

PHIL 1025: Contemporary Moral Issues

Fall 2018, Online

Instructor

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Hours: By appointment

Course Description & Objectives

This course offers a critical examination of controversial moral issues faced by society today. In this course, we will explore three main topics of interest in contemporary moral debates. First, we will discuss socio-political moral issues including the morality of the death penalty and the effects of racism within the American criminal justice system. The second topic, involving moral issues related to health and the nature of humanity, will include discussions of topics like the morality of abortion, opting-out of immunization, and intentional genetic modification. Finally, we will discuss moral issues related to recent technological advancements including the effects of automation and the ethics of artificial intelligence. Students will learn how to apply basic principles and major theories of modern ethics to these issues, become acquainted with some competing perspectives on the issues, and learn to develop and strengthen their own arguments to support their positions on these issues.

As this is an introductory philosophy course, there are no prerequisites and students are not expected to have any prior experience with philosophy. However, this does not mean that it will be exceptionally easy (though it should not be exceptionally difficult either). Some of the readings for this class may seem technical if you are not accustomed to reading philosophy and they may prove difficult to fully understand with a single read-through. While I expect everyone to make an attempt at fully working through the texts on their own, I will also guide you through each of the readings.

Materials

All required materials for this course will be provided through Blackboard.

Assignments

Weekly Assignments (12 total – 50 points each, 600 points total) — Most weeks, students will be assigned some form of weekly assignment. These weekly assignments will cover materials assigned during the week in which they are released. They will be released along with the module that they belong to each week and will be due by 5PM that Sunday. These assignments may include multiple choice questions or short written response questions – each will include detailed instructions.

Midterm Writing Assignment (200 points) — The midterm assignment will be a collection of short essay questions related to issues discussed in the first half of the semester. Students will choose to respond to four out of five available prompts. The total assignment should be approximately 4 pages long. More details about writing philosophical papers and the assignment in particular will be released shortly before the midterm is assigned.

Final Writing Assignment (200 points) — The final writing assignment will be a collection of short essay questions related to issues discussed in the second half of the semester. Students will choose to respond to four out of five available prompts. The total assignment should be approximately 4 pages long. More

details about writing philosophical papers and the assignment in particular will be released shortly before the final is assigned.

Grade Distribution

Out of 1,000 possible points.

Weekly Assignments: 12 x 50 points each = 600 points

Midterm Writing Assignment: 200 points

Final Writing Assignment: 200 points

934-1000 points – A

900-933 points – A-

867-899 points – B+

834-866 points – B

800-833 points – B-

767-799 points – C+

734-766 points – C

700-733 points – C-

667-699 points – D+

634-666 points – D

600-633 points – D-

599 points or fewer – F

Policies

Late Assignments — Unless in the case of a documented medical or family emergency, late submissions of the midterm or final writing assignments will be penalized by one letter grade per day beyond the assigned due date. Assignments submitted more than one week later than the assigned due date will not be accepted unless special circumstances apply. No late weekly assignments will be accepted barring emergencies. Contact the instructor as soon as possible if you anticipate the need to turn in an assignment late.

Code of Conduct — The University of Cincinnati's code of conduct will be in effect. Those in violation will fail the course and be subject to applicable penalties from the University. UC's rules are available at the following link https://www.uc.edu/conduct/Code_of_Conduct/academic-misconduct.html.

NOTE: Any act of cheating on an exam or paper is grounds for receiving a grade of F in the course. Plagiarism is an act of cheating. Plagiarism does not have to be done intentionally to count as plagiarism. If you are unsure what constitutes plagiarism, please consult the guidelines.

This syllabus may change at the instructor's discretion.

Special Needs and Accommodations

I want all students to have an equal opportunity to succeed in this course. If you have a disability (visual, hearing, physical, psychological, cognitive, learning, ADD, medical condition, etc.) which may influence your performance in this course, the university will make reasonable accommodations for you to ensure

an equitable opportunity to meet all the requirements of this course. If you require accommodations due to disability, please contact the Disability Services Office at 513-556-6823, Campus Location: 210 University Pavilion. You may also visit their website at: <http://www.uc.edu/aess/disability.html>

Any student requiring accommodation for religious observances should notify the instructor in advance so that adequate accommodation can be provided.

Course Calendar

Week One August 27-31	Introduction to the Course	Weekly Assignment 1
Week Two September 4-7	Deontology vs. Utilitarianism	Weekly Assignment 2
Week Three September 10-14	Socio-Political Issues: Death Penalty	Weekly Assignment 3
Week Four September 17-21	Affirmative Action	Weekly Assignment 4
Week Five September 24-28	War on Drugs	Weekly Assignment 5 Midterm Writing Assignment Posted
Week Six October 1-5	Health and Humanity: Abortion	Weekly Assignment 6
Week Seven October 8-12	NO READINGS	Midterm Writing Assignment DUE by 5PM Sunday
Week Eight October 15-19	Immunization	Weekly Assignment 7
Week Nine October 22-26	Human Genetic Modification	Weekly Assignment 8
Week Ten October 29-November 2	Technological Advancement: Automation	Weekly Assignment 9

Week Eleven November 5-9	Artificial Intelligence	Weekly Assignment 10
Week Twelve November 12-16	Privacy in the Information Age	Weekly Assignment 11
Week Thirteen November 19-23 THANKSGIVING	NO READINGS	
Week Fourteen November 26-30	Animal Rights	Weekly Assignment 12 Final Writing Assignment Posted
Week Fifteen December 3-7	NO READINGS	
December 14 th	FINAL	Final Writing Assignment DUE by 5PM