussion meeting, and to participate in each in class debate held in discussion sections. The more you are silent (in conjunction with total absence from your instructor's office hours), the lower your class participation grade will be. If you are uncomfortable talking in class then it is your responsibility to find a way to come talk to your TA about this.

Of course, you can't participate in class effectively if you do not come to class prepared. At minimum, you must *come to class with the reading, your notebook, and something to take notes with*. Students are required to do *all* the reading on the syllabus. Students are expected to read the material in great depth, taking notes and making sure that the main concepts and arguments have been understood. Class and lecture is a time to discuss the readings, not to become familiar with them for the first time.

Attendance Policy

Although you are not graded for attendance, students are obligated to attend class regularly. This class adopts the university-wide attendance policy, which is as follows: absence from more than 10% of the scheduled class sessions, whether excused or unexcused, is excessive and there will be a grade penalty for each further absence. Every absence over four will drop one's total grade in the course by half a letter grade (or five percentage points). For instance, a student with six absences can receive no better than a 90% in the class.

To record your attendance, you will need to sign your name on an attendance sheet that will be passed around during your discussion section meetings. If the sheet does not make it to you, *it is your responsibility* to sign the sheet before you leave. If you forget to sign the sheet, you will be marked absent by your TA. I will not take attendance during lectures, though it obviously benefits you to attend them.

Required Texts

Mark Timmons, *Disputed Moral Issues: A Reader* (Oxford University Press, New York, 2011), **3rd edition**. You must use the **3rd edition**.

Texts are available at the bookstore and online.

All reading on the syllabus is *required* reading. Additional required readings beyond the main textbook will be made available through our course website on Blackboard. It is your responsibility to download and read these texts.

Please note that you cannot do well in this course just by reading the required reading. I will be providing additional information in class that you are responsible for knowing.

Therefore, if you miss class, it is not enough to make sure you have done the required reading in order to be prepared for exams. You will also have to get class notes from a classmate and make sure that you understand them. The best idea, of course, is to come to class and take your own notes.

Grading Rubric

A = 100-92% = excellent, exceptional, exemplary work

B+ = 91-86% = very good, commendable, admirable

B = 85-80% = good, shows promise

C+ = 79-76% = adequate, acceptable, ok

C = 75-70% = passable, but weak

D+ = 69-66% = very poor, unsatisfactory

D = 65-60% = marginal, seriously flawed

Below D = 59% and below = failure

Course Schedule

This course schedule is subject to change as circumstance demands. All changes will be immediately announced on Blackboard and via email. You are responsible for noting and remembering any changes made.

UNIT ONE: Sex and Marriage

8/25	M	Introduction	NO READING
8/27	W	Natural Law/Virtue	DMI, pp. 1-6; pp. 11-13; pp. 43-45; pp. 58-66 Aquinas and Aristotle on virtue
9/1	M	NO CLASS	LABOR DAY
9/3	W	Natural Law/Virtue [guest lecturer: Prof. Tollefsen]	Elizabeth Anscombe, "Contraception and Chastity" (BB) HW 1 DUE
9/8	M	Natural Law/Virtue	Joseph Pieper, "Temperance" (BB) HW 2 DUE
9/10	W	Kantian ethics	Thomas A. Mapps, "A Liberal View of Sexual Morality" DMI, pp. 101-111. Background reading: DMI, pp. 15-19, 47-54.
9/15	M	LGBT ethics	John Corvino, "Why Shouldn't Tommy and Jim Have Sex?" DMI, pp. 95-100. HW 3 DUE
9/17	W	Marriage	Sherif Girgis, Robert P. George, and Ryan T. Anderson, "What is Marriage?" (BB)
			Jonathan Rauch, "What is Marriage For?" "Anything Goes" (BB)

9/22	M	LGBT ethics	HW 4 DUE
9/24	W	Marriage	DMI, pp. 29-31, John Rawls, "A Theory of Justice", DMI, pp. 71-81; Elizabeth Brake, "Minimal Marriage" (BB)
9/29	M	LGBT ethics	Brake and Rawls (cont). Claudia Card, "Against Marriage" (BB) HW 5 DUE

UNIT TWO: The Value of Human Life

10/1	W	Abortion	<i>Evangelium Vitae</i> DMI, pp. 381-383. Mary Anne Warren, "On the Moral and Legal Status of Abortion." DMI, pp. 384-390.
10/6	M	Abortion	"After Birth Abortion: Why Should the Baby Live?" (BB); Lisa Harris, "Second Trimester Abortion" (BB) HW 6 DUE
10/8	W	Abortion	Judith Jarvis Thomson, "A Defense of Abortion" DMI, pp. 391-399.
10/13	M	Abortion	Patrick Lee and Robert P. George, "The Wrong of Abortion", L. W. Sumner, "A Moderate View" DMI, pp. 447-456; DMI, pp. 473-478. HW 7 DUE
10/15	W		Wrap up/Review Media Analysis #1 Due 9pm (BB)
10/20	M		IN CLASS MIDTERM
10/22	W	Euthanasia	DMI, pp. 340-349. James Rachels, "Active and Passive Euthanasia."
10/27	M	Euthanasia	Philippa Foot, "Killing and Letting Die" DMI, pp. 350-355. HW 8 DUE
10/29	W	Euthanasia	DMI, pp. 20-25, 26-30. The Philosopher's Brief (BB)
11/3	M	Euthanasia	Leon Kass, "Is There A Right to Die?" (BB) HW 9 DUE
11/5	W	Cloning	John Robertson, "Liberty, Identity, and Human Cloning" DMI, pp. 430
11/10	M	Cloning	Leon Kass, "Preventing Brave New World" DMI, pp. 437-445 HW 10 DUE

11/12	W	Enhancement	Michael J. Sandel, "The Case Against Perfection" DMI, pp. 455-462
11/17	M	Enhancement	Frances M. Kamm, "Is There a Problem with Enhancement?" DMI, pp. 513-524 HW 11 DUE

UNIT THREE: Animal Rights

11/19	W	Utilitarianism/Consequentialism	DMI, pp. 6-11.
11/24	M	Animal Rights	G. Matheny, "Utilitarianism and Animals" DMI, p. 333. HW 12 DUE
11/26	W	THANKSGIVING BREAK	NO CLASS MEETING
12/1	M	Animal Rights	James Rachels, "The Basic Case for Vegetarianism" (BB) HW 13 DUE
12/3	W	Animal Rights	Mary Anne Warren, "Human and Animal Rights Compared", DMI, 406-411; Carl Cohen, "Do Animals Have Rights?" DMI, pp. 398-405. Media Analysis #2 due 9PM (BB)
12/8	M		IN CLASS FINAL EXAM

Classroom Rules and Procedures

Classroom Environment

The classroom should be a respectful and professional environment; you should strive to dress, speak, and behave professionally. Please do not speak while others are speaking, and please do not call others names or try to belittle them personally or intellectually because they have a different moral perspective from your own. Although I expect (and welcome) disagreements during our time together, I also expect both civility and openness to a differing point of view, no matter how greatly it might diverge from your own, and even if it implicates your own personal conduct in a negative way. Moral ideals are not *abstractions*, they govern our choices and our identities. We may well disagree with one another's choices because we have different moral ideals. This is a reality that we all need to accept and be comfortable with in this classroom space.

Insubordination or disrespect towards the professor or the TA will not be tolerated and will result in expulsion from the classroom.

Be attentive in class. Do no sleep, text, eat, read other course materials, pass notes, etc. Do not arrive to class late.

Technology Policy

This classroom is a technology free zone unless otherwise stated by the professor on specific occasions. **Laptop computers, tablets and smartphones are not permitted to be on and in use during class meetings.** There is absolutely no texting or internet browsing during class. Failure to comply will result in expulsion from the classroom.

As a general rule, you should turn off your devices before you enter the classroom/lecture hall.

Academic Honesty

Assignments and examination work are expected to be the sole effort of the student submitting the work. Students are expected to follow the University of South Carolina Honor Code (www.housing.sc.edu/academicintegrity/honorcode.html) and should expect that every instance of a suspected violation will be reported. Students found responsible for violations of the Code will be subject to academic penalties under the Code in addition to whatever disciplinary sanctions are applied. Cheating on a test or copying someone else's work will result in an F for that assignment or exam, and possibly a grade of F in the course, and, in accordance with University policy, be referred to the University Committee for Academic Responsibility and may result in expulsion from the University.

Blackboard

I will rely on Blackboard for assignments and grades, as well as to communicate with you outside of class. It is your responsibility to make sure that the email address you use and check is the email address used by Blackboard; if you are not receiving Blackboard communications from me it is your responsibility to notify both me immediately and to fix the problem immediately. I expect you all to be proficient in Blackboard, and if you are having problems with it, it is your sole responsibility to make sure that solutions are found. Instructions, tips, and support are available at uts.sc.edu or servicedesk@sc.edu

Disability Services

If you have a disability that impedes your opportunities for success in this class it is your responsibility to let and the folks at disability services know immediately so that we can accommodate your needs. They can be reached at sasds@mailbox.sc.edu For more information, go online: <http://www.sa.sc.edu/sds/>

