

Philosophy and Public Affairs

PHILOSOPHY 3140 SECTION II
SPRING 2010 WESTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY

Instructor: Lindsay Rettler

Time and Location: Tues/Thurs 6:00-7:15 pm; Brown Hall 4035

Contact: lindsayrettler@gmail.com

Office Hours: Tues 1:00-3:00 pm, and by appointment; Moore Hall 3035

Course Description and Goals

This is a philosophy course in applied ethics. We will examine and critique arguments for both sides of a variety of ethical issues. The first half of the semester we'll address abortion, euthanasia, killing in war, and the killing of animals. During the second half of the semester the class will get to choose the topics we cover. At the end of the course you will have a better understanding of how to identify and evaluate arguments in ethics, as well as how to defend your own ethical views. *Note:* This course satisfies the General Education II requirement.

Required Text

- *Whats Wrong?: Applied Ethicists and Their Critics* edited by David Boonin and Graham Oddie (2nd edition, Oxford, 2005)

Course Requirements

Participation and Presentations (15%): You are expected to do the assigned readings, attend class, and participate in class discussion. Each student will be giving several short presentations to be assigned during the second half of the semester. In your presentations you are expected to explain an argument involved in a particular issue, and then lead a short class discussion on that material (with assistance from me). As class progresses you will get a feel for how the discussions are generally structured. You are allowed to miss two class sessions for any reason whatsoever, at which point I will deduct points from your grade for future absences. Please talk to me *ahead of time* if you know you will be absent.

Homework and Quizzes (10%) The class is primarily based around discussion of the arguments presented in the text. So, it's extremely important that you read the assigned readings and come to class prepared to critically comment on them. I will periodically give short quizzes in class to test your understanding of the reading. Homework assignments will consist of particular questions given during class that you can take home to complete.

Midterm Exam (25%) The midterm exam will be administered in class in the form of short answer questions and short essays.

Course Requirements, continued...

Two Papers, 25% each (50%) The papers are your chance to demonstrate your ability to articulate the argument of a particular author and evaluate it. Specific guidelines will be handed out later (during the second half of the semester). Paper length is between 1,500-2,000 words. You may choose from several topics that will be announced in class.

Administrative Issues

Classroom Conduct: We are discussing topics in this class that are difficult and controversial. They can also be very personal. You have no idea how the people in the room may be personally connected to these issues. Because of this we all need to be very careful how we conduct ourselves. Of course people will disagree—one of the goals of the class is to explore such disagreement in a critical and structured manner. However, in presenting your own thoughts make sure you speak with respect and professionalism. Make sure you've listened carefully to what others are trying to say before you jump in. Anything that might be perceived as insulting or a personal attack will not be tolerated.

Office Hours: I am always available during office hours to discuss any questions about the course or philosophy in general, or anything else of importance to you, including personal issues. You will benefit the most if you come talk to me early on about anything confusing and if you discuss written work at least several days *before* it's due. I'm also happy to answer questions via email. If my scheduled office hours don't work for you, then please contact me to schedule a different time.

Late Assignments: All homework assignments are due at the beginning of class. Late assignments will be penalized one partial grade per day starting with the due date. I understand that emergencies happen, so come talk to me if you encounter a problem that prevents you from turning things in on time. If, however, you do not bother to make arrangements with me within 24-hours of the due date there is no way to avoid the penalty. *Note:* you must turn in all assignments to pass the course.

Academic Integrity: I will enforce the university's policy on academic integrity and report all academic misconduct. You are responsible for making yourself aware of the relevant policies and procedures in the undergraduate catalog: see <http://catalog.wmich.edu> under Academic Policies, Student Rights and Responsibilities. Offenses include cheating, fabrication, falsification and forgery, multiple submission, plagiarism, complicity, and computer misuse.

Accommodation for Disabilities: Any student with a documented disability who needs to arrange reasonable accommodations must contact Beth Denhartigh at 269-387-2116 or at beth.denhartigh@wmich.edu at the beginning of the semester. A disability determination must be made by this office before any accommodations are provided by the instructor.

Course Schedule

The following is an outline of topics and readings for the course. Please complete the readings before class on the days for which they are listed. All page numbers are from *What's Wrong?* 2nd edition, 2005. This schedule is subject to change, though I will notify you of any updates at least a week in advance.

INTRODUCTION TO LOGIC AND ETHICAL THEORIES

M 1/11 Introduction

W 1/13 What's Wrong with Arguing? (1-24)

M 1/18 No Class – Martin Luther King Jr. Day

W 1/20 Ethical Theories (24-30)

THE ETHICS OF KILLING

M 1/25 Is Killing in War Wrong? (33-39)

Robert Fullinwider – War and Innocence

W 1/27 Response to Fullinwider

Lawrence Alexander – Self-Defense and the Killing of Noncombatants: A Reply to Fullinwider

M 2/2 Is Euthanasia Wrong? (44-49)

James Rachels – Active and Passive Euthanasia

W 2/4 Responses to Rachels (50-57)

Winston Nesbitt – Is Killing No Worse Than Letting Die?

Roy Perrett – Killing, Letting Die, and the Bare Difference Argument

PRESENTATION SIGN-UPS

M 2/9 Is Abortion Wrong? Part 1 (58-69)

Don Marquis: Why Abortion is Immoral

W 2/11 Responses to Marquis (70-84)

Gerald Paske – Abortion and the Neo-Natal Right to Life

Alastair Norcross – Killing, Abortion, and Contraception: A Reply to Marquis

Peter McInerney – Does a Fetus Have a Future-Like-Ours?

M 2/16 Is Abortion Wrong? Part 2 (85-98)

Judith Jarvis Thomson – A Defense of Abortion

W 2/18 Responses to Thomson (99-107)

Baruch Brody – Thomson on Abortion

Course Schedule, THE ETHICS OF KILLING continued...

M 2/23 *Responses to Thomson* (99-107)

Francis Beckwith – Arguments from Bodily Rights: A Critical Analysis

Review for the Midterm

W 2/25 MID-TERM EXAM

Pass Out Paper Guidelines

M 3/2 *No Class – Spring Break*

W 3/4 *No Class – Spring Break*

M 3/9 Is Killing Non-Human Animals Wrong? (108-117)

Tom Regan – The Case for Animal Rights

PAPER PROPOSAL #1 DUE

W 3/11 *Responses to Regan* (118-130)

Jan Narveson – On a Case for Animal Rights

R.G. Frey – Why Animals Lack Beliefs and Desires; and The Case Against Animal Rights

Alan White – Rights

M 3/16 Is Failing to Contribute to Famine Relief Wrong? (131-134)

Peter Singer – Famine, Affluence, and Morality

W 3/18 *Responses to Singer* (142-154)

John Arthur – World Hunger and Moral Obligation: The Case Against Singer

Michael Slote – Famine, Affluence, and Empathy

THE ETHICS OF SEX AND MARRIAGE

M 3/23 Is Adultery Wrong? (194-204)

Richard Wasserstrom – Is Adultery Immoral?

W 3/25 *Responses to Wasserstrom* (205-216)

Bonnie Steinbock – Adultery

Don Marquis – What's Wrong with Adultery?

PAPER #1 DUE

M 3/30 Is Same-Sex Marriage Wrong? (297-306)

Jeff Jordan – Is It Wrong to Discriminate on the Basis of Homosexuality?

W 4/1 *Responses to Jordan* (307-311)

David Boonin – Same-Sex Marriage and the Argument from Public Agreement

Andrew Sullivan – Virtually Normal: An Argument About Homosexuality

Course Schedule, continued...

THE ETHICS OF STATE POLICIES

M 4/6 Is a Government Ban on Tobacco Wrong? (497-511)

Robert Goodin – No Smoking

W 4/8 Responses to Goodin (512-536)

Daniel Shapiro – Smoking Tobacco – Irrationality, Addiction, and Paternalism

Graham Oddie – Addiction and the Value of Freedom

M 4/13 Is Issuing Warrants to Torture Wrong? (560-571)

Alan Dershowitz – Tortured Reasoning

PAPER PROPOSAL #2 DUE

W 4/15 Responses to Dershowitz (572-579)

Elaine Scarry – Five Errors in the Reasoning of Alan Dershowitz

Alan Dershowitz – Reply to Scarry

ETHICAL THEORIES REVISITED

M 4/20 Ethical Theories in Review

W 4/22 Paper Discussion and Reflections on the Course

W 4/29 Finals Week

PAPER #2 DUE