

Philosophy 131 04
Present Moral Problems
Fall 2010

Instructor: Sarit Smila

Email: ssmila.wustl.edu

Office: Wilson 204

Cell Phone: 651-2344

Office Hours: Thursday 10:00am-12:00pm

Meeting Time and Place: TTH 8:30-10:00am

Course Description:

The purpose of this course is to examine our moral intuitions about 'real life' ethical issues. We will do that by exploring the three most influential ethical schools and then by looking at some of the prevalent moral debates. This theoretical background provides the philosophical tools necessary for our investigation and reflection on those challenging moral issues.

The syllabus below provides an outline of the course and a list of corresponding readings. *Note that the syllabus is subject to change and supplementation, and that it is the responsibility of each participant to follow these changes.*

Texts: *Ethics in Practice* Edited by Hugh LaFollette, Third Edition

Texts posted on Ares

Course Work: 2 in-class exams (30% each), 1 short paper (30%) presentation and participation (10%)

A NOTE ON GRADING CRITERIA

Grading for written work is based on the following criteria

A: outstanding understanding of the material, ability to explain, creatively integrate, compare, contrast, and critique the material; ability to structure thought and present it in a logical flow.

B: good understanding of the material; some ability to explain, integrate, and critique the material; ability to structure the paper in a logical flow.

C: knowledge of the material but little ability to explain, integrate, or critique it.

D: inadequate knowledge of the material, inadequate ability to explain, integrate or critique it.

F: no demonstration of knowledge of material, ability to explain, integrate or critique it.

Course Requirements and Policies:

PREPARATION AND PARTICIPATION – students are expected to have carefully read the assigned readings prior to the class meeting in which they are to be discussed, and are expected to participate in discussions regarding the materials. An essential part of this course is critical thought and discussion of philosophical issues – that is, doing philosophy, not just reading about it. Note that a crucial part of participation involves respect for other people in the class and for their views.

PRESENTATION – each student will be required to do a presentation on a topic of your choice. You will have 10-15 minutes to present and the idea is to try and engage the issue from a different perspective than is taken in the reading and in class discussion.

PAPER AND EXAMS – specific details regarding the format and content will be provided in the weeks prior to the assignments due dates. The assignments will focus on the readings and on class discussions.

NOTE ON ACADEMIC DISHONESTY

Any instance of cheating, plagiarism, or other form of academic dishonesty will not be tolerated and will receive the maximal disciplinary action as recommended by the college.

Course Outline:

Aug 31 – Introduction

Sep 2 – Utilitarianism – J.S. Mill *Utilitarianism*, Chapter 2 “What Utilitarianism Is”. You can find the chapter online at:

<http://www.utilitarianism.com/mill2.htm>

Sep 7 – Utilitarianism - Cont'd

Sep 9 – Kantian Ethics – Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals (Ares)

Sep 14 – Kantian Ethics Cont'd

Sep 16 – Virtue Ethics – Hursthouse (EIP p. 45)

Sep 21 – Rights Theory – Declaration of human rights, Carlos Santiago Nino (Ares)

Sep 23 - Care Ethics (Ares)

Sep 28 - DVD --- **1st assignment is given in class**

Sep 30 – Abortion – Thomson (EIP p. 117)

Oct 5 – Abortion - Marquis (EIP p. 137) –**1st assignment is due at the beginning of class**

Oct 7 – Euthanasia – Rachels (Ares)

Oct 12 - Euthanasia – Velleman (EIP p. 81)

Oct 14 – Capital Punishment – Pojman (EIP p. 544)

Oct 19 – Capital Punishment – Reiman (EIP p. 554)

Oct 21 – Economic Justice and Welfare – Rawls (EIP p. 565)

Oct 26 – Economic Justice and Welfare – Nozick (EIP p. 578)

Oct 28 - Hunger and Poverty – Singer (EIP p. 611)

Nov 2 - Hunger and Poverty – Hardin “Living in a Lifeboat” – the paper is available online at: http://www.garretthardinsociety.org/articles/art_living_on_a_lifeboat.html

Nov 4 – Review Class

Nov 9 – **In-class Mid-Term Exam**

Nov 11 - Animal Rights – Regan (EIP p. 205)

Nov 16 – Animal Rights – Frey (EIP p. 192)

Nov 18 -- Environmental Ethics – Leopold (EIP p. 660)

Nov 23 - Environmental Ethics – Hill (EIP p. 680)

Nov 25 – Thanksgiving Break

Nov 30 – Pornography - Brison (EIP p. 377)

Dec 2 – Pornography – Altman (EIP p. 387)

Dec 7 – Review Class

Dec 9 – **In-class Final Exam**