



Course title/number	Phil 111 Contemporary Moral Issues: REVISED TO REFLECT UNIVERSITY CLOSURE 8/28
Term (e.g., Fall 200X)	Fall 2017
Meeting times and location	Monday/Wednesday 5.45-7.00 YMCA 113

Course Description and Prerequisites:

Prerequisites: None

Course description: Representative ethics positions, and their application to contemporary social problems.

Learning Outcomes or Course Objectives:

Students who have successfully completed this course should have learned to:

- Provide an accurate outline of key ethical theories and the principal differences between them
- Apply different theoretical and value approaches accurately and coherently to real-life issues or case-studies, both in class discussion and in writing
- Better understand both the ethical positions taken by themselves and others, and be able to think critically about both
- Take part in group discussions about contemporary moral issues in an open-minded, reasoned and reasonable way
- Understand, make and defend philosophical claims, and consider objections to these claims
- Construct and defend coherent philosophical arguments about contemporary moral issues

Instructor Information

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Office hours: M/W 2.30-3.30 and other times by appointment

Office location: 301K YMCA

Textbook and Resources

Some readings for this class, and other resources, are available in the course website on e-campus. The rest are in Hugh LaFollette (ed.) *Ethics in Practice* (4th edition) Wiley Blackwell 2014. Most readings are also in the 3rd edition, if you can get that more cheaply!

CLASS TIMES/DATES:

Part 1: Introducing moral theories: Dates here are approximate, we may go faster or slower on various parts, but we'll finish the section by 20th Sept.

Mon 28th August.

UNIVERSITY CLOSURE – HURRICANE HARVEY.

Wed 30th August

Introduction to the course. No reading required

Mon 4th Sept.

Introduction to Utilitarianism.

Reading: John Stuart Mill, Utilitarianism, Chapter 2. "What Utilitarianism Is". Available in many places online, and on e-campus. One online site: <http://www.utilitarianism.com/mill2.htm>

Wed 6th Sept.

Utilitarianism: Some Questions and Problems.

Reading: James Rachels *The Elements of Moral Philosophy*, chapter 8 p 108-123. Available on e-campus.

Monday 11th Sept.

Introducing Kantian ethics.

Reading: James Rachels, *The Elements of Moral Philosophy*, chapter 9: "Are there absolute moral rules?" p.124-135. Available on e-campus.

Wed 13th Sept.

Introducing Rights Theory.

Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Available on e-campus and at <http://www.un.org/Overview/rights.html>

Mon 18th Sept.

Virtue Ethics

Watch Barry Schwartz's TED talk on "Our loss of wisdom" from 2009 at:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IA-zdh_bQBo

Wed 20th Sept.

Care Ethics

Shafer-Landau "Feminist ethics" on e-campus, and a short piece *Against Empathy* by Paul Bloom in the *Boston Review* <http://bostonreview.net/forum/paul-bloom-against-empathy>

Mon 25th Sept.

DVD: Peter Singer: A Dangerous Mind.

Part 2: Contemporary Moral Issues

Wed 27th Sept.

We will now switch mostly to readings from *Ethics in Practice* 4th edition

Ethics and Euthanasia (1) No reading.

Mon 2nd Oct.

Ethics and Euthanasia (2)

Readings: Brad Hooker in *Ethics in Practice* 76-84 and John Hardwig in *Ethics in Practice* 101-111.

Wed 4th Oct.

Class review session

Monday 9th Oct.

First Class Test. This test will be held at the usual time in the classroom. 25% of total course grade

Wed. 11th Oct:
NO CLASS. I will be away.

Mon. 16th Oct.
Ethics and Abortion (1) No reading.

Wed. 18th Oct.
Ethics and Abortion (2) Readings: Don Marquis 141-150 in *Ethics in Practice* and Judith Jarvis Thompson *Ethics in Practice*, 124-131.

Mon 23rd Oct.
Ethics and Capital Punishment (1) No reading.

Wed 25th Oct.
Ethics and Capital Punishment (2)
Readings: Pojman (594-502) and Reiman (503-509) in *Ethics in Practice*

Mon. 30th Oct.
Ethics and Poverty? (1)
Reading: Singer: "Famine, affluence and morality" in *Ethics in Practice* 554-562

Wed. 3rd Nov.
Ethics and Poverty: (2)
Reading: Garrett Hardin "Living in a Lifeboat" – on e-campus and online at http://www.garretthardinsociety.org/articles/art_living_on_a_lifeboat.html - You only need to read as far as the heading "The World Food Bank".

Mon 6th Nov.
Ethics and Poverty (3)
Thomas Pogge "Eradicating Systematic Poverty" in *Ethics in Practice* 571-582.
Case study due in in e-campus

Wed. 8th Nov.
Animals and Ethics (1) No reading

Mon 13th Nov.
Animals and ethics (2) Readings: Peter Singer *Ethics in Practice* 172-180 and R.G. Frey *Ethics in Practice* 181-191.

Wed. 15th Nov
Ethics and Human Enhancement.(1) Readings: Buchanan and Crawford, "Cognitive Enhancement" *Ethics in Practice* 283-290; Michael Sandel "The Case Against Perfection" (on e-campus).

Mon 20th Nov
Ethics and Human Enhancement (2)
Film: *Fixed: the science/fiction of human enhancement* and a discussion of this film

Wed. 22 Nov: University Reading day for Thanksgiving – no class

Mon 27th Nov.
Ethics and climate change (1) No reading

Wed 29th Nov.

Ethics and Climate Change (2)

Simon James "Climate Change" Chapter 8 of *Environmental Philosophy: An Introduction* (Polity Press 2015) pp. 134-156 (on ecampus)

Mon 4th Dec: No class. (Friday classes on this day)

Wed 6th December: Final review class.

Final class test: Friday 8th December, 8.00-9.30am.

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you believe you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please contact Disability Services, currently located in the Disability Services building at the Student Services at White Creek complex on west campus or call 979-845-1637. For additional information, visit <http://disability.tamu.edu>.

Academic Integrity

"An Aggie does not lie, cheat, or steal, or tolerate those who do."

For additional information please visit: <http://aggiehonor.tamu.edu>.

Plagiarism in this class will be subject to the university penalties for plagiarism. If you are in doubt as to how you are using sources, check with me. Please note: Signing an attendance sheet on behalf of someone who is absent is a form of cheating.

Assessment, Attendance and Grading

Attendance Policy:

The University views class attendance as the responsibility of an individual student. Attendance is essential to complete the course successfully. Students are expected to attend class and to complete all assignments. If you are unable to attend class, you are responsible for providing me with satisfactory evidence to substantiate the reason for absence, in writing (by e-mail is acceptable) and where possible, in advance of the absence. Legitimate reasons for excused absences can be found online at <http://student-rules.tamu.edu/rule07>.

Make-up policy:

If you miss a class test for an excused reason – and you should be excused in advance – substitute assessment will be provided, although it may not be in the same test format as the original assessment missed. If you miss a test for an unexcused reason, you cannot make up the lost grades.

Grading Policies

Late Work:

If you have a serious reason for not being able to submit work on time, you must let me know in advance in writing (e-mail is acceptable) in order to negotiate a new deadline. The coincidence of deadlines in several courses is not a good reason. Work that is late will be penalized by moving

down the grade scale below by one step each day (so, work that would have been awarded an A if received on time, will receive an A- if one day late, B+ if two days late, and so on). Penalties for late work are fair, as handing in work late gives you an advantage over other students who hand work in on time.

Grade Assignment and Weighting:

Grades will be weighted as follows:

1. Attendance:	2.5%
2. Participation	2.5%
3. Four unannounced reading quizzes:	10%
4. One reading review	10%
5. First class test:	20%
6. Case study:	25%
7. Second class test	30%

Grading will be on standard letter scale:

- A = 90-100
- B = 80-89
- C = 70-79
- D = 60-69
- F = <60

(I will give letter grade pluses and minuses on work I return, as well as points).

Assessment:

1.Attendance: 2.5% of the final class grade will be based on a good level of attendance. I will pass around an attendance sheet in each class. If you have one or no unexcused absences, you will get the full 2.5 points here. **For each unexcused absence beyond one here, you will lose 0.5 of these attendance points.**

2. Participation. 2.5% of the final class grade will be based on participation. Participation requires contributing to class, in particular asking and answering questions and showing engagement with the issues we're talking about. Strong performance in terms of participation should also show familiarity with readings and with previous class discussions, understanding of key ideas, and respect for others in the class. If you're not big on speaking in class, you could also send me links to relevant news stories for me to post in e-campus, or ideas/questions you want to discuss in class. Anything that contributes to the class or that shows you are engaged with the class fits into this category, and I'll keep a record of communications with you that are relevant here through the semester.

3.Reading Quizzes:

There will be 4 reading quizzes in the course of the semester. These will not be announced in advance. Each quiz will have 10 questions. Some questions will be multiple choice, others will require very short answers (just a couple of words). These quizzes are to test that you have done the reading and understood basic claims/arguments in the reading. **(10% of final grade)**

4. Reading Review:

You may choose to complete your reading summary on any one of the following readings from the course: Hooker, Hardwig, Thomson, Marquis, Pojman, Reiman, Singer (on poverty) Pogge, Singer (on animals), Frey, Buchanan and Crawford, and Sandel. You must submit the reading summary in e-campus by 5pm on Friday of the week in which the reading was set, so your last chance for submission of the last reading is Friday Nov 17th at 5pm. The reading summary should be 2 pages

long. First, it should outline what you take to be the key arguments in the reading, in a way that someone who had not read the reading could understand (imagine this is like a mini-book review – you are describing the key arguments to an educated audience unfamiliar with the reading). This should take at least a page. Second, you should give a balanced account of the strengths and weaknesses of the reading, in terms of the arguments it presents. So, you need to consider which arguments you think are strong and why, and what objections you think could be made to arguments in the reading. **(10% of final grade)**

5. First class test:

This will be 1 hour 15 mins long and will ask you to answer some short questions, discuss a quotation from one of the readings, and write one essay. In class, 9th October **(20% of final grade)**.

4. Case study:

Due date: November 6th. This case study should be submitted in e-campus by 4.10pm when class starts. **(25% of final grade)**.

5. Final class test:

Same format as first test, but 1.5 hours long. some short answer questions, discussion of a quotation, and one essay. The second test is to some degree cumulative. While the short answer questions and the quotation will only ask you about topics since the last test, the essay question may require your familiarity with the ethical theory from the beginning of the class, as well as with these topics. 8th December **(30% of final grade)**.

