

Contemporary Moral Problems (PHIL 1318)—Fall 2012

Instructor: Ken Daley (Hyer Hall 211E)

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Office Hours: 1-1:50 Monday & Wednesday (and by appointment)

Course Description

We will begin with a general introduction to ethics by examining several different ethical theories. We will then discuss a number of important issues facing contemporary society. These issues include capital punishment, euthanasia, abortion, the treatment of animals, and obligations to the poor.

Required Text

- *Morality and Moral Controversies: Readings in Moral, Social and Political Philosophy*. Arthur, J. & Scalet, S. 8th edition, Prentice Hall, 2009
- All other readings will be available on blackboard (courses.smu.edu)

Requirements

- Two Exams (40% of final grade [or, 20% each]): These will be in-class exams consisting of fill-in-the-blank, short-answer, and essay questions.
- Final Exam (25% of final grade): This will be a cumulative exam consisting of fill-in-the-blank, short-answer, and essay questions.
- Critical Paper (15% of final grade): You will write one 1000-1500 word critical paper (**to be submitted on blackboard**) in which you examine at least one of the positions regarding one of the issues we will cover. You will also be required to state and support your own position.
- Quizzes (10% of final grade): There will be several unannounced quizzes throughout the semester, the purpose of which will be to determine whether or not you are doing the assigned readings. I will drop the (yet to be decided number of) lowest scores when calculating your final quiz grade. Because of this, you will not be able to retake quizzes for which you are absent or late.
- Participation/Attendance (10% of final grade): Students must exhibit a willingness to think, and be open to revising their current opinions. Frequent absences, sleeping during lecture, text messaging*, and being disruptive will negatively affect your participation grade. Engaging with the material, whether that involves asking questions, contributing to discussion, or simply being attentive, will positively affect your participation grade.

***Note:** For each class period during which you send text messages, one point will be subtracted from your final grade.

Philosophy Department Goals

- Students will be able to describe and explain some of the general features and principal theoretical methods of ethics, social and political philosophy, and logic.
- Students will develop techniques of formal reasoning.
- Students will develop the ability to apply techniques of formal reasoning to current ethical issues.
- Students will develop writing and analytic skills.

Tentative Schedule

Introductory Issues & General Theories

- Week 1: Arguments/Logic; Cultural Relativism (blackboard); Divine Command Theory (16-21)
- Week 2: Ethical Egoism (blackboard); Aristotle (50-56)
- Week 3: Mill & Utilitarianism (65-72)
- Week 4: Kantian Ethics (56-65)

Contemporary Moral Issues

- Week 5: ***Capital Punishment***
 - *First Exam (Mon, 9/17); Van den Haag (146-151); Reiman (151-156)
- Week 6: ***Euthanasia***
 - Dyck (252-255); Rachels (256-259)
- Week 7: ***Abortion***
 - Thomson (211-218); Warren (218-225)
- Week 8: Marquis (231-239)
- Week 9: ***Capitalism, Property, and Poverty***
 - *Second Exam (Wed, 10/17); Singer (blackboard); Arthur (blackboard)
- Week 10: Nozick (452-460); Marx & Engels (blackboard); Nielsen (blackboard)
- Week 11: ***Animals and the Environment***
 - Singer (158-166); Steinbock (167-173)
- Week 12: Baxter (173-177); Callicott (177-184)
- Week 13: ***War***
 - Wasserstrom (115-123)
 - *Final Exam (TBA)

Plagiarism and Academic Dishonesty: Violation of SMU's honor code will not be tolerated. Every piece of work you turn in must be entirely your own. Writing a paper means *both* expressing your own thoughts *and* expressing them in your own words. You may not copy unquoted passages from our texts, from any other texts (including others students' papers), or from the internet, even if the passages are brief. No one else may write a paper for you, whether in whole or in part. In a typical case (for example, a student turns in a paper mostly cut-and-pasted from web sites), the **penalty** for violating the honor code will be an **F** in the course. On top of this grade penalty, the case may be presented to the honor council, in which case the student may be subject to **further disciplinary action**, such as suspension or dismissal from the university.

Disability Accommodations: Students needing academic accommodations for a disability must first contact Ms. Rebecca Marin, Coordinator, Services for Students with Disabilities (214-768-4557) to verify the disability and establish eligibility for accommodations. They should then schedule an appointment with the professor to make appropriate arrangements.

Religious Observance: Religiously observant students wishing to be absent on holidays that require missing class should notify their professors in writing at the beginning of the semester, and should discuss with them, in advance, acceptable ways of making up any work missed because of the absence.

Excused Absences for University Extracurricular Activities: It is the responsibility of the student to make arrangements with the instructor prior to any missed scheduled examination or other missed assignment for making up the work.