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## PHL 312 Contemporary Moral Problems

T/TH 3:05-4:20 Bldg: Wilson Rm: 1132  
Dr. Jeffrey Stephenson ([jeffrey.stephenson@montana.edu](mailto:jeffrey.stephenson@montana.edu); xXXXX)  
Office and hours: Wilson 2-149, T/TH 1100-1200 by appointment

Required books: *Today's Moral Issues: Classic and Contemporary Perspectives* by Bonevac edit.

### General course description

This is an upper division course in contemporary moral philosophy and problems. The readings will be a mix of theoretical and practical application, through a consideration of classical and contemporary philosophers and other source materials to be provided to students during the semester. Most of the readings will be in the western analytic tradition, but there will be some consideration of continentalist and non-Western theorists as well. There will be some small group activities during the course of the semester. At the conclusion of this course, you should have an understanding of the philosophical treatments of several contemporary, complex problems, including euthanasia, the use of torture, environmental ethics, and what your thoughts on these problems are. You should also develop during the semester an increased ability to read and think critically.

A primary goal of any philosophy course typically is to assist students in cultivating the analytic skills to interpret and critically to evaluate the views and theories expressed by philosophers, and this course is no exception. Toward this end, students will be provided the opportunity to develop and hone their analytic abilities during weekly class discussions, written work and examinations. Students are also encouraged in this type of course to develop their own positions in a fairly sophisticated way. This entails the exchange of ideas, which can become unpleasant exchanges if the discussion gets away from the following assumed foundation: Students, by definition, are not experts. We are here to consider the ideas of people who have thought long and deeply about specific areas of interest, to critique and criticize those ideas, and to exchange ideas and arguments with each other to gain clarity about what are feasible avenues for solutions to some very controversial problems. Treat your fellow classmates with the same respect and compassion you would want to be treated as we move through this complex material.

### Grading

<i>Exams/Attendance/Participation</i>	<i>% Value</i>	<i>Grade Scale</i>
Attendance	5	90-100 = A
Midterm Exam	40	80-89 = B
Final Exam	40	70-79 = C
Participation	15	60-69 = D
		0-59 = F

### Attendance

Attendance is required. There are two class meetings for 15 weeks, hence each absence will result in a reduction of the attendance portion of your grade by 1/30<sup>th</sup>. **If you are absent it is your responsibility to obtain class notes from a fellow student; students should not ask to see the instructor's notes from lectures that students do not attend.**

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### **Class participation**

Class participation consists in arriving to class on time, staying for the duration of the class, and paying attention and maintaining engagement with your fellow students and the class material for the 1 hour and 15 minutes of class. Class commences at precisely 3:05 PM each class meeting. Consequently, you should arrive in class no later than 3:00 PM. If you arrive a few moments late, quietly enter the room and take a seat with the least disturbance possible. Arrive having read the assignment and prepared to discuss salient points or to ask relevant questions. **Philosophy is the kind of subject that demands one's attention; consequently, students should read the assigned material for each class meeting.** In this course you will be called on during class to respond to questions posed. Chronic tardiness and/or failure to be prepared for class will be academically penalized at the instructor's discretion.

### **Midterm and Final Exams**

Exam preparation for this course will consist of a set of 8-10 topical area questions distributed to students one week prior to the exam date, related to text material and relevant class discussion points. Exams will consist of a multiple choice/matching section, short responses to specific questions, and very short essay responses to more general questions. Further details, requirements and grading criteria will be discussed in class prior to the distribution of topical area questions.

The mid-term examination grade will serve as the assessment of student progress for the first half of the course material.

### **Topical outline, reading assignments, exam and other important dates.**

Reading assignments listed below are to be read for class discussion on that date.

TURN OFF YOUR CELL PHONE OR BEEPER OR PAGER BEFORE EACH CLASS.

#### **Week 1 Virtue Theory and Application**

28 AUG 2012: Aristotle p. 13

30 AUG 2012: Warren p. 277; case study.

#### **Week 2 Deontological Theory and Application**

4 SEPT 2012: Kant p. 27

6 SEPT 2012: Mappes p. 65; case study.

#### **Week 3 Utilitarianism Theory and Application**

11 SEPT 2012: Bentham p. 39 and Mill p. 46

13 SEPT 2012: View clip from *Saving Private Ryan*; Nadelman p. 154; case study.

#### **Week 4 Ethic of Care Theory and Application**

18 SEPT 2012: Noddings p. 54

20 SEPT 2012: Warren p. 123

#### **Week 5 Animals**

25 SEPT 2012: Singer p. 84

27 SEPT 2012: Regan p. 91

#### **Week 6 Theory of Liberty**

2 OCT 2012: Burke p. 132

4 OCT 2012: Mill p. 138; mid-term exam questions distributed.

#### **Week 7 Pornography and Free Speech**

9 OCT 2012: MacKinnon p. 175; Levant p. 228

11 OCT 2012: Mill 202

#### **Week 8 Free Speech**

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16 OCT 2012: Rauch p. 213.

18 OCT 2012: Mid-term examination.

**Week 9: Abortion**

23 OCT 2012: Thomson p. 267

25 OCT 2012: Supreme Court of New Jersey p. 314; Rachels p. 323

**Week 10 War**

30 OCT 2012: Aquinas p. 380

1 NOV 2012: Posner and Becker p. 395

**Week 11 Torture**

6 NOV 2012: NO CLASS – Election Day.

8 NOV 2012: Bentham p. 404; Luban p. 410

**Week 12 Theory of Justice/Government**

13 NOV 2012: Locke p. 435

15 NOV 2012: Marx p. 458 and 464

**Week 13 Economic Justice**

20 NOV 2012: Murray p. 505

22 NOV 2012: NO CLASS – Thanksgiving.

**Week 14 Social Justice and Affirmative Action**

27 NOV 2012: Scalia p. 530

29 NOV 2012: Boxill p. 536

**Week 15 Affirmative Action (cont'd) and Immigration**

4 DEC 2012: Sowell p. 542

6 DEC 2012: Kant p. 574

**Week 16**

12-1:50 12 DEC 2012: Final Examination