Course Syllabus

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Course Description

This class will investigate a range of moral issues, including capital punishment, abortion, euthanasia, poverty and racism, terrorism and war, sexuality and marriage, pornography and drugs, and the environment. Along the way we will examine a variety of ethical theories. Our aims will be to understand better the complexities of the moral realm, to enable students to develop their own moral reasoning skills and to strengthen their own social ethics.

Required Textbooks:


Course Objectives and Learning Outcomes

1) Students will examine a variety of moral theories

2) Students will become familiar with
   - the key perspectives involved in each of the several moral issues
   - the harmony and conflict between legislation and morality
   - the harmony and conflict between objective and subjective guilt & virtue
   - the harmony and conflict between personal and social values

3) Students will clarify their own personal and social ethics in relation to the classical moral theories and codes of ethics
Course Requirements

- Attendance (24% of grade)
- Review questions and reflection papers (38% of grade)
  - 13 sets of review questions for 13 articles assigned in *Contemporary Moral Problems*
  - 6 300-word reflection papers on 6 chapters in *Unprotected*
- Research paper (25% of grade)
  - 8 page paper on an ethical / moral issue of the student’s choice.
- Oral Presentation (13% of grade)
  - A 10-minute oral presentation and defense of the research paper

Grading Scale

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<tr>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Letter grade</th>
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<tr>
<td>97-100</td>
<td>A+</td>
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<tr>
<td>93-96</td>
<td>A</td>
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<td>90-92</td>
<td>A-</td>
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<td>87-89</td>
<td>B+</td>
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<td>83-86</td>
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<td>80-82</td>
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<td>77-79</td>
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<td>70-72</td>
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<td>60-62</td>
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Academic Dishonesty Policy (See page 169 of catalog)

Disability Statement: If a student is in need of an accommodation based on the impact of your disability, you should contact me to arrange an appointment. At the appointment we can discuss the course format, anticipate your needs and explore potential accommodations. I rely on the Office for Students with Disabilities for assistance in verifying the need for accommodations and developing accommodation strategies. If you have not previously registered with the Office for Students with Disabilities, I encourage you to do so. Just a reminder, requests for accommodations are not retroactive.
Attendance Policy

Attendance counts as 24% of the grade (one point for every hour of class time). The last class is most important because the student must make an oral presentation of the research paper. The oral presentation adds 13 points to the last class, bringing the total participation points to 37% of the grade. Some attendance points missed may be made up by extra homework assignments, but points from the last class cannot.

Course Schedule

May 6, 2009  
Assignments:  
introductions  
syllabus  
research paper  
moral theories and codes  
(none due)

May 13, 2009  
Assignments:  
Abortion  
Read “Excerpts from Roe vs Wade (1973)” and John T. Noonan, “An almost absolute value” in chapter 2 of Contemporary Moral Problems. Write answers to review questions (not the discussion questions) for moral issues for both of these articles. Read pages 78 – 105 in Unprotected. Write 300 words of reflection on this chapter.

Euthanasia  
Read James Rachels, “Active and Euthanasia Passive Euthanasia” in chapter 3 of Contemporary Moral Problems. Write answers to review questions (not the discussion questions) on this article.

May 20, 2009  
Assignments:  
Capital Punishment  
Read “Gregg vs Georgia” in chapter 4 of Contemporary Moral Problems; answer review questions.

Drugs and Addiction  
Read Thomas Satsz, “The ethics of addiction” and USDEA “Speaking out against drug legalization” in chapter 6 of Contemporary Moral Problems. Answer review questions.
May 27, 2009

Assignments:

Sexuality and Marriage
Read Jonathan Rauch, “Who needs marriage?” in chapter 5 of Contemporary Moral Problems. Answer review questions. Reflection paper (300 words) on chapter 1, 300 words on chapter 2 + 300 words on chapter 4 of Unprotected. Reflection paper (300 words) on chapter 7 + 300 words on chapter 8 in Unprotected.

Gay marriage

June 3, 2009

Assignments:

Affirmative Action, Poverty and Racism

UN Declaration of Human Rights

June 10, 2009

Assignments:

Animal Rights
Read Peter Singer, “All Animals are Equal”. Answer review questions.

War and Terrorism
Read Douglas Lackey, “Pacifism” and William O’Brien, “The content of just and limited war” Answer review questions for both articles in chapter 9 of Contemporary Moral Problems.

June 17, 2009

Assignments:

Torture
Read Henry Shue, “Torture”. Answer review questions.

June 24, 2009

Assignments:

Oral Presentations of research papers
8-page research paper due at beginning of class

15- minute oral presentations during class

No Pre-class assignment