

Department of Philosophy
University of Guelph
Winter 2013

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PHIL1010 DE Introductory Philosophy: Social and Political Issues

This first-year course introduces students to the basic concepts in political, social and ethical theory through their application to contemporary issues. The course material overlaps with issues in sociology, environmental science, national security, gender studies, health care, international development, business and law. The course will instruct students on how to evaluate the moral dimensions of frequently debated political issues in today's public sphere. The history of moral theory offers a wealth of resources that can be drawn upon in evaluating controversial issues. Most students have views on these issues without recognizing that their views carry theoretical underpinnings. Our task will be to theoretically analyze some of the most common arguments in a sampling of political debates. Students will learn how to apply enduring concepts in moral and political theory, and they will learn how to think critically about some of the common assumptions that we find in today's debates. As a 1000-level course, it is a basic introduction to philosophical concepts in with a broad range of applicability, not only in other disciplines, but in the student's life outside the university as an educated citizen. Basic ethical and political concepts covered will include autonomy, paternalism, wealth redistribution, deontology, consequentialism, intrinsic value, discrimination, power, entitlement, rights, equality, and liberty.

Required Text:

Timmons, Mark (Editor). *Disputed Moral Issues: A Reader*, 2nd Edition, Oxford, UK

Course Requirements: Students will be assessed on the basis of two Analysis papers (5-6 pages each), 6 Discussions, and a Take-Home Final Examination.

Distribution:

1st Analysis (5-6 pages): 25%

2nd Analysis (5-6 pages): 25%

Discussions: 20%

Take-Home Final Examination: 30%

Guidelines for submitting written work: The essays must be must be uploaded to the course website dropbox by the deadline, and may *not* be via e-mail or by fax. Feedback will be returned to the students from the professor with the website assignment feedback tool in the virtual dropbox.

Course Schedule

Required Readings are Listed Below

WEEK 1 Basic Theoretical Concepts

January 7-13: Reading: "Consequentialism," pp. 6-11; "Kantian Moral Theory," pp. 15-20; "The Moral Law," pp. 47-54; "Rights Based Moral Theory," pp. pp. 20-25; "Virtue Ethics," pp. 25-6; Locke, "Natural Rights," pp. 55-58

Activity: Self-Test
Discussion

WEEK 2: Individual Liberty and its Limits: Abortion

January 14-20: Reading: Don Marquis, "Why Abortion is Immoral," pp. 400-404; Warren, "On the Moral and Legal Status of Abortion," pp. 384-390; Thompson, A Defense of Abortion," pp. 391-399

Activity: Self-Test
Activity: research country where abortion is illegal, and consider why, given the difference in political systems, it is legal here and illegal there

WEEK 3: Individual Liberty and its Limits: Euthanasia

January 21-27: Reading: Rachels, "Active and Passive Euthanasia," pp. 303-306; Brock, "Voluntary Active Euthanasia," pp. 313-316; Steinbock, "The Intentional Termination of Life," pp. 307-12

Activity: Self-Test
Discussion

WEEK 4: Individual Liberty and its Limits: Cloning

January 28-February 3: Robertson, "Liberty, Identity, and Human Cloning," pp. 430-436; Kass, "Preventing Brave New World," pp. 437-445; Habermas, Juergen. "An Argument Against Human Cloning: Three Replies." pp. 163-67 [PDF Download from D2L site]

Activity: Self-Test
Activity: Research on the web to find out the reason why cloning, despite its great promise, is not being aggressively pursued by medical researchers
Activity: You Tube video on Dolly the sheep

WEEK 5: Social Issues: Sexism and Racism

February 4-10: Frye, "Sexism," pp. 236-241; Garcia, "Racism as a Model for Understanding Sexism," pp. 242-251; Sumner, "Hate Propaganda and Charter Rights," pp. 478-491 (PDF download from course website)

Activity: Self-Test

Activity: Assignment/Essay #1 Due (at end of this week: midnight June 17)

Activity: Discussion

WEEK 6: Social Issues: Sexual Morality and Marriage

February 11-17: Readings: Mappes, "A Liberal View of Sexual Morality and the Concept of Using Another Person," pp. 90-101; Gallagher, "Normal Marriage: Two Views," pp. 107-115; Wolfson, "Enough Marriage to Share," pp. 115-120

Activity: Self-Test

Reading Week February 18-24

WEEK 7: Social Issues: Gambling & Addiction

February 25-March 3: Readings: "Is Gambling Immoral? A Virtue Ethics Approach," pp. 211-20; Goodin, "Permissible Paternalism," pp. 198-204; Boaz, "Drug-Free America or Free America," pp. 182-88; Newton, "Why is Gambling Wrong?" [Recommended, not required, PDF download from D2L site]

Activity: Self-Test

Activity: You Tube video on possible correlation between marijuana use and risk of psychosis.

Activity: Discussion

WEEK 8: International Political Issues: War & Terrorism

March 4-10: Shue, "Torture," pp. 540-548; Dershowitz, "Should the Ticking Time Bomb Terrorist Be Tortured?" pp. 549-559

Activity: Self-Test

Activity: Assignment #2 Due (at end of this week: midnight July 8)

WEEK 9: International Political Issues: Wealth Distribution

March 11-17: Sen, "Property and Hunger," pp. 549-559; O'Neill, "A Kantian Approach to World Hunger," pp. 600-605

Activity: Self-Test

Activity: Discussion

WEEK10: Politics of the Environment: Environment & Global Warming

March 18-24: Readings: Hill, "Ideals of Human Excellence and Preserving the Natural Environment," pp. 624-631; Sinnott-Armstrong, "It's Not My Fault: Global Warming and Individual Moral Obligations," pp. 642-658; Lomborg, "Let's Not Lose Our Cool About Global Warming," pp. 658-664

Activity: Self-Test

Activity: You Tube video on Al Gore on Global Warming

WEEK 11: Politics of the Environment: Animal Rights

March 25-31: Readings: Matheney, "Utilitarianism and Animals," pp. 333-342; Cohen, "Do Animals Have Rights," pp. 348-356

Activity: Self-Test

Activity: You Tube video on factory farming

Activity: Discussion

WEEK 12: Consolidation: Review and Preparation for Take-Home Exam

April 1-April 8

Description of Take-Home Exam: Designed to test your memory of the readings and your ability to search and find information in the readings and on the website, the exam will consist of short answer and objective questions (like those on the self-tests). You will have two weeks to write the exam.

The Final Exam *will be posted by July 30 and must be completed by August 12 (must be uploaded to the site by Sunday night August 12, 2012).*

E-mail Communication

As per University regulations, all students are required to check their **uoguelph.ca** e-mail account regularly: e-mail is the official route of communication between the university and its students.

When You Cannot Meet a Course Requirement

When you find yourself unable to meet an in-course requirement because of illness or compassionate reasons, please advise the course instructor (or designated person, such as a teaching assistant) in writing, with your name, ID#, and e-mail contact. See the Undergraduate Calendar for information on regulations and procedures for Academic Consideration:

<http://www.uoguelph.ca/registrar/calendars/undergraduate/current/c08/c08-ac.shtml>

Drop Date

The last date to drop one-semester **Summer 2012** courses, without academic penalty, is **Friday, July 6th**.

For regulations and procedures for Dropping Courses, see the Undergraduate Calendar:

<http://www.uoguelph.ca/registrar/calendars/undergraduate/current/c08/c08-drop.shtml>

Copies of out-of-class assignments

Keep paper and/or other reliable back-up copies of all out-of-class assignments: you may be asked to resubmit work at any time.

Student Rights and Responsibilities

Each student at the University of Guelph has rights which carry commensurate responsibilities which, broadly, being a civil and respectful member of the University community. The Rights and Responsibilities are detailed in the Undergraduate Calendar:

<http://www.uoguelph.ca/registrar/calendars/undergraduate/current/c14/c14-strightsrespon.shtml>

Academic Misconduct

The University of Guelph is committed to upholding the highest standards of academic integrity and enjoins all members of the University community – faculty, staff, and students – to be aware of what constitutes academic misconduct and to do as much as possible to prevent academic offences from occurring. The Academic Misconduct Policy is detailed in the Undergraduate Calendar:

<http://www.uoguelph.ca/registrar/calendars/undergraduate/current/c08/c08-amisconduct.shtml>

Recording of Materials

Presentations which are made in relation to course work—including lectures—cannot be recorded in any electronic media without the permission of the presenter, whether the instructor, a classmate or guest lecturer.

Resources

The Undergraduate Calendar is the source of information about the University of Guelph's procedures, policies and regulations which apply to undergraduate programs. It can be found at:
<http://www.uoguelph.ca/registrar/calendars/undergraduate/current/>

If you find yourself in difficulty, contact the undergraduate advisor in your program, or the BA Counseling Office: <http://www.uoguelph.ca/baco/contact.shtml>