

## **Contemporary Moral Issues**

PHIL 211 (001-006), Fall 2015

### 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

Office phone: (803) 777-2264

Office: 416 Byrnes Building

Email: [frey.jenn@gmail.com](mailto:frey.jenn@gmail.com)

### Discussion Sections

#### *Sections 001-002*

##### Class Meetings

001: F 10:50-11:40, Wardlaw, 122

002: F 12:00-12:50 Sumwalt 213

Instructor: Mr. Justin Price

Office Hours: TH 3-4, or by appointment

Office: 447 Byrnes Building

Email: [justinprice02@gmail.com](mailto:justinprice02@gmail.com)

#### *Sections 003-004*

##### Class Meetings

003: F 12-12:50, Sumwalt 305

004: F 1:10-2:00, Coker 102

Instructor: Mr. Adam Omelianchuk

Office Hours: MW, 12-1, or by appointment

Office: 447 Byrnes Building

Email: [apo@email.sc.edu](mailto:apo@email.sc.edu)

#### *Sections 005-006*

##### Class Meetings

005: F 1:10-2:00, Coker 510

006: F 2:20-3:10, Wardlaw, 122

Instructor: Mr. Nicholas Danne

Office Hours: TH, 1-2, or by appointment

Office: 444 Byrnes Building

Email: [ndanne@email.sc.edu](mailto:ndanne@email.sc.edu)

## **Course Description**

This is an introductory course that presupposes no prior knowledge of philosophy. The goal of this class is to learn how 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 points of view about the good human life and how to assess our own value judgments.

## **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**

Midterm Exam	25%
Media Analysis	25%
Final Exam	25%
Homework Quizzes	10%
Class Participation	15%

### *Homework Quizzes*

These will be ten *very* short, multiple choice quizzes designed to test whether or not you have done the course reading. These will appear at random throughout the semester. If you do the course reading, you will have no trouble with these quizzes. If you have not done the reading, you will probably fail them.

### *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 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 through Blackboard at the appropriate time indicated on the syllabus. **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.

### **Texts**

I will rely on Blackboard to distribute the course materials, including all written texts. Much of this material is in the public domain; for the rest I will rely upon the library's "e-reserve" system, which is accessible through Blackboard. If the reading is on the syllabus it is *required reading*. You cannot do well in this course without doing the reading and taking notes on the reading. I repeat: you cannot possibly do well in this course without doing the reading and taking notes on that reading.

### **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**

M 8/24	INTRODUCTION	NO READING
W 8/26	RESEARCH WORKSHOP	NO READING
M 8/31	Temperance/Lust	Elizabeth Anscombe, “Contraception and Chastity” (BB) Aquinas, “On Lust” (BB)
W 9/2	Sex and Love	St.Paul, “Sexuality and Love” (BB); Geoffrey Gorer, “On Falling In Love” (BB)
M 9/7	LABOR DAY	NO CLASS
W 9/9	LGBT Ethics	John Corvino, “Why Shouldn’t Tommy and Jim Have Sex?” (BB)
M 9/14	Marriage/Law	Ryan T. Anderson, Sherif Gergis, and Robert George, “What is Marriage” (ER)
W 9/16	Marriage/Law	Elizabeth Brake, “Minimal Marriage” (ER)
M 9/21	Marriage/Law	Excerpts, “Obergefell v. Hodges (online)
W 9/23		Wrap up discussion/Summary
F 9/25		Media Analysis Due, 10PM

**UNIT TWO: The Value of Human Life**

M 9/28	Abortion	Evangelium Vitae (online)/Mary Anne Warren, “Moral and Legal Status of Abortion” (BB)
W 9/30	Abortion	Giubilini and Minerva, “After Birth Abortion: Why Should the Baby Live?” (ER) Excerpts, Roe v. Wade
M 10/5	Abortion	Sherwin, “Abortion Through a Feminist Ethics Lens” (ER); excerpts Casey v. Planned Parenthood
W 10/7	Abortion	Sidney Callahan, “A Case for Pro-Life Feminism” (BB); Charlie Carmosy, “Abortion

W 10/7	Abortion	and Women” (BB)
M 10/12	Abortion	Helen Alvare, “Constitutional Abortion and Culture” (BB)
W 10/14	Euthanasia/Assisted Suicide	Excerpts, Evangelium Vitae (BB) “The Philosopher’s Brief” (BB)
M 10/19	Euthanasia/Assisted Suicide	Dan Brock, “Voluntary Active Euthanasia” (ER)
W 10/21	Euthanasia/Assisted Suicide	Leon Kass, “Is There a Right to Die?” (ER) <b>Media Analysis Due 10PM</b>
M 10/26	MIDTERM	MIDTERM EXAM

### **UNIT THREE: Race and Racism**

W 10/28	Racism	MOVIE: “Race, The Power of an Illusion” Background reading: excerpts, The Ferguson Report (BB)
M 11/2	Racism	MOVIE: “Race the Power of an Illusion”: excerpts, The Ferguson Report (BB)
W 11/4	Racism	Michael Bamshad and Steve Olson, “Does Race Exist?” (ER) Sally Haslanger, “Gender and Race: What Are They, and What Do We Want them to be?” (BB)
M 11/9	Racism	Jorge Garcia, “The Heart of Racism” (ER)
W 11/11	Racism	Charles Mills, “Heart Attack” (ER)
M 11/16	Racism	Charles Mills, “Heart Attack” (ER)
W 11/18	Affirmative Action	Louis Pojman, “The Case Against Affirmative Action” (ER)
M 11/23	Affirmative Action	Elizabeth Anderson, “Why Racial Integration Remains an Imperative” (BB)
W 11/25	THANKSGIVING	NO CLASS
M 11/30	Affirmative Action	Richard Kahlenberg, “Class, Not Race” (ER)
W 12/2	Wrap up/review	Wrap Up Discussion/Summary
F 12/4	NO CLASS MEETING	Media Analysis Due, 10PM LAST DAY OF CLASSES FOR FALL TERM
W 12/9	FINAL EXAM	FINAL EXAM 12:30 PM

### **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 beliefs and actions. 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 not 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](http://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](http://uts.sc.edu) or [servicedesk@sc.edu](mailto: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](mailto:sasds@mailbox.sc.edu) For more information, go online: <http://www.sa.sc.edu/sds/>