

Syllabus
Philosophy and Political Science 27: Ethics and Society

Spring Quarter 2009
M/W 12-12:50
Instructor: Erick Ramirez

E-mail: ejramire@ucsd.edu
Office Hours: M- 2-4pm
Office: HSS 8089

Teaching Assistants:

Matt Brown
HSS 7017

Nanhee Byrnes

Lisa Paschall

Mike Binder

Course Description:

In this course we're going to look at three ongoing and important social issues using a very specific method. That method is philosophical analysis. We will focus on the central arguments that have come to define these issues and will examine what the justifications in each argument and why they've come to be important. In particular we will focus on looking at arguments dealing with abortion, animal rights, and end of life issues.

Students are expected to engage in moral deliberation about these topics. This means being able to claim a position in each debate but, more importantly, to have a sense of the moral principles that justify your view. Moral issues are a messy business and it's important that we keep track of why it is that we believe or accept some moral principles and not others and whether our moral commitments in one issue (for example abortion) have implications for how we ought to think about other issues (animals rights). This is not easy. Students are expected to respect the fact that intelligent people can disagree on what the right thing to do really is when we're faced with moral dilemmas.

A central feature of moral deliberation is reflective equilibrium. This means being open to see where our moral principles might conflict with our intuition the right thing to do. It means dealing with these conflicts sometimes changing our moral principles to resolve as many conflicts as possible. This means that we can't look at each issue in isolation. The moral principles we use to decide who deserves moral rights have an impact on whether fetuses, children, and animals have moral status. Reflective equilibrium is an ongoing process and it's not easy.

Requirements

Students MUST complete all assignments in order to receive a passing grade in the course (even if you're taking it P/NP).

Section Attendance and Participation	10%
Weekly Reading Quizzes	5%
Very Short Paper (2 pgs)	5%
Short Paper (6 pgs)	30%
Final Paper (8 pgs)	50%

Late Assignments

Late assignments will not be accepted without prior notification to and an okay from both me and your TA. This means giving us more than 24 hours notice that you will not be able to turn in a paper on time.

You must have a significant reason for turning a paper in late. You will be given each assignment far in advance of its due date so be prepared to explain why you couldn't complete an assignment within the allotted time frame. If a paper will be turned in late it is subject to a penalty (out of fairness to students that do turn their papers in on time) unless evidence of significant illness or other hardship is evident. Please come see me if you have any questions or concerns regarding the policy over late papers.

Plagiarism

Plagiarism will not be tolerated. I am requiring that all students submit their assignments to turnitin in order to minimize the temptation to plagiarize. Papers not submitted to turnitin will not be graded. In order to register on turnitin please use the following information:

class ID: 2638867

Password: phil27s09

You will need to create an account in order to be able to submit assignments. Feel free to ask me or your TA for help with this. If you aren't familiar with the policy on plagiarism please take a few minutes to read what UCSD has to say about it:

<http://www-senate.ucsd.edu/manual/appendices/app2.htm>

Course Materials

All of the readings for this course are available online and free of charge from the library e-reserves website:

reserves.ucsd.edu

My name is listed under the Philosophy department. Please make sure to download and read materials before they're discussed in lecture. Reading quizzes, given in your discussion sections, are meant as an enticement to keep up with the reading. The quarter goes by so quickly that it is almost impossible to catch up if you fall behind.

Office Hours

I will hold two office hours every week (listed at the top of the syllabus) and am available by appointment also. Please don't hesitate to ask for other meeting times if you can't make my office hours. I will bend over backwards to make sure that we can meet at a time that is convenient for both of us.

Your TAs will also be holding office hours every week. Take advantage of this opportunity. We won't bite, promise. Spending time in office hours is a great way to get your questions answered.

Tentative Reading Schedule

Week 1

Philosophical Method and the role of reasons in Ethics

Readings:

Pence, Gregory E. Chapter 1 Moral Reasoning and Ethical Theories in Medical Ethics. *Classic Cases in Medical Ethics*.

Brink, David. "The Autonomy of Ethics" in The Cambridge Companion to Atheism.

Week 2

Three Ethical Theories

Readings:

J.S. Mill. Utilitarianism (Chapter 2)

Kant, Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals, (First Section)

Rousseau. On the Social Contract (Book 1)

Weeks 3 - 5

Abortion

Readings:

English. "Abortion and the Concept of a Person."

Feinberg. "Potentiality, Development, and Rights."

Marquis. "An Argument That Abortion is Wrong."

Noonan. "An Almost Absolute Value in History."

Thompson. "A Defense of Abortion"

Harris. "Fathers and Fetuses"

Due: Very Short Paper (2 pages) week 3

Week 6 + 7

Animals and Us

Readings:

Singer. "All Animals Are Equal."

Kant. "We Have Only Indirect Duties to Animals"

Regan. "The Case for Animal Rights"

Cohen. "Do Animals Have Rights?"

Midgley. "Persons and Non-Persons"

McCloskey. "Rights."

Weeks 8-10

End of Life Issues

Readings:

Rachels. "Active and Passive Euthanasia"

Foot. "Euthanasia"

Brock. "Voluntary Active Euthanasia"

Finnis. "A philosophical Case Against Euthanasia"

Hardwig. "Is There A Duty to Die?"

Callahan. "Our Burden Upon Others: A Response to John Hardwig"

Cohn and Lynn. "A Duty to Care."

Churchill. "Seeking a Responsible Death"

Due: Medium Paper (6 pages) week 8

Finals week:

Due: Final Paper (8 pages) week 11