

College of Marine Sciences & Maritime Studies

Department of Maritime Studies



PHIL 111 Syllabus

Section 500 (31819)
Contemporary Moral Issues
Spring 2026 - Galveston

Course Information

Meeting Times: Meeting Type: LEC

Meeting Days: TR

Start Time: 2:20PM

End Time: 3:35PM

Start Date: 01/12/2026

End Date: 05/05/2026

Meeting Location: KIRK 206

Credit Hours: 3

Instructor Details

Darren Domsky

Email: domskyd@tamu.edu

Office: MAIN 200

Phone: none

Office Hours

TR, 12:50-2:20 pm in MAIN 200, and by appointment

Catalog Description

(PHIL 2306) Contemporary Moral Issues. (3-0). Credit 3. Representative ethical positions and their application to contemporary social problems; also taught at Galveston campus.

Special Course Designation

KLPC - Core Language, Philosophy, & Culture

KUCD - University Required Cultural Discourse

PHIL 111 counts towards the **Language, Philosophy, and Culture** component of the Texas A&M Core Curriculum, and it also counts as a **Cultural Discourse (CD)** course. For more information about core courses, see <https://core.tamu.edu>

Course Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of this course, the learner will be able to:

- Show understanding of various aspects of moral and ethical reasoning.
- Examine a variety of challenging moral and ethical topics, scenarios, theories, and questions.
- Analyze concepts and ideas associated with morality and ethics in general and with various applied ethics puzzles and problems.
- Develop logical and critical thinking.
- Write and speak clearly and concisely, while defending one's moral or ethical position effectively and persuasively.

Core Course Objectives

- Critical Thinking (to include creative thinking, innovation, inquiry, and analysis, evaluation and synthesis of information):

- PHIL 111 develops critical thinking both in the effort to interpret the arguments and ideas of others and in the effort to build and defend the student's own ideas. Strategies used to develop

critical thinking include readings, class discussion, and written assignments. Evaluation will be based upon quizzes and written assignments. The quizzes each have a written part, where students answer written quiz questions individually in writing, and a "group questions" oral part, where students answer oral questions orally, and work together as a group to answer those questions. These group questions are video recorded so that each student's individual contributions to these group efforts can be assessed and evaluated.

- Communication (to include effective development, interpretation and expression of ideas through written, oral, and visual communication):

- PHIL 111 develops communication in the interpretation of difficult texts and images, and the effort to understand and express philosophical ideas and arguments. Readings, lecture, discussion and writing assignments are strategies for this objective. Evaluation will be based upon quizzes reflecting the students' ability to understand ideas from written texts and from class discussion and upon essays in which the students develop and present their ideas.

- Social Responsibility (to include intercultural competence, knowledge of civic responsibility, and the ability to engage effectively in regional, national, and global communities):

- PHIL 111 develops social responsibility through the examination of the good life, which includes questions about the fundamental structure of society and its justification. Strategies used to develop social responsibility include readings, class discussion, and written assignments. Evaluation will be based upon quizzes and written assignments.

- Personal Responsibility (to include the ability to connect choices, actions and consequences to ethical decision-making):

- PHIL 111 develops personal responsibility through the study of human will, the good life, and moral value. Strategies used to develop personal responsibility include readings, class discussion, and written assignments. Evaluation will be based upon quizzes and written assignments.

Textbook and/or Resource Materials

Disputed Moral Issues

Authors: Mark Timmons

Publisher: Oxford University Press

Publication Date: 6th edition (2023) *OR* 4th edition (2017)

Edition: 6th edition (2023) *OR* 4th edition (2017)

This material Is: Required

Notes:

Feel free to get the 6th edition (2023) *OR* 4th edition (2017). The course will only use readings that can be found in either of these editions. One or both of these editions should be available in the TAMUG bookstore.

Grading Policy

Your final grade in this course is determined by your grades on four quizzes and two in-class essays.

The lowest of your four quiz grades is dropped, and your best three quizzes are each worth 1/6th (i.e. 16.667%) of your final grade.

Each of the two in-class essays is worth 25% of your final grade.

Dates for the four quizzes and two in class essays:

Quiz 1 Feb 17th

Quiz 2 Mar 17th

In-Class Essay 1 Mar 19th

Quiz 3 Apr 7th

In-Class Essay 2 Apr 16th

Quiz 4 Apr 23rd

Standard Letter Grading Scale:

A: 90% or higher

B: 80-89

C: 70-79

D: 60-69

F: 0-59

For each quiz, the highest possible quiz grade, for any given student, is 120%. For each essay, the highest possible essay grade, for any given student, is 150%. Grades higher than 100% are extremely difficult to achieve, and indicate work done at the graduate level. (The professor developed this grading system as a means for accommodating undergraduate/graduate split classes. For this professor, each graduate letter grade is 20% more difficult to obtain than its corresponding undergraduate letter grade.) Each quiz has a written part, where students answer fill-in-the-blank questions individually, and a "group questions" part, where students work together as a group to answer oral questions orally. For each quiz, the written part is worth 2/3 of the grade, and the group part is worth 1/3 of the grade. Essays are written in class. Essay topics are provided by the professor, and are not known in advance. All quizzes and essays are closed-book and closed-notes, and, except for students with academic accommodations or explicit permission from the professor, all phones/tablets/laptops must be off.

Your Grade Will Never Be Curved: Everyone Can Get An 'A', and Everyone Can Fail

I never adjust grades, after they are given, in any way, for any reason. When grades are curved (made to conform to a statistical bell curve), it becomes difficult not to see your classmates as are your enemies, because the worse they do, the better you do. In my class, you and your classmates are *allies*. The better *anyone* does, the better *everyone* does.

Graded Class Participation

There is **no** graded class participation in this class. No one will judge the quantity or quality of your participation, and your grade in this class cannot be based on your participation in any way, not even unconsciously or inadvertently.

Graded Attendance

Attendance is **not** graded in any way in this class. No one will judge the quantity or quality of your attendance, and your grade in this class cannot be based on your attendance in any way, not even unconsciously or inadvertently.

Coming to Class Late, or Leaving Early

Please do not apologize or worry about coming to class late. And please do not apologize or worry if you need to leave class early. I (your professor) am not in the least offended by these things, and I will not even notice.

Why Attendance Is So Crucial

For two reasons. First, this class is highly student centered. Students have a great deal of control over what things they learn, and how deeply they learn any given thing. If you are not there, then you cannot help steer this class in the directions that you are most interested in.

Second, this class is *intense*. Every minute of every class is testable, and every minute of every class is as likely to be tested on as any other minute of class. My quizzes do not even begin to exist until the end of the last class before that quiz. I make each quiz from scratch, and I test each class on whatever that particular class was taught. Quizzes are composed of three kinds of questions: questions that test your memory and understanding of the readings; questions that test your memory and understanding of the lecture material; and questions that test both together.

If you ever miss any class, for goodness sakes, see if you can find other students to study with, so that you can get, and understand, the notes that you missed. Even if you attend every single class, for goodness sakes, see if you can find other students to study with, so that you can get, and understand, the notes that you missed.

All Grading Is Position Neutral

This course is not about teaching you what to think; it is about teaching you how to reason about, and how to rationally defend, what you think. You will not in any way be told how one should live; you will be asked. And it will not matter (where your grades are concerned) which particular philosophical positions you take. What will matter, in addition to your critical understanding of the readings and lectures, is how persuasively you defend and/or support your philosophical positions compared to people who share those same positions. This makes all grades 100% position neutral.

Everything I Grade, I Grade Anonymously

Every quiz and essay ever graded in this class will be graded without knowing who that student is. I (your professor) am extremely passionate about avoiding any possible bias while grading. So please do not worry about getting on my bad side. No student could ever do this, and, even if they could, it could not possibly affect their grade. Similarly, please do not feel pressured to get on my good side. Once you become my student, you will always be on my good side, and there is nothing that you could ever do to change this. And even if this were not the case, it is impossible for my opinion of you to affect my grading of your work, because when I grade your work, I will have no idea who you are.

Please respect my anonymous grading policy. On your quizzes and in-class essays, please write your name only in the designated location on the cover page, and please do not put it, or hint at it, anywhere else. (Student ID # can be written anywhere.)

Late Work Policy

Work submitted by a student as makeup work for an excused absence is not considered late work and is exempt from the late work policy ([Student Rule 7](#)).

Since nothing is ever handed in in this class, there is no need for a late work policy.

Course Schedule

COURSE SCHEDULE

Date	Class Readings Covered	Length	Quiz/Essay
Jan 13:	Timmons, Consequentialism	5 pgs	
Jan 15:	"		
Jan 20:	Timmons, Kantian Moral Theory	4 pgs	
Jan 22:	"		
Jan 27:	Timmons, Virtue Ethics	1.5 pgs	
Jan 29:	"		
Feb 3:	Marneff: Decriminalize Don't Legalize	9.25 pgs	
Feb 5:	"		
Feb 10:	Goodin, Permissible Paternalism: Saving Smokers from Themselves	5.5 pgs	
Feb 12:	"		
Feb 17:			Quiz 1
Feb 19:	Timmons, Rights-Based Moral Theory	5 pgs	
Feb 24:	Warren, On the Moral and Legal Status of Abortion	5.5 pgs	
	Marquis, Why Abortion is Immoral	4.5 pgs	
Feb 26:	Thomson, A Defense of Abortion	8.25 pgs	
Mar 3:	Hardin, Lifeboat Ethics	5 pgs	
Mar 5:	NO CLASS		
Mar 10:	NO CLASS, SPRING BREAK		
Mar 12:	NO CLASS, SPRING BREAK		

Date	Class Readings Covered	Length	Quiz/Essay
Mar 17:			Quiz 2
Mar 19:			In-Class Essay #1
Mar 24:	Timmons, Ethics of Prima Facie Duty Singer, The Life You Can Save	2.5 pgs 11.5 pgs	
Mar 26:	Nathanson, An Eye for an Eye?	5.5 pgs	
Mar 31:	van den Haag, A Defense of the Death Penalty	3.5 pgs	
Apr 2:	Reiman, Civilization Safety and Deterrence	2.25 pgs	
Apr 7:			Quiz 3
Apr 9:	Velleman, Against the Right to Die	6 pgs	
Apr 14:	Singer, All Animals Are Equal	7.5 pgs	
Apr 16:			In-Class Essay #2
Apr 21:	Norcross, Puppies Pigs and People	10.5 pgs	
Apr 23:			Quiz 4

AI Statement

The use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) affordances like ChatGPT is meant to be impossible (since quiz questions and essay topics are not known in advance, and since devices must be off), and on top of this it is not permitted.

Technology Support

Technology Services - Help Desk

E-mail: Helpdesk@tamug.edu

Phone: 409-740-4714

Location: Bldg 3007 (CLB), Rm 113

Hours: Monday - Friday 7:30am to 6:00pm

Canvas LMS Technical Support

Hours: 24/7/365

Phone: (877) 354-4821

Email: support@instructure.com

Support is available by clicking the Help button at the far left in the Canvas global navigation menu.

Canvas Resources are also linked on the home page of every Canvas course.

Learning Resources

On-campus learning resources to support students in achieving excellence are available through The Center for Academic Learning Support (tamug.edu/cals).

University Policies

This section outlines university-level policies as established by the TAMU Faculty Advisory Council.

University Attendance Policy

The university views class attendance and participation as an individual student responsibility. Students are expected to attend class and to complete all assignments.

Please refer to [Student Rule 7](#) in its entirety for information about excused absences, including definitions, and related documentation and timelines.

Makeup Work Policy

Students will be excused from attending class on the day of a graded activity or when attendance contributes to a student's grade, for the reasons stated in

Student Rule 7, or other reason deemed appropriate by the instructor.

Please refer to [Student Rule 7](#) in its entirety for information about makeup work, including definitions, and related documentation and timelines.

Absences related to Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 may necessitate a period of more than 30 days for make-up work, and the timeframe for make-up work should be agreed upon by the student and instructor" ([Student Rule 7, Section 7.4.1](#)).

"The instructor is under no obligation to provide an opportunity for the student to make up work missed because of an unexcused absence" ([Student Rule 7, Section 7.4.2](#)).

Students who request an excused absence are expected to uphold the Aggie Honor Code and Student Conduct Code. ([See Student Rule 24.](#))

Civil Rights, Free Speech, and Title IX Policies

Texas A&M University is committed to fostering a learning environment that is safe and productive for all. University policies and federal and state laws prohibit discrimination and harassment based on an individual's race, color, sex (including pregnancy and related conditions), religion, national origin, age, disability, genetic information, veteran status, or any other legally protected characteristic. This includes forms of sex-based violence, such as sexual assault, sexual harassment, sexual exploitation, dating/domestic violence, and stalking.

Students can report discrimination/harassment, access supportive resources, or learn more about their options for resolving complaints on the University's Civil Rights & Title IX webpage. Students should be aware that all university employees (except medical or mental health providers) are mandatory reporters, which means that if they observe, experience or become aware of an incident that they reasonably believe to be discrimination/harassment alleged to have been committed by or against a person who was a student or employee at the time of the incident, the employee must report the incident to the university. Texas A&M University is committed to fostering a learning environment that is safe and

productive for all. University policies and federal and state laws prohibit discrimination and harassment based on an individual's race, color, sex (including pregnancy and related conditions), religion, national origin, age, disability, genetic information, veteran status, or any other legally protected characteristic. This includes forms of sex-based violence, such as sexual assault, sexual harassment, sexual exploitation, dating/domestic violence, and stalking. Students can report discrimination/harassment, access supportive resources, or learn more about their options for resolving complaints on the [University's Civil Rights & Title IX webpage.](#)

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Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Policy

Texas A&M University is committed to providing equitable access to learning opportunities for all students. If you experience barriers to your education due to a disability or think you may have a disability, please contact the Disability Resources office on your campus (resources listed below). Disabilities may include, but are not limited to, attentional, learning, mental health, sensory, physical, or chronic health conditions. All students are encouraged to discuss their disability-related needs with Disability Resources and their instructors as soon as possible.

To request academic accommodations, contact the designated ADA office based on your location:

- Texas A&M University, College of Nursing, College of Dentistry, Irma Lerma Rangel College of Pharmacy College Station, College of Medicine, School of Public Health, Institute of Biosciences and Technology, EnMed Program, Bush School in Washington DC, Mays Business School – CityCentre, TAMU Engineering Academies, Texas A&M University Higher Education Center at

McAllen and Texas A&M University at Galveston should contact Disability Resources at (979) 845-1637 or disability@tamu.edu.

If you are experiencing difficulties with your approved accommodations, contact the office responsible for approving your accommodations or the Texas A&M ADA Coordinator Julie Kuder at ADA.Coordinator@tamu.edu or (979) 458-8407.

Pregnancy Accommodations

Texas A&M provides reasonable accommodations to students due to pregnancy and/or related conditions, such as childbirth, recovery and lactation. Students should contact the University's Pregnancy Coordinator as soon as they become aware of the need for accommodation. Depending on the circumstances, accommodations could include extended time to complete assignments or exams, changes in course sequence, or modifications to the physical classroom environment. Texas A&M will also allow a voluntary leave of absence, ensure the availability of lactation space, and maintain grievance procedures to provide for the prompt and equitable resolution of complaints of sex discrimination. For information regarding pregnancy accommodations, email TIX.Pregnancy@tamu.edu.

Statement on the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)

FERPA is a federal law designed to protect the privacy of educational records by limiting access to these records, to establish the right of students to inspect and review their educational records, and to provide guidelines for the correction of inaccurate and misleading data through informal and formal hearings.

Currently enrolled students wishing to withhold any or all directory information items may do so by going to howdy.tamu.edu and clicking on the "Directory Hold Information" link in the Student Records channel on the MyRecord tab. The complete [FERPA Notice to Students](#) and the student records policy is available on the Office of the Registrar webpage.

Items that can never be identified as public information are a student's social security number, citizenship, gender, grades, GPR, or class schedule. All efforts will be made in this class to protect your privacy and to ensure confidential treatment of information associated with or generated by your participation in the class.

Directory items include name, UIN, local address, permanent address, email address, local telephone number, permanent telephone number, dates of attendance, program of study (college, major, campus), classification, previous institutions attended, degrees, honors and awards received, participation in officially recognized activities and sports, medical residence location, and medical residence specialization.

Free Speech and Civil Discourse

Texas A&M recognizes that the pursuit of truth through open and robust discourse is critical to academic inquiry. However, as a community of scholars, the university has an aspirational expectation that such discourse will be conducted in accordance with Aggie Core Values. In this "marketplace of ideas," we encourage civil dialogue creating an environment that allows individuals to express their ideas and to have their ideas challenged in respectful and responsible ways. Students can learn more about Freedom of Expression and Free Speech on our [website about the First Amendment](#).