

PHIL 2306W.09 Contemporary Moral Issues
Fall, 2017

Location: CHSS 242A

PLTL: Section 1 CHSS 242A; Section 2 CHSS 290 Conference Room (Dean's office)

Day and Time: Tues/Thurs 9:30 am – 10:50 am

Instructor: Dr. Maria Botero

Office: CHSS, room 348

Office Hours: Monday 3-4 pm; Tuesday 3:30-4:30. You do not need an appointment for regular office hours, just drop by. Please consider office hours as part of the class. Your success in this course is important to me. I am happy to work with you if you have any difficulties/questions regarding the class material, studying for the exam, writing an essay or if you just want to discuss the class material, I always enjoy talking about Philosophy! If this time doesn't work we can set up an appointment (please email me three possible meeting times so we can set an appointment that works with our schedules)

Email: mdb037@shsu.edu

Course Description: A study of major moral issues in contemporary society. Includes topics such as abortion, euthanasia, censorship, capital punishment, and other issues that confront today's society.

Class Description: In this class we will explore some of the basic moral theories and apply them to contemporary moral issues such as abortion, euthanasia and animal rights. The course involves formal lectures that will discuss crucial issues from the readings and their relationship with the basic questions explored during the course. It also includes in-class work where you will be required to apply the theories explored in class to contemporary moral issues.

This is a "W" course, which means that more than 80 percent of your course grade will derive from writing activities designed to help you master course objectives. These activities include a test that includes essay-type questions (20 % of your grade), pre-essay writing exercises and essay (40% of your grade), and in-class writing exercises (20% of your grade). Writing in this course is one of the tools used to help you learn course material; in-class exercises will require you to draft and revise your work, with or without instructor feedback.

This class is part of the EWCAT program, as such we will be reading original texts and incorporating Peer-Led Team Learning (PLTL) discussions.

Course Objectives: The main goal of this class is that you **learn** some of the most influential current **moral theories** and learn how to **apply** these moral theories in an attempt to answer moral questions that are important in today's society. As a result, at the end of this class, you will achieve critical thinking abilities that will help you analyze, understand and justify your position towards a moral issue as well as an understanding of other perspectives. This also means that at the end of this class you will be familiar with the literature on the major theories and contemporary debates on moral issues. In short, this class will give you the necessary tools to be able to understand and analyze future ethical dilemmas you may encounter as a citizen, in your profession and personal life.

Required Textbook: Vaughn, L. (2013) *Contemporary Moral Arguments. Readings in Ethical Issues*. Second Edition, Oxford University Press.

We will use this textbook throughout the class; the required readings are central to the course. You are expected to do all of the assigned readings and to come to class prepared to discuss them and use them in your in-class assignments. Sometimes I will ask questions in class about the readings that may be used as extra credit.

Attendance Policy: Attendance is mandatory. In accordance with University regulations attendance will be taken every class. If you miss more than three classes I will deduct one point from your final grade for each day. For example, four absences mean that 1 point will be deducted from your final grade. If you earned a 70 (C) based on your work, your final grade will be 69 (D) because of your absences. Plan ahead, save these excused absences for real emergencies, school trips, sick days, car trouble etc.

Grading Plan

Test (including essay-type questions): 20%

Essay: 40%

Final Exam: 20%

Exploratory Writing Exercises and PLTL (average): 20%

I recognize that there are multiple ways to learn and that this multiplicity should be acknowledged in the structure of university courses and the evaluation of their participants. For that reason we will use different formats of evaluation throughout the class.

Description:

- **Exam:** The first exam will be a combination of multiple choice and essay-type questions. This is perhaps one of the hardest assignments in the class, make sure you attend class, do the readings and take notes to prepare for this assignment. You will be required to provide explanations of the **theories learned** in class in detail and **apply** them to real-life cases.
- **Essay:** In this essay you will critically analyze one of the arguments covered in class. This is not just an opinion paper, you need to use the theories examined in class and presented on your readings. Failure to use these theories will result in a non-passing grade (be smart, use the grading keys provided in the instructions). You will need to submit a hard copy in class and an electronic copy through *Turnitin*. We will work on several assignments to prepare for this essay, you are required to hand-in with your essay all of the preparatory exercises as part of the grade for the essay. These pre-essay exercises are designed to help you critically analyze the question and arguments discussed in your essay.
- **Exploratory Writing Exercises:** These are short individual or group writing exercises. The instructions for each individual exercise will be given in-class. On the appointed date you are required to submit all of the writing exercises done until that point. You are also required to complete the log and staple this log to your folder (a submission schedule, grading rubric and log blank form will be posted on Bb). There are no make-ups for these exercises, if you miss a class you need to make sure that by submission day you have completed the missed exercise. It is **your responsibility** to ask your classmates or your professor when you miss class so by the submission date you will have all of the exercises in your folder. You cannot

hand in all the informal writing exercises at the end of class without submitting them throughout the semester.

These exercises are designed to assist you in critical reflection of the course material and prepare you for your test and essay. You should approach writing in this course as a tool to use as part of your learning

- **PLTL Sessions** Every two weeks you will have a PLTL session where you are required to prepare a set of question based on your readings. A tutorial leader will record your attendance and your answers. I will provide a grade based on these records. I will only excuse one absence (if written documentation is provided) otherwise if you do not attend a PLTL you will be granted a zero.
- **Final Exam:** The final exam will be comprehensive.
- **Illness on the day of the exam:** If the student has a very good reason and supporting documentation (i.e. doctor's note, death in the family), s/he can apply to the course director for a makeup within 2 business days of the missed exam or the due date for essay submission.

Grading Scale: A 90-100, B 80-89, C 70-79, D 60-69, F below 60. I will only roundup final grades to a higher number if its decimal is a .6 or higher. For example, an 89.6 will be rounded up a 90 but an 89.5 will remain as an 89. There are no exceptions.

Laptop Policy: No laptops are allowed in class. If you feel that this restriction limits your ability to learn please talk to me.

Standard Policies: Students should consult the standard policies in the following link <http://www.shsu.edu/syllabus/> Please consult this webpage for a complete description.

The following is a brief description of some of the main points of the standard policies plus some additions pertinent to this class: (1) NOTICE TO PERSONS WITH A DISABILITY: Every student is entitled to a meaningful and stimulating learning experience. Disabled students are strongly encouraged to avail themselves of the services provided by the *Office of Services for Students with Disabilities in the SHSU Lee Drain Annex (telephone 936-294-3512, TDD 936-294-3786). Please contact this office to request accommodations.* Keep in mind that no accommodation can be made until you register with this office and that there will be no retroactive accommodations. However, if your paperwork/diagnosis is in progress please talk to me (2) ACADEMIC DISHONESTY: Any student found guilty of dishonesty in any phase of academic work will be subject to disciplinary action. If your paper is the product of plagiarism it will automatically get a zero. If you have no idea how to start/develop your paper please come to see me during office hours, plagiarizing is not worth the risk! The same policy applies to your exam, if you are using any non-authorized material in your exam such as cellphone, notebooks, textbooks or looking at a classmate's paper, you will immediately will be granted a zero in the exam (3) CLASSROOM RULES OF CONDUCT: Students are expected to assist in maintaining a classroom environment that is conducive to learning because of the topics discussed in this class it is crucial that we maintain a respectful environment.

Cell Phone Policy: Cell phones and other electronic devices are a part of everyday life. In the academic classroom, however, during class these devices can be a serious distraction for yourself

and other classmates and during tests they can be a serious problem. The use by students of these devices is prohibited unless specifically permitted by the instructor, especially during tests. All such devices should be turned off or put in a silent or vibrate mode and should not be visible during class. At no time should students answer a call.

Any use of a cell phone or electronic device during a test period is prohibited. These devices should not be present during a test or should be stored securely in such a way that they cannot be seen or used by the student. Even the visible presence of such a device during the test period will result in a zero for that test. Use of these devices during a test is considered de facto evidence of cheating and could result in a charge of academic dishonesty (see student code of conduct <http://www.shsu.edu/syllabus/>).

If there is an emergency situation for a student, that student should inform the instructor and place himself/herself in a seat near the door where an exit for a phone call would be only minimally disruptive. Other arrangements for handling potential emergency situations may be granted at the discretion of the instructor.

Tentative Reading Schedule

All of the readings are from the textbook unless it is indicated otherwise. Please keep in mind that this is not a final reading schedule; changes may be incorporated during the semester. My priority is that students understand the material so, if necessary, I will make changes to the schedule if the material is not clear or if there is not enough time to finish an assignment. The order of the readings will remain the same; however, dates may change. That means that, if the dates are not correct, you should read the reading listed after the last one discussed in class. Check with your classmates or the instructor if you miss class for any possible changes.

August 24	Welcome and introduction to Ethics and Morality
August 29	In-class exercise
August 31	Harvey!
September 5	1. What is Morality? Characteristics of Morality: Ethics and the Moral Domain p. 1-6
September 7	First PLTL: Are we moral by Nature? The Ring of Gyges p.27-30
September 12	1. One Big Objection to Morality! James Rachels: Can Ethics Provide Answers p.44-60 In-class Exercise
September 14	2. Second PLTL First Ethical Theory: Utilitarianism • John Stuart Mill: Utilitarianism p.81-84
September 19	Last remaining issues on Utilitarianism
September 21	Test
September 26	3. Application to the Issue of Euthanasia and Assisted Suicide • James Rachels: Active and Passive Euthanasia p.289

September 28	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dan Brock: Voluntary Active Euthanasia p.303
October 3	Daniel Callahan: When Self-determination Runs Amok p.278 In-class Exercise
October 5	<u>Third PLTL</u>: Second Ethical Theory: Deontology <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Immanuel Kant: Fundamental Principles of the Metaphysic of Morals p.85-93
October 10	Last remaining issues on Deontology
October 12	1. Application of Utilitarianism and Deontology to Animal Ethics Peter Singer: All Animals are Equal p.578-587 In-class exercise First Folder Submission
October 17	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Carl Cohen: The Case for the Use of Animals in Biomedical Research p.588-594
October 19	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pre-Essay Exercises 1 & 2: Bring Two Possible Cases for Analysis and Three Questions per case. Peer review and create outline in class
October 24	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pre-Essay Exercise 3: Bring draft, peer review
October 26	<u>Fourth PLTL</u>: Second Ethical Theory: Justice John Rawls: A Theory of Justice, p.102-107
October 31	Application of Deontology, Utilitarianism, and Theories of Justice to Abortion Don Marquis: Why Abortion is Immoral p.148-154 Mary Anne Warren: On the Moral and Legal Status of Abortion p. 126-129
November 2	Essay Due Judith Jarvis Thomson: A defense of Abortion p.183-192
November 7	In-Class Exercise
November 9	Deontology, Utilitarianism, Theories of Justice and the Application to the Issue of Death Penalty
November 10	Last day to drop a course with a "Q"
November 14	Immanuel Kant: The Right of Punishing p.354-355 Igor Primoratz: A Life for a Life p.356-361
November 16	<u>Fifth PLTL</u>: Stephen Nathanson: An Eye for an Eye? P. 362-366
November 21	Last remaining issues on Death Penalty
November 23	No class-Thanksgiving Holiday

November 28	Third Ethical Theory: Virtue Ethics <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aristotle: Nichomachean Ethics p.94-101 • In-class exercise
November 30	Last day of class-review for the final exam
December 7 9:30-11:30	Final Exam