

Philosophy 341: Contemporary Moral Issues

Spring 2017

MTWR, 9:55 to 10:45, Science Hall 360

4 Credits

Josh Mund (josh.mund@wisc.edu)

Office Hours: Wednesday and Thursday, 11:15 to 12:15, 5145 Helen C White

(You are very welcome to meet with me at a different time; email me to make an appointment.)

Course Goals:

- 1) To decide what you believe (at least tentatively) about the following moral questions:
 - a. Is Consequentialism true?
 - b. Is Ethical Objectivism true?
 - c. Is it morally wrong not to give most of your money to help poor people?
 - d. Is abortion morally permissible?
 - e. How is it permissible to treat nonhuman animals?
 - f. How much moral responsibility do human beings bear for their actions?
 - g. Is the US criminal justice system morally acceptable?

- 2) To develop the following intellectual skills:
 - a. Being skeptical of your initial reaction to ethical questions (and other questions) and searching for reasons/evidence in support of and in opposition to your initial reaction
 - b. Identifying the argument that someone is making, reconstructing it in valid form, and carefully considering whether the premises are true
 - c. Improving your ability to
 - i. *read for mastery,*
 - ii. *study effectively,*
 - iii. *produce a concise and compelling argument in written form,* and
 - iv. *deliver a concise and compelling argument as a presentation*

- 3) Your Own Goal:

Graded Work:

- 7 to 8 quizzes and homework assignments (25%)
- 4 Short Papers, the first in two drafts (48%)
- Final Oral Presentation (12%)
- Final Paper (15%)
- Coming to class is required. If you miss no more than 4 class periods throughout the semester, your final course grade will increase by 1%

Final Grades:

- 93-100=A, 88-92=AB, 82-87=B, 78-81=BC, 70-77=C, 60-69=D, <60=F

Course Expectations:

- I hope everyone will be actively engaged and contribute to other people’s learning, which you can do by asking lots of questions. Throughout the semester, if you have suggestions about what would make it easier for you to participate or be engaged, please be in touch with me.
- In this class, we’ll discuss some very controversial topics. Most of the time we’re trying to figure out whether someone who acts in a particular way is doing something *morally wrong*. Those kinds of discussions often bring up strong emotions; that kind of reaction is totally appropriate. I expect all of us to do the following two things during discussion: (1) be polite: pay attention when other people are talking, don’t interrupt, and don’t yell. (2) Respond to an *idea*, not a particular person who expresses an idea. For example, say something like “I think it’s wrong to do such-and-such in such-and-such circumstances, and I believe that for the following reason”; don’t say “If *you* would do such-and-such in such-and-such circumstances, then *you’re* a terrible person (for the following reason)”.
- Please do not use phones, laptops, etc. during class. Keep them put away and on silent.
- Academic dishonesty, including cheating and plagiarism, is treated very seriously. Any work you submit must be your own and must comply with the university guidelines on academic honesty: <https://students.wisc.edu/student-conduct/academic-integrity/> . Whenever you have a question about complying with the academic honesty requirements, feel free to talk to me. If you’re in a situation where it’s the night before an assignment is due and you can’t finish, please do not think about plagiarizing. Instead, take a deep breath, go to sleep, send me an email or come talk to me, and take a modest late-penalty rather than running a very large risk.

Readings:

- All readings will be on our canvas site. Please bring hard copies of the readings assigned for the current topic with you to each class. Also, please bring a hard copy of the syllabus with you to each class.

Special Arrangements and Department contact:

- If I can help accommodate a disability or any other issue that might get in the way of learning, please be in touch with me as soon as possible
- If you have a problem or issue regarding the course that you would like to discuss with someone not directly connected to the course, feel free to contact Jesse Steinberg, Assistant to the Chairperson, 5185 Helen C White Hall, jesse.steinberg@wisc.edu.

Class Schedule

This schedule and the readings may change throughout the semester.

<i>Date</i>	<i>Topic</i>	<i>Assignment Due / Readings</i>
T 1/17	Introduction/Ethical Theory	
W 1/18		
R 1/19		
M 1/23	Skill Day 1: Reading	Syllabus quiz
T 1/24	Logic	

W 1/25		Ethical Theory quiz
R 1/26		
M 1/30	Skill Day 2: Studying	<i>Dunlosky, "Strengthening the Student Toolkit" (move to Monday)</i>
T 1/31	Ethical Objectivism	Logic quiz
W 2/1		<i>Shafer-Landau "Ethical Relativism"</i>
R 2/2		<i>Street, "Does Anything Really Matter..."</i> Homework 1 due Thursday 2/2 in class
M 2/6		<i>Chapter from Shafer-Landau, Whatever Happened to Right and Wrong?</i> ² use for homework 2
T 2/7		
W 2/8	Skill Day 3: Writing a Philosophy Paper	
R 2/9	Obligations to the Poor	Homework 2 due Thursday 2/9 in class
M 2/13		<i>Singer, "Rich and Poor"</i> <i>McNeil, "Beyond Swollen Limbs..."</i> <i>Dugger, "Preventable Disease Blinds Poor..."</i> you don't need to bring the McNeil or Dugger reading to class.
T 2/14		<i>Arthur, "World Hunger and Moral Obligation"</i>
W 2/15		
R 2/16		<i>Wolf, "Moral Saints"</i>
M 2/20		
T 2/21		
W 2/22	Abortion	<i>(i) "Fetal Development" from Encyclopedia of Abortion</i> <i>(ii) "Abortion" from Encyclopedia of Bioethics</i> <i>(iii) NCHS abortion fact sheet</i> <i>(iv) Guttmacher Institute fact sheet</i>
R 2/23		<i>Marquis, "Why Abortion Is Immoral"</i> <i>(see instructions on canvas site)</i>
M 2/27		Draft of Short Paper 1 due Monday 2/27 in class
T 2/28		<i>Norcross, "Killing, Abortion, and Contraception"</i>
W 3/1		
R 3/2		<i>(i) Thompson, "A Defense of Abortion"</i>

		<i>(ii) "Pregnant and No Civil Rights" NYT</i>
M 3/6		Short Paper 1 due Monday 3/6 in class
T 3/7		
W 3/8	Obligations to nonhuman Animals	
R 3/9		<i>Varner, section of "Personhood and Biography"</i>
M 3/13		Peer Review of Short Paper 2: see Short Paper 2 assignment
T 3/14		<i>Singer, section of "Equality and Its Implications"</i> Homework 3 due Tuesday 3/14 in class
W 3/16		<i>Singer, "Equality for Animals?"</i>
R 3/16		<i>OPTIONAL: Hare, "Why I Am only a Demi-Vegetarian"</i>
		Short Paper 2 due Friday 3/17
Spring Break	xx	xx
M 3/27		<i>Norcross, "Puppies, Pigs, and People..."</i>
T 3/28		<i>DeGrazia, "Animal Research", from Animal Rights: A Very Short Introduction</i>
W 3/29		<i>Ringach, "The Use of Nonhuman Animals in Biomedical Research"</i>
R 3/30		
M 4/3		<i>(i) Pound, "Where is the Evidence that Animal Research..."</i> <i>(ii) Bass, "Lives in the Balance..."</i>
T 4/4		
W 4/5	Free Will and Moral Responsibility	<i>Rachels and Rachels, "Chapter 8 of Problems from Philosophy"</i>
R 4/6		
M 4/10		<i>Van Inwagen, "Freedom of the Will"</i>
T 4/11		
W 4/12	Criminal Justice	Homework 4 due Wednesday 4/12 in class <i>(i) Cole, Selection from Criminal Justice in America</i> <i>(ii) Ten, Introduction and Utilitarian Theory</i>
R 4/13		

M 4/17		(i) <i>"In Cheshire Murder Case..."</i> (ii) <i>"Komisarjevsky Convicted of Triple..."</i> (iii) <i>Ten, Retributive Theories</i> (iv) <i>Von Hirsch, Censure and Punishment</i>
T 4/18		Short Paper 3 due Tuesday 4/18 in class
W 4/19		(i) <i>Stubblefield, "Prisons Should Not..."</i> (ii) <i>"An Alabama Prison's..."</i> (iii) <i>Carroll and coauthors, "Mass Incarceration"</i>
R 4/20		
M 4/24	Presentations	
T 4/25		
W 4/26		
R 4/27		
M 5/1		
T 5/2		
W 5/3		
R 5/4		
		Short Paper 4 due Friday 5/5
M 5/8		Final Paper due Monday 5/8