

CLASS SYLLABUS: PRESENT MORAL PROBLEMS 131F Spring 2009

Instructor: Clare Palmer.

TA: Sarit Smila.

Clare Palmer's office: Room 108, Wilson; Sarit Smila's office: Room 116, Wilson.

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Clare Palmer -Office hours: Tuesday, 4-6; Sarit Smila -Office hours: Thursday, 9.30-11.30

Required Books for Course:

The Elements of Moral Philosophy (5th Edition) James Rachels (McGraw Hill)

Ethics in Practice: An Anthology (3rd Edition) Hugh Lafollette (ed.) (Oxford: Blackwells 2007).

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

Meeting Times and Places:

11.30 – 1, Tuesdays and Thursdays in Duncker 101

Hand in/Pick up papers

If you need to hand in work, or pick up work outside class, go to the Philosophy office in Wilson Hall. If you go in the main door of Wilson and up the stairs, the office is just ahead of you on the left. The "hand-in papers" filing cabinet is there; so also is the "pick-up papers" filing cabinet; there are folders inside for the course. All papers not handed back in class will be available in the "pick up papers" filing cabinet. The office is open normal office hours (but closed for lunch between 12 and 1 daily).

Course Outline and Weekly Readings:

Week 1

Tuesday January 13th Intro to course, and introductory case study.

Thursday January 15th: Introduction to Utilitarianism

Reading: 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/

Week 2

Tuesday January 20th Utilitarianism 2: some questions and problems

Reading: Rachels, Ch. 7 "The Debate over Utilitarianism"

Thursday January 22nd: Introduction to Kantian ethics.

Reading: Rachels, Chapter 8 "Are there absolute moral rules"?

Week 3

Tuesday January 27th: Introduction to Rights

Reading: Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Online at

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

Thursday January 29th: Virtue Ethics

Reading: Rachels, Chapter 12 "The Ethics of Virtue"

Week 4

Tuesday February 3rd: Ethics of Care

Reading: Rachels, Chapter 12 "Feminism and the Ethics of Care" (160-172)

Thursday February 5th: 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.

Week 5

Tuesday February 10th: Ethics and Abortion 1 **Take home case-study due in.**

Thursday February 12th: Ethics and Abortion 2

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

Week 6

Tuesday February 17th: Ethics and Euthanasia 1.

Thursday February 19th: Ethics and Euthanasia 2.

Readings for Thursday: 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

Tuesday February 24th: Ethics and Capital Punishment 1.

Thursday February 26th: Ethics and Capital Punishment 2.

Readings for Thursday: 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

Tuesday March 3rd: Review class.

Thursday 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

Tuesday 17th March: Economic Justice 1.

Reading for Tuesday: Rawls "A Theory of Justice" (*EIP* 565-577)

Thursday 19th March: Economic Justice 2.

Reading for Thursday: Nozick "The Entitlement Theory of Justice" (*EIP* 578-590).

Week 11

Tuesday 24th March: Ethics and Poverty 1: Do we have positive obligations to assist the distant poor? Readings for Tuesday: 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. You only need to read as far as the heading "The World Food Bank".

Thursday 26th March: Ethics and Poverty 2: Are we harming the poor?

Reading for Thursday: Pogge "Eradicating Systematic Poverty" (*EIP* 633-646)

Week 12

Tuesday 31st March: Animals and Ethics 1

Thursday 2nd April: Animals and Ethics 2

Readings for Thursday: 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

Tuesday 7th April: Environment and Ethics 1 **Essay due in**

Thursday 9th April: Environment and Ethics 2.

Readings for Thursday: Thomas Hill "Ideals of Human Excellence" (EIP 680-690) Aldo Leopold "The Land Ethic" (EIP 660-668)

Week 14

Tuesday 14th April: Free Speech.

Reading for Tuesday: John Stuart Mill "Freedom of Thought and Discussion" (EIP 373-376)

Thursday 16th April: Pornography.

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

Week 15

Tuesday 21st April: Review Session

Thursday 23rd April: Final Class Test.

There is no further final examination for this class

FURTHER COURSE INFORMATION

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). There will be readings for every class in the first part of the semester; then generally for Thursdays later on. Check the syllabus each week to be sure. I will expect you to have done the readings each week, and I'll have 4 Quickie Random Reading tests in the course of the semester (worth 10% of the final grade for the course). These tests should be straightforward if you've done the reading and have shown up for class!

Assessment

The course has a number of forms of assessment:

1. 4 Random Reading Quizzes, to encourage you to attend class and do the reading (10%)
2. One take-home case study (15%)
3. A mid semester test with two essays (25%)
4. A longer essay (25%)
5. A final class test with (a) a case study and (b) an essay (25%)

These test different skills: recall, clear summarizing, researching, understanding texts, analyzing, criticizing and developing arguments; relating theory to practice.

In general:

Length of coursework: Keep to the assigned length. Work that is more than 1 page over length, unless permission has been obtained, will be penalized 1/3 of a grade (eg a B+ will become a B).

Late work: Late work means extra time, and gives an advantage over other students. Therefore work will be penalized by 1/3 of a grade for every 2 days or part of two days it is late.(So, up to 2 days late an A will become A-; 2- 4 days, B+ and 4-6 days, B). If you need an extension for medical or other personal reasons, please contact one of us.

Taking the course on a Pass/Fail basis: You need to get an average of C+ overall to pass.

Grading: Good grades are gained by papers that display a combination of the following:

- 1) A demonstration that you understand material you've read, that you've given it a charitable hearing, and that you can accurately summarize key points from it.
- 2) Where relevant, a concise and accurate account of empirical material. (This, though, should only constitute a small proportion of your paper.)
- 3) The skills of reconstructing, analyzing and critically evaluating authors' arguments; and (where relevant) reformulating them more successfully.
- 4) An ability to argue persuasively for your own view, which involves: marshalling relevant empirical information, explaining how it is relevant and supports 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 your conclusions follow from your premises.
- 5) Clear and concise writing, so that the reader can see immediately what you are trying to say; an introduction that sets up the piece of work, signposts so that the reader knows where the paper is going, & paragraphs that follow on from one another, so that the essay has a sense of flow and structure.

To Avoid!: Unsubstantiated claims; discussions of feelings/opinions where these are not backed up by evidence or argument; inaccurate or carpingly uncharitable reporting of other positions; generalizations (such as "People think that"); discussions that have no reference to the work of those who have already written in the field; careless/inaccurate reading of case studies.

And Note: You **do not** have to agree with any position that you think the instructors may be taking to get a good grade! Your work is judged on the basis of the strength of the arguments you present, not the position you adopt.

Referencing: You should reference all sources used, including web sites and materials from the textbooks, both when you refer to them in your paper, and in detail at the end in a bibliography. The bibliography does not count towards your page total. Some suggestions about referencing format follow later in the syllabus.

Assignments:

1. Random Reading Quizzes (10%)

There will be four of these randomly scattered through the semester. Each will have 10 questions, either with answers of a sentence or less, or multiple choice answers. We'll collect these in, grade them, and hand them back in the next class.

2. Case Study (15%)

This case study will be followed by a couple of questions: you should answer all of them. The case study provides an opportunity to show that you've understood the ethical theories and can relate them to a particular case in practice.

3. Mid-term class test (25%) – 5th March

This 1.5 hour test asks you to answer two essay questions. More on this nearer the time.

4. Longer Essay (25%) – 7th April

This essay should be 5 double-spaced sides long. You may choose between writing on poverty and ethics or animals and ethics. Essay questions, readings and other assistance will be given later in the semester.

5. Final Class Test (25%) – 23rd April

This 1.5 hour class test will contain a case study, and an essay question. Although the final class test will be oriented around the issues we've looked at in the second part of the semester, you will need to know material from the **whole course**, not just the second half of the semester, in order to answer the questions well. Again, more on this nearer the time.

The Participation Grade

A small participation grade will be awarded to students who contribute (a) regularly and (b) helpfully to class discussion. This grade will take the form of a **one third additional grade on the second essay**. No student should be disadvantaged by this grade (since nothing is lost by not getting it) but it rewards 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!

Dissatisfaction with Grades

Occasionally a student is unhappy with a grade. If this is you, please **do not** knock on my door, brandishing your paper or test, expecting an instant judgment; thinking about grades is a process that takes time and reflection! Write a brief 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. Either Sarit or I, or both of us (depending on who marked it) will re-read the piece of work concerned and will provide feedback and a view on the grade. If you are still unhappy, I will give the contested 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**. Note: we will not enter into discussions about the award of the participation grade.

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:

For a journal article: Jones, Peter (1998) "Growing Mushrooms in Inner Mongolia" *Journal of Mushroom Studies* vol. 4 no.3 pp 97-107

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

For an article in a book: Jones, Peter (1999) "Growing Mushrooms in Inner Mongolia" in Smith, Rebecca (ed.) *Growing Mushrooms in Asia* (London, Routledge) pp. 97-107

When citing websites, you should still be able to identify author, but not page and date. You may only be able to use the author's name in-text Please put the web address in the bibliography.

Useful Web Resources

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

Two on-line encyclopedias of philosophy:

Stanford <http://plato.stanford.edu/> (This is an excellent resource, but quite high-level)

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>