

PHI 115.301 ETHICS AND CONTEMPORARY ISSUES

Fall 2009

PROF. J. MARTIRE

SYLLABUS OVERVIEW

Office: Strong Hall 227

Phone: 836-5732

Office Hours: W 1-3; TTh 11:15-12:30

Text: SOCIAL ETHICS: MORALITY AND SOCIAL POLICY (7th edition)

(Eds.) Thomas Mappes and Jane Zembaty

I. Introductory Lectures, Discussions, Class Assignments, Quizzes: (*weeks 1-3*)

assignments, worksheets & readings

The Declaration of Independence

U.S. Constitution selections: Preamble, Article 6, Amendments

U.N. Universal Declaration on Human Rights

MLK: "I Have a Dream"

access documents through course Blackboard (Bb) website: *see External Links*

II. Examinations of Foundational Ethical Issues:

readings: mostly from Mappes & Zembaty, SOCIAL ETHICS (7th Edition)

Ch. 1: ABORTION (*weeks 4-6*)

Prepare critical abstracts on readings from: John Paul II, Warren, Marquis, Thomson, Roe

Quizzes and Examination on topic of ABORTION

Ch. 3: THE DEATH PENALTY (*weeks 7-9*)

Prepare critical abstracts on: Primoratz, Nathanson, Pojman, Reiman, Dolinko, Gregg (majority opinion and dissent)

Quizzes and Examination on topic of THE DEATH PENALTY

Ch. 2: EUTHANASIA and SUICIDE (*weeks 10-11*)

III. Examinations of Additional Ethical Issues: (*weeks 12-16* as time and interests dictate)

Ch. 4-5: Issues of SEX, MARRIAGE, PORNOGRAPHY, HATE SPEECH AND CENSORSHIP

Ch. 8: SOCIAL & ECONOMIC JUSTICE

Ch. 9: WORLD HUNGER AND POVERTY

Ch. 10-11: ANIMALS & THE ENVIRONMENT

Ch. 7: TERRORISM etc...

Ch. 6: DRUG CONTROL etc.

IV. Term Papers:

See detailed instructions in syllabus on Blackboard.

Term Paper prospectus due:Tuesday, October 13, 2009

Term Paper due:Tuesday, November 17, 2009

V. Final Examination: see MSU Class Schedule: **Wednesday, December 16, 2009: 8-10 p.m.**

VI. MAJOR COMPONENTS OF COURSE GRADE:

Quizzes and short assignments.....15%

two essay examinations @ 20% each40%

term papers: choice of topics from chapters 4, 5, 7, 8 only25%

see detailed instructions in syllabus on Bb

final examination: essay questions20%

***** SEE FULL SYLLABUS FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

AND FOR DETAILS OF COURSE REQUIREMENTS *****

General Aims of the Course as an Introduction to Philosophy

1. This is an introductory course and requires no prior knowledge of philosophical topics or methods. It concerns topics of "Ethics" in relation to matters of law and social policy. **Its analyses seek universal ethical principles pertinent to the conduct of public affairs in a democratic and egalitarian setting (one in which all individuals are presumed equal under law)**, rather than reliance upon the private and factionalizing features of personal moral beliefs or parochial moral traditions.
2. The orientation of the course will be mainly analytical rather than historical, but there will also be a strong constructive theme throughout the course: we will try to clarify the controversial issues discussed and then critically evaluate the foundational arguments supporting the competing ethical positions reviewed.
3. Introductory lectures, discussions, and distributed materials will introduce the general intellectual standards, the analytical strategies, and the critical methods needed to determine the philosophical worth (or defensibility) of argued positions offered in the textual readings and in discussions and student writings.
4. We will examine a wide range of ethical viewpoints from the readings of our main text (Mappes & Zembaty: SOCIAL ETHICS 7th edition); after analyzing the intellectual strengths and weaknesses involved, students will design, recommend, and defend their own favored resolutions to the controversial issues addressed. **Student work will be evaluated by the same intellectual standards used in classes to assess the argued positions offered in the readings.**
5. The readings for the course should widen the student's acquaintance with competing normative ideals and viewpoints; more importantly, **these readings should provide opportunities to develop critical philosophical standards** for our reasoning concerning a particularly troublesome range of problems of ethics in relation to law and social policy. **We can certainly avoid thinking rigorously and carefully about such problems, but we cannot avoid behaving in their context;** in this sense, these problems are politically, if not psychologically, unavoidable.
6. **We seek improvements upon the clarity, rigor, and sophistication of our ways of thinking about problems of ethics in relation to matters of law and social policy.** Advances in these areas will require critical re-examination of our foundational intellectual, experiential, and cultural resources -- from the sciences, from our cultural heritage, from religious and political beliefs, and from personal experiences. **Ideals and norms derived from these diverse resources variously affect and guide our behaviors, our social policies, and our institutions, but not all are philosophically defensible.**

Background General Education Program Goals

Ethics, understood as a form of disciplined and reflective study within philosophy, attempts to achieve detailed, systematic and critical understanding of the aims, nature and character of morality. In this course we will examine and critically evaluate various politically controversial moral issues in light of important and influential moral principles and theories; these latter provide conceptual categories and frameworks as well as normative standards in terms of which judgments concerning moral issues can be assessed, defended and criticized. Abortion, euthanasia and the death penalty will be treated as core issues for this course.

This course serves not only as a form of introduction to the academic discipline of Philosophy, but also as a General Education Course; in that latter role, the course serves several specific goals of the general education program: For a full statement of the General Education Program at Missouri State University, consult the university website.

1. "... to enrich the student's understanding of basic concepts, principles and theories used to resolve moral issues."
2. "... to help students develop skills in critical analysis and evaluation of ethical principles and theories."
3. "... to enable students to improve in the ability to distinguish moral issues from other types of conflict that arise from diverse cultural traditions."
4. "... to teach students how to use principles and theories to develop publicly defensible resolutions to moral issues."
5. "... to enhance students' abilities to understand the impact of ethical decisions on governmental regulations, legal requirements, political processes and economic activities."

While the structure, readings and assignments of course are designed to serve these goals, their degree of attainment will reflect the diligence of attention and effort by students.

OFFICE: Strong Hall Room 227

Phone: 836-5732

OFFICE HOURS: Wednesday: 1:00 - 3:00 pm

Tuesday and Thursday: 11:15 p.m. – 12:30 p.m.
additionally by appointment.

Course Description and Objectives:

Ethics is the branch of philosophy that attempts to achieve a systematic understanding of the nature of morality. In this course we will examine and critically evaluate various moral issues in light of fundamental theories of morality and basic moral principles. The theories will provide different frameworks within which we can judge particular moral issues. By the end of the course you should be able to:

- a) explain basic concepts, principles, and theories used to resolve moral issues
- b) critically analyze and evaluate ethical principles and theories
- c) distinguish moral issues from other types of conflict that arise from diverse cultural traditions
- d) use principles and theories to develop publicly defensible resolutions to moral issues
- e) recognize the impact of ethical decisions upon governmental regulations, legal requirements, political processes, and economic activities.

This course is part of the general education program and satisfies the humanities perspective of the "Culture and Society" area of the general education requirement. For more information about the General Education Program, see <http://www.missouristate.edu/GeneralEducation/Goals%20GenEd.htm>

It is your responsibility to understand the University's procedure for dropping a class. If you stop attending this class but do not follow proper procedure for dropping the class, you will receive a failing grade and will also be financially obligated to pay for the class. For information about dropping a class or withdrawing from the university, contact the Office of the Registrar at 836-5520.

Emergency Response Statement: Students who require assistance during an emergency evacuation must discuss their needs with their professors and Disability Services. If you have emergency medical information to share with me, or if you need special arrangements in case the building must be evacuated, please make an appointment with me as soon as possible.

For additional information students should contact the Office of Disability Services, 836-4192 (PSU 405), or Larry Combs, Interim Assistant Director of Public Safety and Transportation at 836-6576.

For further information on Missouri State University's Emergency Response Plan, please refer to the following web site: <http://www.missouristate.edu/safetran/erp.htm>

Term Papers: Thesis Defense Project

Please keep in mind that **term papers should be designed as philosophical contributions to the issues and problems discussed**; they are **not** to be simply "book reports", or mere surveys of what has already appeared in the literature of the discipline. In a sense, your task, in each case, is to **compose a philosophical article** comparable to those reviewed in class. It is important therefore (i) that you **make clear what issues and problems you are addressing**, (ii) that you **offer and examine critically specific theses which purport to resolve the issues** or problems addressed, (iii) that you **avoid mere opinion or dogmatic insistence**, (iv) that you **submit your argued analyses and theses to the competition of alternative views**, noting the relations between your posited views and the indicated objections and opposing analyses provided in the literature, and (v) that you attempt to **show the relative superiority of your own views** or at least the adequacy with which they can be defended against known objections and attacks.

By "confronting" the oppositional literature in an honest and forthright manner, you will have gained special opportunity to refine and buttress your argument against obvious forms of intellectual vulnerability and opposition, and you will have added "depth" to your paper by providing a dimension beyond mere recitation of a constructed or favored view. Importantly, you will have contributed to and advanced the human conversation which inquires into the matter addressed.

Check List:

- * give a clear statement of the issue(s) to be addressed
- * provide explanation of the importance/relevance of such issues
- * present an argued position, i.e. a rational defense for conclusions drawn, not mere insistence or opinion
- * "situate" your position by confronting it with oppositional views from the existing/shared literature
- * show how you can meet or surpass the criticisms (directly offered or implied) of others
- * acknowledge what vulnerabilities or concerns remain

As a required feature of the term paper assignment, you must submit a one-page term paper prospectus and meet course deadlines as follows:

prospectus due: Tuesday, October 13, 2009

term paper due: Tuesday, November 17, 2009

Prospectus for Term Papers: Thesis Defense Projects

The term paper(s) must satisfy the following formal requirements: title page, annotated outline page (updated prospectus), **at least 5 pages of relevant text**, typed, double-spaced, plus supportive scholarly references and adherence to customary scholarly formats and standards. Further, each paper must address and satisfy the following design format:

- i. Design a social policy as a form of law to resolve the ethical issues and political controversies addressed.**
- ii. Argue to defend your recommended policy, basing such on foundational ethical and legal principles and other objectively defensible considerations for governing free and equal persons under recognized democratic ideals and processes.**
- iii. Argue the superiority of your intellectual posture in relation to the positions and criticisms offered or implied within the textual readings on the issue addressed.**

PHI 115: Outline for the term paper prospectus: (annotated outline)

- 1. identify general topic:-----**
identify specific issue(s) to be addressed: -----
What moral/political controversies are you trying to resolve?
- 2. define carefully your specific thesis: -----**
What rights/liberties should be protected by law here?
What regulations and restraints on behaviors should be imposed by law?
What should be made law to resolve the issues at stake?
- 3. sketch the design of your thesis defense argument:-----**
Identify foundational ethical/legal principles involved.
Examine the constitutionality of all features of your proposal(s).
- 4. identify major oppositional considerations: -----**
Identify their principled bases (i.e., define clearly what general moral and political principles support your view).

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Statement of nondiscrimination: Missouri State University is an equal opportunity/affirmative action institution, and maintains a grievance procedure available to any person who believes he or she has been discriminated against. At all times, it is your right to address inquiries or concerns about possible discrimination to the Office for Equity and Diversity, Park Central Office Building, 117 Park Central Square, Suite 111, (417) 836-4252. Other types of concerns (i.e., concerns of an academic nature) should be discussed directly with your instructor and can also be brought to the attention of your instructor's Department Head. Please visit the OED website at www.missouristate.edu/equity/.

Statement on disability accommodation: To request academic accommodations for a disability, contact the Director of Disability Services, Plaster Student Union, Suite 405, (417) 836-4192 or (417) 836-6792 (TTY), www.missouristate.edu/disability. Students are required to provide documentation of disability to Disability Services prior to receiving accommodations. Disability Services refers some types of accommodation requests to the Learning Diagnostic Clinic, which also provides diagnostic testing for learning and psychological disabilities. For information about testing, contact the Director of the Learning Diagnostic Clinic, (417) 836-4787, <http://psychology.missouristate.edu/ldc>.

Statement on academic dishonesty: Missouri State University is a community of scholars committed to developing educated persons who accept the responsibility to practice personal and academic integrity. You are responsible for knowing and following the university's student honor code, *Student Academic Integrity Policies and Procedures*, available at www.missouristate.edu/assets/provost/AcademicIntegrityPolicyRev-1-08.pdf and also available at the Reserves Desk in Meyer Library. Any student participating in any form of academic dishonesty will be subject to sanctions as described in this policy.

Attendance policy: This is not a correspondence course! Regular attendance at all scheduled class meetings is normally expected, but medical or other emergencies or other valid reasons may occasionally justify class absence. However, since the course is not merely a review of textbook materials and involves significant lecture and discussion materials as well, after two unexcused absences course grades will be penalized 1% (1 point on a 100 point scale) per unexcused class hour absence.

Cell phone policy: As a member of the learning community, each student has a responsibility to other students who are members of the community. When cell phones or pagers ring and students respond in class or leave class to respond, it disrupts the class. Therefore, the Office of the Provost prohibits the use by students of cell phones, pagers, PDAs, or similar communication devices during scheduled classes. All such devices must be turned off or put in a silent (vibrate) mode and ordinarily should not be taken out during class. Given the fact that these same communication devices are an integral part of the University's emergency notification system, an exception to this policy would occur when numerous devices activate simultaneously. When this occurs, students may consult their devices to determine if a university emergency exists. If that is not the case, the devices should be immediately returned to silent mode and put away. Other exceptions to this policy may be granted at the discretion of the instructor.