

PHIL 1400

Introduction to Contemporary Moral Issues

Fall 2006

TR 2:00pm-3:20pm; PHYS 115

Instructor: Monica A. Lindemann

Email: m_a_lindemann@hotmail.com

Office Hours: MWF 11:00am - 12:00pm

Office: EESAT 320D; ext. 565-4671

Course Description

This course is intended to serve as an introduction to moral philosophy. Rather than take a purely theoretical approach to introducing ethics, we will explore contemporary ethical disagreements on issues of relevance in contemporary society. Students will read authors who present dramatically different conclusions concerning such issues as capital punishment, abortion, euthanasia, poverty, war and the like

Course Objectives

After completing this course, students should be able to discuss diverse positions on relevant contemporary moral issues. They should be able to discern the arguments given in support for certain positions as well as recognize possible logical fallacies in argumentation. Furthermore, they should acquire familiarity with essential ethical theories.

Texts

Shaw, William H. (2005), *Social and Personal Ethics*, 5th edition, Belmont, CA: Wadsworth/Thomson Learning.

Various photo-copied hand-outs, to be passed out in class

Requirements & Assignments

The final grade for the course will be calculated as follows:

- | | |
|----------------------------------|-----------------|
| • Reading quizzes | 20 % (10 x 2 %) |
| • two (2) one-hour exams | 40 % (2 x 20 %) |
| • one Position Paper (4-6 pages) | 20 % |
| • Attendance and Participation | 20 % |

Overall, twelve reading quizzes will be given to ensure that the students have read the assignments. The two lowest grades of the reading quizzes will be dropped at the end of the course (hence, only ten quizzes will ultimately count for the final grade). If you miss a reading quiz, this missed quiz will constitute one of the two grades to be dropped. **There will be no make-up reading quizzes!!!** The reading quizzes will be relatively elementary, and can generally be answered after having read the assignments once. The quizzes will be administered at the

beginning of the class period, and will consist of 5 questions (multiple choice or true/false), which are worth 2 points each.

The one-hour examinations will only cover the material discussed in the respective sections, i.e. they will **not** be cumulative. The exams will consist of multiple choice and short answer questions. They also might include short essays at the discretion of the instructor.

The topics and parameters for the Position Paper will be announced in class.

Attendance Policy

Your regular attendance is one of the requirements for this course. You are allowed three unexcused absences during the semester, which will not negatively affect your grade. Any additional unexcused absence will adversely affect your grade at the discretion of the instructor. If you have more than 10 unexcused absences during the semester, you will automatically fail the course.

Cheating & Plagiarism

Cheating, in any form, will result in an automatic grade of "F" in this course, the removal of the student from the course, and immediate reporting of the student's actions to the Office of the Dean of Students. Cheating includes plagiarism, unauthorized preparation of notes for use on examinations, use of such notes during an examination, looking at another student's examination answers, allowing another student to look at your own examination answers, or the requesting or passing of information during an examination or after an examination has been taken

Tentative Schedule

WEEK 1

- | | | |
|-----|---------|---|
| Tue | Aug. 29 | Introduction to the class |
| Th | Aug. 31 | Basic logic: arguments and informal logical fallacies |

WEEK 2

ETHICAL THEORIES

- | | | |
|-----|--------|--|
| Tue | Sep. 5 | The Nature of Morality and Normative Theories of Ethics; read pp. 2-34 |
| Th | Sep. 7 | Virtue Ethics; read Aristotle, pp. 46-52
Deontological Ethics; read Kant, pp. 53-60
Utilitarianism; read Mill, pp. 61-67 |

WEEK 3

SUICIDE AND EUTHANASIA

- | | | |
|-----|---------|---|
| Tue | Sep. 12 | read "The Morality and Rationality of Suicide," pp. 70-79
"Voluntary Active Euthanasia," pp. 79-89 |
| Th | Sep. 14 | read "When Self-Determination Runs Amok," pp. 89-96
"Is there a Duty to Die?" pp. 96-104 |

WEEK 4

EUGENICS AND ABORTION

- | | | |
|-----|---------|--|
| Tue | Sep. 19 | read hand-out "Playing God: Genes, Clones, and Luck."
"An Almost Absolute Value in History," pp. 105-109
"The Moral Status of Abortion," pp. 110-118 |
|-----|---------|--|

Th Sep. 21 read "An Argument That Abortion is Wrong," pp. 119-128
"A Defense of Abortion," pp. 129-138
Movie: If These Walls Could Talk

WEEK 5 ABORTION cont'd / CAPITAL PUNISHMENT

Tue Sep. 26 read "Virtue Theory and Abortion," pp. 139-146
Movie cont'd: If These Walls Could Talk

Th Sep. 28 read handout "Desert and Capital Punishment"
"Punishment and the Criminal Justice System," pp. 336-344
Movie: Finding Resolution

WEEK 6 CAPITAL PUNISHMENT cont'd / GUN CONTROL

Tue Oct. 3 read "The Ultimate Punishment," pp. 344-350
"Justice, Civilization and the Death Penalty," pp. 350-358

Th Oct. 5 read "The False Promises of Gun Control," pp. 312-319
Handguns and Violent Crime," pp. 319-327
Movie: Bowling for Columbine

WEEK 7 GUN CONTROL cont'd / WAR AND TERRORISM

Tue Oct. 10 read "Is There a Right to Own a Gun?" pp. 328-335
Movie cont'd: Bowling for Columbine

Th Oct. 12 read "Terrorism, Innocence, and War," pp. 366-374
"Human Rights, the Laws of War, and Terrorism," pp. 374-381

WEEK 8 WAR AND TERRORISM cont'd

Tue Oct. 17 read "The Dark Art of Interrogation," pp. 382-391
"Loyalty and Obedience," pp. 391-398

Th Oct. 19 **EXAM # 1**

WEEK 9 ANIMALS AND ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS

Tue Oct. 24 read "The Place of Nonhumans in Environmental Issues," pp. 147-154
"Do Animals Have Rights?" pp. 154-160
"Should Trees have Standing?" pp. 161-166

Th Oct. 26 read "People or Penguins," pp. 166-171
Handout "The Land Ethic"

WEEK 10 ANIMALS AND ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS cont'd / LIBERTY, PATERNALISM AND FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

Tue Oct. 31 read "The Search for an Environmental Ethic," pp. 171-181
"Why You Are Committed to the Immorality of Eating Meat," pp. 181-189

Th Nov. 2 read "Paternalism," pp. 244-253
"Permissible Paternalism," pp. 253-260

WEEK 11 LIBERTY, PATERNALISM AND FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION cont'd /

PORNOGRAPHY AND SEXUAL MORALITY

Tue Nov. 7 read "A Drug-Free America-or a Free America, pp. 260-267
Handout "The Ethics of Addiction"

Th Nov. 9 read "Pornography, Oppression, and Freedom," pp. 190-196
"Feminism, Moralism, and Pornography," pp. 196-201
Movie: A Drug Called Pornography

WEEK 12

PORNOGRAPHY AND SEXUAL MORALITY

Tue Nov. 14 read "Alcohol and Rape," pp. 201-209
Handouts "Date Rape: A Feminist Analysis" and
"An Interview About Date Rape"

Th Nov. 16 **POSITION PAPER DUE**
"Why Shouldn't Tommy and Jim Have Sex?" pp. 210-218
"Homosexuality and the Common Good," pp. 219-225

WEEK 13

FAMILY MORALITY

Tue Nov. 21 Read "Adultery and Fidelity," pp. 226-234
Handout "Licensing Parents"

Th Nov. 23 **Thanksgiving-- NO CLASS**

WEEK 14

ECONOMIC JUSTICE

Tue Nov. 28 read "Rich and Poor" pp. 432-440
'World Hunger and the Extent of our Positive Duties," pp. 440-448

Th Nov. 30 read "Welfare and Social Justice," pp. 466-475
"Is Inheritance Justified?" pp. 475-483

WEEK 15 (Pre-Finals Week) ETHICS IN BUSINESS

Tue Dec. 5 read "The Inconclusive Case vs. Manipulative Advertising," pp. 484-495
"The Ethics of Sales," pp. 496-505

Th Dec 7 read "Some Paradoxes of Whistleblowing," pp. 505-514
"Drug Testing in Employment," pp. 514-520
Wrap-up of class

WEEK 16

FINAL EXAM (EXAM # 2)

Tue Dec. 12 1:30 pm-3:30 pm