

Current Moral and Social Issues
730:105:02, Fall 2013

Instructor: Erik Hoversten
Email: ehoversten@philosophy.rutgers.edu
Office: Gateway building, Room 533, CAC
Office Hrs: W 12p-1p, F 1p-2p, and by appt.

Meeting Place: Scott Hall, Room 206, CAC
Meeting Times: W 9:50a-11:10a, F 2:50p-4:10p

Textbook: There is no textbook for this class. Readings can be found on the course website.

Course website: [Sakai: Phil 105-02, f13](#)

Course overview

In this course, we will examine some interesting issues in normative philosophy with an eye toward their relevance to our own lives and actions. The purpose of the course is to introduce students to the methods of philosophical investigation and develop their ability to critically assess arguments and theses available in the philosophical literature as well as to hone their own thoughts on the issues.

Core Curriculum Learning Goal: This course meets goal 'o': 'Examine critically, philosophical and other theoretical issues concerning the nature of reality, human experience, knowledge, value, and/or cultural production.' Assessment will be by an SAS generic rubric embedded in the evaluation criteria laid out in this syllabus.

Assessment

The goal of the assessment in this class is to test three key elements of philosophical engagement: reading comprehension (quizzes), critical thinking and development of one's ideas (essays), and free and open discourse (participation).

There will be 10 in class **quizzes** (see schedule below), each worth 12 points. To receive full credit on the quiz portion of your grade, you must accumulate 100 quiz points. The questions will be fill in the blank and short answer and will draw on the assigned readings for the relevant section.

The two **essays** should be 5-7 pages double spaced, so around 2000 words. A grading rubric is available on the course website. I will provide you with a list of essay topics, but you should feel free to write on any topic of your choice so long as it is relevant to what we have discussed in class. Please get topics approved by me beforehand. Everyone will have an opportunity to resubmit their first paper with revisions if they want to improve their grade. If you take this option your grade will be determined solely based on your resubmission.

Participation is by necessity a bit more subjective. Full credit will require more than just showing up to each class. Everyone is expected to participate in discussions throughout the semester. Of course, you need not have something to say in every class; just try to contribute. One of the best ways to develop an understanding of the material is to actively engage in class discussion.

Grade breakdown

Quizzes:	30%
Midterm essay:	30%
Final essay:	30%
Participation:	10%

Attendance

Students are expected to attend all classes; if you expect to miss one or two classes, please use the University's [Absence Reporting Website](#) to indicate the date and reason for your absence. An email is automatically sent to me.

Academic integrity

You must abide by the University's [Academic Integrity Policy](#). The basic guideline is that credit should be given where credit is due. If you have any uncertainty regarding an issue of academic integrity, please contact me about it.

Course schedule

Meeting date	Main Topic	Discussion issue	Notes
W 9/4	Normative philosophy	descriptive v. normative phil	syllabus introduction
F 9/6	Normative philosophy	arguments and reasons	
W 9/11	Metaethics	ethical theories 1	
F 9/13	Metaethics	ethical theories 2	quiz #1
W 9/18	Punishment	why do we punish?	
F 9/20	Punishment	drug criminalization	quiz #2
W 9/25	Punishment	rights of criminals	
F 9/27	Punishment	capital punishment	quiz #3
W 10/2	Abortion	an argument for	
F 10/4	Abortion	an argument against	
W 10/9	Abortion	embryos & stem cells	quiz #4
F 10/11	Sport	amateurism in collegiate sport	
W 10/16	Sport	health and personal choice	quiz #5
F 10/18	Sport	performance enhancing drugs	
W 10/23	Free period		essay help
F 10/25	Animal ethics	speciesism	essay #1 due
W 10/30	Animal ethics	ethical meat consumption	
F 11/1	Animal ethics	species control & preservation	quiz #6
W 11/6	Environmental ethics	nature as patient	
F 11/8	Environmental ethics	stewardship	
W 11/13	Environmental ethics	resource collection & use	quiz #7
F 11/15	The role of the state	liberalism & perfectionism	
W 11/20	The role of the state	surveillance & protection	quiz #8
F 11/22	The role of the state	paternalism & lifestyle choice	
W 11/27	The role of the state	social programs	quiz #9
F 11/29	No class		
W 12/4	Student choice		
F 12/6	Student choice		quiz #10
W 12/11	Free period		essay help
R 12/19	No class		essay #2 due