

PHIL 1400: Introduction to Contemporary Moral Issues

Fall 2005

Section 001, M/W/F, 10:00-10:50, ENV 115
Section: 002, M/W/F, 12:00-12:50, ENV 391

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or by appointment.

*We are discussing no small matter, but how we ought to
live.*

Socrates in Plato's Republic

Course Description:

Though we don't often realize it, formal education is focused mainly on the nuts and bolts of life. We go to school to get a job and earn a living. Thus school is concerned with teaching skills applicable for employment, and not skills for everyday living. The purpose of this class is to focus on the latter.

Everyday we are faced with ethical questions that affect ourselves and those around us. We will look at many of these questions and attempt to reason our way to some sort of meaningful conclusion. What is important is not whether you agree or disagree with the readings in the class, but rather that you are able to understand ethical arguments and be able to formulate and present your own. Above all, this course should help you to explain your views to others in an accessible and logical manner.

Comfort

Because this course is based on examining contentious issues, the classroom needs to be seen as a safe and comfortable place for discussing ideas. Accordingly, I insist on an atmosphere that is free of all forms of hostility. I use "hostility" in an intentionally vague manner so as to encompass everything from slanderous, derogatory remarks to jokes to offensive clothing. If a

student repeatedly engages in hostile behavior, they may lose attendance points or even be asked to leave the class.

A final thing to note about this course is that it will be done in a secular manner. This does not mean that religious or spiritual concerns will be barred in class discussion, only that we will not focus on them. This is done intentionally so as to appeal to the broadest audience.

Texts

- Olen, et al. *Applying Ethics*, 8th Ed. Thomson Wadsworth: Belmont, CA, 2005.
- Missner, Marshall. *On Ethics*. Thomson Wadsworth: Belmont, CA, 2004

Course Requirements:

Introductory Paper (5%): The purpose of this assignment is to introduce yourself and to get started thinking about the kinds of questions we will discuss in the course. In an essay (800 words) please address the following questions. The due date for the paper is 1/30.

1. Who are you?
2. Why did you choose to take an ethics/philosophy class?
3. What ethical questions are most important to you, i.e., what topics would you most like the class to cover?
4. What beliefs and values are most important to you?
5. Why are these beliefs and values so important to you?

Attendance (10%): Due to the interactive nature of this course, attendance is required and participation is strongly recommended. Leaving early without consulting me will count as an absence.

Presentations (15%): Beginning in February, Fridays will be devoted to student presentations. Students will be required to give a 5-10 minute presentation on a *recent* (no older than '05) news article that relates to the topic(s) discussed that week. Presentations should explain background information, why the article is relevant and some ethical implications of the article. Along with the presentation, each student will turn in a 500-word paper discussing the same points as the presentation (background

info, relevance and implications). All articles must be turned in by Wednesday for approval.

Exams (45%): Three exams will be given during the course. Each successive exam will be weighted more than the one before it: Exam I= 10%, Exam II = 15% and Exam III = 20%. The material for exams will be gleaned from readings, lecture and classroom discussions; so make sure you are there to participate. Make-up exams will be allowed only with written documentation that excuses the absence on exam day or by prior arrangement. Exams will be taken anonymously using student ID numbers; failure to use your ID will result in a loss of points.

Final Paper (30%): I will give you a list of guidelines for the final paper assignment after the first exam but be aware that you will be required to take a copy of your paper to the writing lab for evaluation before it can be turned in. You may write on any topic we discuss in class or on another topic with my approval. A preliminary thesis and outline are due on March 27th and the final paper is due on April 17th.

Academic Dishonesty and Plagiarism:

According to the UNT student code of conduct, section A2, the term "plagiarism" includes, but is not limited to: (a) the knowing or negligent use by paraphrase or direct quotation of the published or unpublished work of another person without full and clear acknowledgement and (2) the knowing or negligent unacknowledged use of materials prepared by another person or by any agency engaged in the selling of term papers or other academic materials. Any form of cheating will be dealt with in proportion to its severity. In extreme cases, an F in the class and/or expulsion from the university may be appropriate. *NOTE* - Leaving the classroom to answer your cell phone during an exam will be viewed the same as cheating and will be treated accordingly. Please use common sense.

Special Accommodation:

If you are in need of special accommodation in this class due to any disability, contact the Office of Disability Accommodation (ODA) as soon as possible.

A Note on My Personal Policies:

I find cell phones really, really annoying. If you have one, turn it off during class. If you forget to turn

it off during class, do not excuse yourself to answer it. This is considered rude and may lead to a loss in attendance points. I am also growing weary of laptop computers, which should not be used in class.

A Note on the Readings:

This class will rely on WebCT Vista for supplemental reading and syllabus changes. To log onto WebCT, go to <https://webctvista.unt.edu/>, click "logon to WebCT Vista" and log in using your EUID and password. Because the reading schedule may be changed due to unforeseen complications, all changes will be announced on Webctvista and the online syllabus will be corrected accordingly. On an entirely different note, all readings should be done for the day they are listed on. So the chapter on Kant should be read by 1/23.

Tentative Reading Schedule

ETHICAL FOUNDATIONS (all text readings in this section are in Missner)

1/18	<i>Religion and Ethics -</i>
Missner, Ch. 1 & 2	
1/20	<i>Utilitarianism - Missner, Ch. 3</i>
(pp. 16-29)	
1/23	<i>Kant - Missner, Ch. 4</i>
1/25	<i>The Core of Morality & Nietzsche -</i>
	<i>Missner, Ch. 6 & 7</i>
1/27	<i>Selfishness - Missner, Ch. 8</i>
1/30	INTRODUCTORY PAPER DUE
	<i>The Challenges of Cultural</i>
	<i>Relativism - James Rachels (W)</i>
2/1	NO CLASS
2/3	EXAM I

CONTEMPORARY MORAL ISSUES

Expanding the Moral Sphere

Suicide and Euthanasia:

- 2/6 Introduction & J. Gay-Williams,
The Wrongfulness of Euthanasia,
pp. 165-183
- 2/8 Rachels, *Active and Passive
Euthanasia (W)*
- 2/10 Presentations

Abortion:

- 2/13 Introduction & Warren, *On the
Moral and Legal Status of
Abortion*, begin with section II,
pp. 117-128 & 148-153
- 2/15 Marquis, *An Argument That Abortion
is Wrong (W)*
- 2/17 Presentations

Cloning

- 2/20 Introduction & Kass, *The Wisdom of
Repugnance*, pp. 221-233
- 2/22 Tooley, *Moral Status of Cloning
Humans*
- 2/24 Presentations

Animal Rights:

- 2/27 Introduction & Singer, *All Animals
Are Equal...*, pp. 445-465
- 3/1 Steinbock, *Speciesism and the Idea
of Equality*,
- 3/3 Presentations

Sexual Morality:

- 3/6 3/24 Kucsma/Angel, *Maybe we Should
See Other People: Alternatives to
Monogamy (W)*
- 3/8 **NO CLASS**
- 3/10 **EXAM II**
- 3/13 - 3/17 **SPRING BREAK**

Personal and Social Ethics

The Environment

- 3/20 Introduction & Baxter, *People or Penguins*, pp. 492-501 & 522-526
- 3/22 Davradou & Wood, *The Promotion of Individual Autonomy in Environmental Ethics* & Rose, *Hot Flashes* & Revkin, *Eskimos Seek to Recast Global Warming as a Rights Issue*, (all on **W**)
- 3/24 Presentations

Homosexuality:

- 3/27 **OUTLINES DUE** & Levin, *Why Homosexuality is Abnormal*
- 3/29 Corvino, *Why Shouldn't Tommy and Jim Have Sex?* (**W**)
- 3/31 Presentations

Capital Punishment:

- 4/3 Introduction, pp. 263-273 & Van Den Haag, *The Ultimate Punishment: A Defense* (**W**)
- 4/5 Reiman, *Justice, Civilization, and the Death Penalty* (**W**)
- 4/7 Presentations

Discrimination:

- 4/10 Introduction & Beauchamp, *The Justification of Reverse Discrimination*, pp. 404-426
- 4/12 Newton, *Reverse Discrimination as Unjustified*
- 4/14 **NO CLASS**

Economic Justice:

- 4/17 **FINAL PAPERS DUE** & Introduction & Hospers, *What Libertarianism Is*, pp. 357-375
- 4/19 Singer, *Rich and Poor* (**W**)
- 4/21 Presentations

War and Terrorism:

- 4/24 Nagel, *War and Massacre* (**W**)

4/26	Fullinwider, <i>Terrorism, Innocence, and War</i> (W)
4/28	Presentations
5/1	Presentations
5/3	Presentations
5/8	8:00 - 10:00, Exam time for
Section 001	
5/12	10:30 - 12:30, Exam time for
Section 002	

NOTE - All readings with a (W) will be found on WebCT