

PHIL 130: Current Moral Problems

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Office Hours: Zoom (by appointment)

Course Description and Expected Outcomes:

We make decisions of moral importance every day. Such decisions present a challenge: what is the morally right thing to do? What is the morally right position to adopt? These questions concern issues that are directly relevant to our own lives as well as those that are relevant to society more generally.

For these reasons, we will examine a number of contemporary moral issues from a philosophical perspective. We will address questions such as: Do animals have rights? Is eating meat morally wrong? Is abortion morally permissible? If so, under what conditions? What obligations, if any, do we have to the global poor? Would it be morally right to genetically enhance ourselves or our children? Before examining these questions, the course introduces some influential ethical theories about what, in general, makes actions right and wrong.

The primary purpose of the course is to enable students to understand issues in health care ethics better, and to appreciate and evaluate the arguments on all sides, while attempting to form their own considered view. You can only test your views by subjecting them to criticism, so you will be expected to regularly participate in class discussion through the discussion board.

Required Course Materials:

Note: There is no required textbook for this course. All readings will be made available via eCampus.

Requirements:

- 1. Readings & Lectures:** You are expected to complete each of the assigned readings and to watch the corresponding lecture videos posted online.
- 2. Quizzes:** *Quizzes will only be available to take during the week for which they are assigned.* Each quiz has a time-limit (usually 4 minutes). *You cannot make up any missed quizzes.* However, there will be *twelve* quizzes; only your best *ten* will count toward the final grade.
- 3. Discussion Board:** You will be required to post regularly on the Discussion Board. You are required to post at least *6 comments each week* on the discussion board. At least three of your comments each week should respond directly to one of the discussion prompts, and (ii) at least three of your comments should be replies to one of your classmates' comments.

Note: Discussion board comments should be thoughtful, respectful, and at least *4-6* sentences long). *Discussion Board comments for each week must be completed by the end of Saturday in order to receive credit.*

- 4. Essay:** There will be one essay that requires you to critically evaluate one of the arguments we cover in the course. Instructions for the essay will be posted in advance.
- 5. Exams:** There will be three multiple choice exams. Each exam will cover the material from one week of the course.

Grade Breakdown:

Exam 1:	20%	Essay:	20%
Exam 2:	20%	Quizzes:	10%
Exam 3:	20%	Discussion	10%

Grading Scale

97-100	A+	87-89:	B	77-79:	C	67-69:	D	0-59:	F
93-96:	A	83-86:	B	73-76:	C	63-66:	D		
90-92:	A-	80-82:	B-	70-72:	C-	60-62:	D-		

Course Schedule

This schedule is a guide for the course and is subject to change with advance notice. All readings can be found under the “Readings” folder on eCampus.

Week 1

Topic	Readings/Video Lectures	Assignments
<i>ETHICAL THEORIES</i>	Rachels, “The Challenge of Cultural Relativism”	Quiz 1
	Rachels, “The Utilitarian Approach”	Quiz 2
	O’Neill, “A Simplified Account of Kant’s Ethics”	Quiz 3
	Ross, “What Makes Right Acts Right?”	
<i>EUTHANASIA</i>	Brock, “Voluntary Active Euthanasia”	
	Subramanya, “Scheduled to Die” (<i>no video lecture</i>)	Quiz 4
Quizzes & Exam #1 Dates TBD		

Week 2

<i>ETHICAL TREATMENT OF ANIMALS</i>	Singer, “All Animals are Equal”	Quiz 5
	Norcross, “Puppies, Pigs, and People”	Quiz 6
	Warren, “Human and Animal Rights Compared”	Quiz 7
<i>ABORTION</i>	Sumner, “A Moderate View”	
	Thomson, “A Defense of Abortion”	Quiz 8
	Don Marquis, “Why Abortion is Immoral”	Quiz 9
Quizzes & Exam #2 Dates TBD		

Week 3

<i>WORLD HUNGER & POVERTY</i>	Singer, "The Life You Can Save"	Quiz 10
	Arthur, "World Hunger and Moral Obligation"	Quiz 11
<i>EMERGING TECHNOLOGIES</i>	Savulescu, "Genetic Interventions and the Ethics of Enhancement"	
	Sandel, "The Case Against Perfection"	Quiz 12
Essay Assignment Due Date TBD		
Quizzes & Exam #3 Dates TDB		

Make-up Exams

Make-up exams will be allowed if there is a conflict with a University-sponsored event or a Day of Special Concern and if appropriate documentation and advance notice are provided to the instructor. In all other cases, a make-up exam will be allowed only at the instructor's discretion and only in circumstances that made it impossible for a student to take the exam at the scheduled time. Make-up exams may receive a 10% grade penalty for each day the exam goes untaken.

Inclusivity Statement

The West Virginia University community is committed to creating and fostering a positive learning and working environment based on open communication, mutual respect, and inclusion. If you are a person with a disability and anticipate needing any type of accommodation in order to participate in this class, please advise me and make appropriate arrangements with the Office of Accessibility Services (293-6700). For more information on West Virginia University's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion initiatives, please see <http://diversity.wvu.edu>.

Plagiarism

Any use of sources (other than your own thoughts) in written assignments (essays or exams) without proper citation counts as plagiarism. *This includes the use of ChatGPT and other AI tools.* Plagiarism on any assignment will be penalized with a zero for that assignment and a formal report to the University. In addition, you are not permitted to use any AI tool for any assignment in this course (unless approved by me in advance).