

**CLASS SYLLABUS: PRESENT MORAL PROBLEMS 131F Spring 2008**

*Section 01*

**Instructor: Clare Palmer.**

**TAs: Carmen Price, Zach Hoskins**

**Clare Palmer's office: Room 108, Wilson**

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**Clare Palmer -Office hours: Thursday 2-4pm**

**Carmen Price-Office hours: TBA**

**Zach Hoskins-Office hours: TBA**

**Required Books:**

*The Elements of Moral Philosophy* (5<sup>th</sup> Edition) James Rachels (McGraw Hill)

*Ethics in Practice: An Anthology* (3<sup>rd</sup> Edition) Hugh LaFollette (ed.) (Oxford: Blackwells 2007).

There are also several readings that can be obtained from the internet.

**Meeting Times and Places:**

Monday/Wednesday 1.00 – 2.30. Room TBA

**Course Outline and Weekly Readings:**

**Week 1**

Monday January 14<sup>th</sup> Intro to course, and introductory case studies.

Wednesday January 16<sup>th</sup>: Introduction to Utilitarianism

Reading for Wednesday: John Stuart Mill's *Utilitarianism*, chapter 2 "What Utilitarianism Is".

This is available in any number of places on the internet. One good site:

[http://etext.library.adelaide.edu.au/m/mill/john\\_stuart/m645u/](http://etext.library.adelaide.edu.au/m/mill/john_stuart/m645u/)

**Week 2**

Monday January 21<sup>st</sup> No class: Martin Luther King day.

Wednesday January 23<sup>rd</sup>: Utilitarianism 2: some questions and problems

Reading for Wednesday: Rachels, Ch. 7 "The Debate over Utilitarianism" (100-116)

**Week 3**

Monday January 28<sup>th</sup>: Kantian ethics.

Reading: Rachels, Chapter 8 "Are there absolute moral rules" (117-129)

Wednesday January 30<sup>th</sup>: Rights Theory

Reading: Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Online at

<http://www.un.org/Overview/rights.html>

**Week 4**

Monday February 4<sup>th</sup>: Virtue and Care Ethics

Reading: Rachels, Chapter 12 "The Ethics of Virtue" and "Feminism and the Ethics of Care" (160-190)

Wednesday February 6<sup>th</sup>: **DVD** – *Peter Singer: A Dangerous Mind*. The DVD on Singer acts as a transition from thinking about ethical theories to looking at a series of topics in applied ethics.

We'll switch books at this point to *Ethics in Practice* for most readings, though we will still use

some extracts from Rachels. We expect that Singer will be visiting Wash U later in the semester, so you should get a chance to hear him in person.

### **Week 5**

Monday February 11th: Ethics and Abortion 1

Wednesday February 13th: Ethics and Abortion 2

Readings for Wednesday: Don Marquis (137-147 in *Ethics in Practice*) and Judith Jarvis Thompson (*Ethics in Practice*, 117-125). These papers have been, and remain, extremely important in philosophical debates about abortion. The other papers in this section of the book are also worth reading and have been influential.

### **Week 6**

Monday February 18th: Ethics and Euthanasia 1.

Wednesday February 20th: Ethics and Euthanasia 2. **First paper due in.**

Readings for Wednesday: Look first at a short section in Rachel's book on Euthanasia. Then read Brad Hooker's "Rule Utilitarianism and Euthanasia" (*Ethics in Practice (EIP)*62-71) and John Hardwig's controversial "Dying at the Right Time" (*EIP*91-102). If you have time, Velleman's paper is also interesting.

### **Week 7**

Monday February 25th: Ethics and Capital Punishment 1.

Wednesday February 27th: Ethics and Capital Punishment 2.

Readings for Wednesday: Rachels' book has a short section on retributivism. Read this first, then the two pieces for and against capital punishment in *Ethics in Practice* by Pojman (544-553) and Reiman (554-561).

### **Week 8**

Monday March 3rd: Review class.

Wednesday March 5th: Mid Term Class Test.

There are no assigned readings this week, as you will be preparing for your test.

### **Week 9: Mid Semester Break**

### **Week 10**

Monday 17<sup>th</sup> March: Economic Justice 1.

Wednesday 19<sup>th</sup> March: Economic Justice 2.

Readings for Wednesday: Rawls "A Theory of Justice" (*EIP* 565-577) and Nozick "The Entitlement Theory of Justice" (*EIP* 578-590).

### **Week 11**

Monday 24<sup>th</sup> March: Ethics and Poverty 1: Do we have positive obligations to assist the distant poor?

Readings for Wednesday: Peter Singer "Famine, Affluence and Morality" (*EIP* 572-581) and Garrett Hardin "Living in a Lifeboat" – not in the book but available on the web at [http://www.garretthardinsociety.org/articles/art\\_living\\_on\\_a\\_lifeboat.html](http://www.garretthardinsociety.org/articles/art_living_on_a_lifeboat.html). You only need to read as far as the heading "The World Food Bank" in this article, though it might be useful to read the whole article.

Wednesday 26<sup>th</sup> March: Ethics and Poverty 2: Do we have negative obligations to the poor?  
Reading for Wednesday: Thomas Pogge “Eradicating Systematic Poverty” (*EIP* 633-646)

### **Week 12**

Monday 31<sup>st</sup> March: Animals and Ethics 1

Wednesday 2<sup>nd</sup> April: Animals and Ethics 2

Readings for Wednesday: Singer, Peter “All Animals are Equal” (*EIP* 171-180) and R.G.Frey “Moral Standing, the Value of Lives, and Speciesism”(*EIP* 192-204).

### **Week 13**

Monday 7<sup>th</sup> April: Environment and Ethics 1

Wednesday 9<sup>th</sup> April: Environment and Ethics 2. **Second essay due in.**

Readings for Wednesday: Thomas Hill “Ideals of Human Excellence” (*EIP* 680-690) Aldo Leopold “The Land Ethic” (*EIP* 660-668)

### **Week 14**

Monday 14<sup>th</sup> April: Free Speech.

Reading for Monday: John Stuart Mill “Freedom of Thought and Discussion” (*EIP* 373-376)

Wednesday 16<sup>th</sup> April: Pornography.

Readings for Wednesday “The Price we Pay” Susan Brison (*EIP* 377-386) and Andrew Altman “The Right to Get Turned On” (*EIP* 387-397)

### **Week 15**

Monday 21<sup>st</sup> April: Review Session

Wednesday 23<sup>rd</sup> April: Final Class Test.

**There is no further final examination for this class**

## **FURTHER COURSE INFORMATION**

### **1. Class format**

The classes will be a mixture of lecture and discussion, often using topical case studies. You should feel free to ask questions at any time and you are positively encouraged to join in discussion – hence the participation grade (see below).

### **2. Doing the reading**

You are expected to have done the reading for this course before class. We will feel free to ask people questions about the reading(s) in class, so you should be prepared.

When doing the reading, write down:

- a) The central arguments, or central points, each reading is making.
- b) At least one problem for you arising from each reading
- c) What you don't understand or would like clarified from each reading

This should be a maximum of 1 side of writing per reading: clarity and brevity are very important. We will ask in class what people have written in answer to these three points. We will also randomly collect in your answers to these questions three times in the semester; if you miss more than one of these times, 1/3 of a grade will be deducted from the second piece of coursework (eg, a B+ will become a B).

### 3. Assessment: general points

**Length of coursework:** You should keep to the assigned length of the work. Work that is more than 1 page over length – unless permission has been obtained - will be penalized one third of a grade (eg a B+ will become a B).

**Late work:** Handing in work late, except in special circumstances, may give an advantage over other students. Therefore work will be penalized by one third of a grade for every 2 days or part of 2 days that it is late. (So, up to and including 2 days late an A will become A-, from 2-4 days B+, 4-6 days, a B and so on). If you need an extension for medical or other personal reasons, please contact Clare Palmer.

**Taking the course on a Pass/Fail basis:** If you are taking the course on a Pass/Fail basis, you will need to get an average of a C+ mark to gain a Pass.

**Grading:** This is a philosophy class. Philosophy is not the kind of subject where there are straightforwardly right and wrong answers, so getting it right in this sense is not the basis of your grade. We are not looking for your affirmation of particular views of which we approve! Good grades are gained by papers that display a combination of the following:

- 1) A demonstration of understanding of material that has been read, and an ability to accurately summarize key points. This generally requires careful reading, as it is very easy to misrepresent others' views.
- 2) An ability to analyze critically the arguments in the work of authors that you have read: to see weaknesses, inconsistencies, contradictions, places where the conclusion does not follow from the premises, and to point these out. (You may also want to suggest ways in which arguments could work better if appropriately reformulated).
- 3) An ability to make a good argument oneself which involves: marshalling relevant facts, explaining how they are relevant and support your case, providing grounds for any claims that are made, considering counter-arguments to your own argument and showing why the counter-arguments do not succeed; making sure that conclusions follow from premises.
- 4) Clear writing, so that the reader can see immediately what you are trying to say; an introduction that sets up the essay, providing signposts so that the reader knows where the essay is going; paragraphs that follow on from one another, so that the essay has a sense of flow and structure.

Things to avoid: Unsubstantiated claims; discussions of feelings and opinions where these are not backed up by evidence or argument; inaccurate reporting of other positions; generalizations (such as "People think that" or "Westerners believe that"); discussions that have no reference to the work of those who have already written in the field. Papers that demonstrate some or all of these qualities will not get very good grades!

More guidance about writing the longer paper can be found at the end of this syllabus, and further information will be given out nearer the time.

**Referencing:** You should reference your work carefully, even where you are using Rachels or one of the set readings. There are different referencing conventions, and you may choose to adopt any, as long as you adopt one! My recommendation is to name the author, date and page – eg (Jones 1997: 34) in the text, and then create a bibliography in which the full reference appears. So, for instance:

Jones, Peter (1997) "Growing Mushrooms in Inner Mongolia" *Journal of Mushroom Studies* vol. 4 no.3 pp 97-107

for a journal article.

Jones, Peter (1997) *Mushrooms of Inner Mongolia* (London: Routledge)

for a book.

Jones, Peter (1997) "Growing Mushrooms in Inner Mongolia" in Smith, Rebecca (ed.) *Growing Mushrooms in Asia* (London, Routledge) pp. 97-107

for an article in a book.

For citing websites, you should still be able to identify author, but page and date may be less straightforward. Here you may only be able to use the author's name in-text. But please put the entire web address in the bibliography.

**NB The bibliography does not count in the page total for your paper.**

Reading for your Papers:

First, note that all the topics on this course are big questions, and many people have thought about them before – indeed, they might have spent their whole professional lives thinking about them. So don't reinvent the wheel! Read as much as you have time to do, including the other papers in the book relevant to topics we are discussing, and more widely where you can.

It may be that someone else has taken a text you want out of the library: luckily, there is a huge amount available online, in particular journal articles. You may need to search for these through the library's search engines, not just on the web. JSTOR for instance, has articles from a huge number of philosophy (and other) journals. *Ethics Updates* <http://ethics.acusd.edu/index.asp> also points to some online articles, has debates and recordings of various philosophers discussing central topics, and is endlessly useful. The following journals, which may also be useful, are available full text online:

Ethics, Ethics and the Environment, Ethical Theory and Moral Practice, Journal of Ethics  
Journal of Social Philosophy, Philosophy

The readings suggested here are of course not the only possible readings. Feel free to read other things! If you want more reading recommendations, contact one of us to ask what might be appropriate.

**3: Assignments**

There are two pieces of coursework and two class tests.

**Coursework 1 – constitutes 20% of the total mark for this course.** This piece of work is due in on 22<sup>nd</sup> February. You should answer the following question:

Outline the key elements of any one of the moral theories we've considered. How might this theory be applied to the issue of abortion? What problems with the theory are raised by applying it to abortion?

Your answer should be three double-spaced sides long, not counting the bibliography.

**Class Test 1 – constitutes 25% of the total mark for this course.** This test will be in class on Wednesday 5<sup>th</sup> March. You will be asked to answer 2 essay questions from 5 questions on the paper. I will run through some sample questions before the test, and spend a class reviewing material. The topics to be covered will include utilitarianism, deontological and rights theories, virtue and care ethics, abortion, euthanasia and capital punishment.

**Coursework 2 – constitutes 30% of the total mark for this course.** This longer essay allows you to explore one of the applied topics not covered in the first half of the semester in more detail. Your essay should be **five double-spaced** sides long. The due date is 12<sup>th</sup> April. Please choose from one of the two questions below. The questions are followed by some suggested further reading.

**1. What moral responsibilities (if any) do affluent individuals have towards those who are distant and poor? How much sacrifice, if any, is required to fulfill these responsibilities? Give reasons for your answer.**

Your first port of call should be to read all the articles relevant to the topic in *Ethics in Practice*. Some suggestions for further reading:

Peter Singer's own web page indicates where much of his work is available online  
[http://www.princeton.edu/~psinger/available\\_online.html](http://www.princeton.edu/~psinger/available_online.html)

The ethics updates page has a number of interviews with philosophers on world hunger:  
<http://ethics.acusd.edu/Applied/worldHunger/index.asp>

Other useful texts:

Cohen, Andrew and Wellman, Christopher (2005) in the "World Hunger" section of *Contemporary Debates in Applied Ethics* (Oxford, Blackwell) ed. Cohen and Wellman.p.311-342  
Dower, Nigel (1991) "World Poverty" in *A Companion to Ethics*, Peter Singer (ed.) (Oxford: Blackwell,)

La Follette, Hugh and Aitken, William (eds) (1977) *World Hunger and Moral Obligation* (New Jersey: Prentice Hall)

May, Larry and Sharratt, Sherri (eds) (1994 and subsequent editions) *Applied Ethics: A Multicultural Approach* Collins, (N.J. : Prentice Hall,). Section on hunger and poverty.

Nussbaum, Martha and Jonathan Glover (1995) (eds) *Women, culture, and development : a study of human capabilities* (New York : Oxford University Press)

O'Neill, Onora (1986) *Faces of Hunger* (London: Allen and Unwin)

Shue, Henry (1996) *Basic Rights* (Princeton: University of Princeton Press)

Singer Peter (1979) *Practical Ethics* (1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> edition) (CUP)

Telfer, Elizabeth (1996) *Food for thought: philosophy and food* (New York: Routledge)

Unger, Peter (1996) *Living High and Letting Die* (Oxford: OUP)

There are also a number of useful articles available online in the *Journal of Ethics* vol. 9 nos. 1-2

**2. What moral responsibilities (if any) do we have towards non-human animals? How do these compare with the responsibilities we have towards other humans? Give reasons for your answer.**

Some suggestions for further reading:

First, read all the articles on this topic in *Ethics in Practice*.

Other useful texts:

- Allen, C. & Bekoff, M. 1997. *Species of Mind: The Philosophy and Biology of Cognitive Ethology*. MIT Press
- Carruthers, P (1992) *The Animals Issue* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press)
- Frey, R.G. (1980) *Interests and Rights: The Case against Animals* (Oxford: Clarendon)
- Harrison, P. (1991) "Do animals feel pain?" *Philosophy* 66:25-40 (full text journal available)
- Hauser, Marc.(2000) *Wild Minds: what animals really think* (New York:Henry Holt)
- Lockwood, Michael (1979) "Killing and the Preference for Life" *Inquiry* 22 p.157-170
- Singer, Peter *Animal Liberation* (This book is very widely available in a number of different editions)
- Singer Peter (1979) *Practical Ethics* (Cambridge: CUP )
- Singer, Peter and Regan, Tom (eds) (1989) *Animal Rights and Human Obligations* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall)
- Tom Regan (1984) *The Case for Animal Rights* (Berkeley :UC Press)
- R.G. Frey (1983) *Rights, Killing and Suffering* (Oxford, Blackwell)
- Slicer, Deborah (1991) "Your Daughter or your Dog? A feminist assessment of the animal research issue" *Hypatia* 6/1 pp.108-124
- Sunstein and Nussbaum (eds) (2004) *Animal rights: current debates and new directions* (Oxford: OUP)
- Warren, Mary Ann *Moral Status* (Oxford: OUP 1997)

#### **Some further guidance on writing this paper:**

When writing this paper, try to develop some kind of argumentative thesis. (It doesn't matter whether you really believe what you are defending. This is about making good arguments). You might find it useful to think about the following things:

- a) Have I defined and explained the terms I am using? So, for instance, if you are talking about rights, or utilitarianism, make sure that you have explained what you think the term means, with which version of the view you are concerned (perhaps, even, with which single author's version you are working). In some cases you might want to offer a reason for taking a particular term in the way you have
- b) Try to demonstrate awareness and understanding of some, at least, of the important existing arguments on the subject. Summarize these briefly in ways that you think capture the key elements of the position being advocated. However, you aren't expected to be comprehensive. You only have 5 pages. You are likely to have to omit some of the authors or arguments important in the area about which you are writing. It's good if you can note this up front.
- c) In developing your arguments, you need to provide good reasons why you think what you are arguing for is the case. Draw on the views of others who have held similar positions, picking out from their work good reasons that might support your arguments.
- d) Consider objections to your arguments – the need to do this is explicit in many of the question titles. The objections may be either ones you come up with yourself, ones from the literature that are made against your position, or ones from the literature that are made against similar positions to yours, even though they have not directly been leveled at your position. Be hard on yourself! Try to find plausible, rather than wild objections.
- e) Work out ways of defending your arguments against these objections (if you can!)

If you choose a question with several parts, don't forget to answer all of the parts.

If you're worried about your paper, or you are having difficulty formulating arguments, talk to Carmen or Zach in office hours. We will look at outlines of arguments and outline plans for papers sent by e-mail, but not at complete drafts of papers (except in exceptional circumstances).

**Class Test 2 – This will constitute 25% of the total mark for this course.** This class test will be on Wednesday 23rd April at the usual time and place. There will be one compulsory case study question, and one essay that you can choose from 3 essay titles on the paper. The test will cover the whole course, not just the second part of the semester, since the theory covered in the first part of the semester is also important in the second.

#### **4. The Participation Grade**

A small participation grade will be awarded to students who contribute regularly and helpfully to class discussion, including regularly sending in questions prior to class. This grade will take the form of a one third additional grade on the second essay (taking a B+, for example, to an A-). No student should be disadvantaged by this grade (since nothing is lost by not getting it) but it is a way of rewarding students who have done the reading and help to keep the class discussions alive. There is a long tradition of verbal debate in Philosophy, and we want to encourage you to contribute to it! Note also that those students who have missed more than one reading notes hand-in during the course of the semester (see above) will, equally, be penalized 1/3 of a grade on this piece of work.

#### **5. Dissatisfaction with Grades**

Occasionally a student is unhappy with a grade. If this is you, please do not knock on our doors, brandishing your paper or test, expecting an instant judgment; thinking about grades is a process that takes time and reflection! Write an account explaining why you think the grade is unfair. Submit this account, with the contested piece of work, to Mindy Danner in the Philosophy office for the attention of Clare Palmer. We will all re-read the piece of work concerned and will provide feedback and a view on the grade. If you are still unhappy, we will give the paper to another colleague in Philosophy to evaluate. If you wish to do this, you must agree to abide by the decision of the colleague: grades can go down as well as up by taking this route – and it is not uncommon for them to go down. Note: we will not enter into discussions about the award of the participation grade.

#### **6. End of semester evaluation**

Please fill in an online end of semester evaluation for this class – the web site is at [evals.wustl.edu](http://evals.wustl.edu)!

#### **USEFUL WEB RESOURCES**

Most useful of all: Lawrence Hinman's Ethics Updates: <http://www.ethics.acusd.edu>

Two on-line encyclopedias of philosophy:

Stanford <http://www.plato.stanford.edu> (This is an excellent resource and has a pretty good entry on environmental ethics in it)

IEP <http://www.utm.edu/research/iep>

And an on-line philosophy dictionary: <http://www.philosophypages.com/dy>

The Philosopher's Index is a useful resource to search for topics/authors in journal articles and edited book collections. It can only be accessed from university computers, and only supports four users at a time: <http://library.wustl.edu/databases/about/phil.html>