

Phil 131: Present Moral Problems

Spring 2012
Tuesday 5:30-7:30
Cupples II Room 230

Instructor: Tyler Paytas
E-mail: tylerpaytas@wustl.edu
Office: Wilson 116
Office Hours: Thursdays 2:00-4:00

Course Description

An investigation of a range of contemporary moral issues and controversies that draws on philosophical ethics and culture wide moral considerations. Topics include: animal rights, global poverty, terrorism, pornography, lesbian and gay rights, and abortion. The aim of the course is to present diverse points of view regarding these topics and to provide conceptual and theoretical tools that enable the student to make headway in thinking carefully and critically about the issues.

Learning Objectives

Students who take this class can expect

- to learn how to think in a rigorous philosophical way about important issues and positions in contemporary applied ethics.
- to gain a deeper understanding of philosophical methodology.
- to experience a learning environment that encourages independent thought and discussion.
- to hone their critical reading and writing skills.

Expectations

This course has no prerequisites. Students are expected to attend all lectures, read the required texts, and do the best work they can on all assignments. Students are also expected to take an active role in their learning by raising questions in class and participating in discussion. The instructor will attempt to provide interesting and informative material for students to read, give helpful lectures, provide assignments and activities that challenge and stimulate interest, be available to answer any questions, and provide fair and timely evaluations of student achievement.

Required Texts

- *Disputed Moral Issues: A Reader*, Second Edition. Edited by Mark Timmons. Oxford University Press, 2011.
- Additional readings will be distributed in class and via email.

Evaluation

25% Participation
25% Midterm Exam
25% Term Paper
25% Final Exam

Participation – Much class time will be spent discussing the assigned readings. For that reason, it is essential that each student come to class prepared with questions, comments, or objections. To ensure that this is the case, each student will submit a one page (typed, double spaced) summary of the assigned readings at the beginning of each class period. There will also be a weekly online assignment that will be part of the participation grade. You will be asked to watch a video or listen to a podcast, and post a response of at least 250 words on the Telesis discussion board. Participation grades will be determined by the quality of the weekly summaries, discussion board posts, the quality and frequency of contributions to class discussion, and regularity of attendance. Please do not be afraid to share your thoughts with the class—undeveloped ideas often lead to fruitful discussions.

Term Paper – Students are expected to write one paper with a length of 1,200 – 1,500 words. Students can either choose a topic suggested by the instructor, or come up with their own paper idea. Anyone who wants to do the latter must have the paper proposal approved by the instructor. I will provide further details about the paper assignment and expectations later in the semester. Some class time will be devoted to discussion of strategies for writing papers. Papers are due at the beginning of class on the assigned date. Papers not received then will be penalized 5% off their base grade immediately, and another 5% for every 24 hour period thereafter until they are received.

Academic Integrity

All students are expected to adhere to high standards of academic integrity. In this class especially, that means that all work presented as original must, in fact, be original, and the ideas and contributions of others must always be appropriately acknowledged. Quotations must, of course, be acknowledged, but so must summaries, paraphrases, and the ideas of others. *Course Listings and Bearings*, and the [University Policies website \(www.wustl.edu/policies/undergraduate-academic-integrity.html\)](http://www.wustl.edu/policies/undergraduate-academic-integrity.html) all contain full statements of the University's policy on academic integrity. The policy is summarized at www.ja.wustl.edu/academicintegrity/resources-policysummary.php. If you have any doubts or questions about documentation requirements, please ask me. Don't guess.

Electronic Devices – Cell phones, music players, and computers may not be used during class. Ringers should be turned off before entering, and texting is prohibited.

Course Schedule (Subject to change. Any changes will be announced in class and via e-mail.)

<u>Date</u>	<u>Topic</u>	<u>Reading Due</u>
1/17	Introduction to Ethics	None
1/24	Consequentialism	DMI 1-11, 38-42
1/31	Kant	DMI 15-20, 47-54
2/7	Virtue Ethics	DMI 25-26, 58-67
2/14	Natural Law	DMI 12-15, 43-472/21
2/21	Sexual Morality	DMI 73-106
2/28	Pornography and Censorship	DMI 122-153, 162-174
3/6	Midterm	DMI 29-33
3/13	SPRING BREAK	None
3/20	Abortion	DMI 373-404, (Brown)
3/27	Animals	DMI 330-341, 348-371
4/3	Terrorism	DMI 504-539
4/10	Global Poverty	DMI 562-593
4/17	Global Poverty	DMI 594-599, (Pogge)
4/24	Final Exam	None