

Philosophy K111
Fall Semester 2010
Ethics

Instructor: Theodore Bach, PhD.

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Office hours: Tuesday/Thursday, 10:00am-11:00 am and by appointment. D205.

Introduction: Deciding whether an abortion is permissible, whether a war is just, whether or not we should attend class, what type of cereal to buy at the supermarket – these are all instances where we engage in *practical reasoning*. How do we do this? How *ought* we to do this? And, perhaps most important, what are the relevant criteria to consider during these deliberations? Should I consider just myself – just others – maybe family and friends but not strangers or foreigners? Should we be guided by what produces *happiness* in others and ourselves? Or perhaps what most respects our *freedom* to be rational agents, or what is “*fair*” for everyone?

It is the job of the moral philosopher to clarify the issues and concepts that surround these difficult questions. To perform this task, it is not sufficient to merely sit back and voice our opinions. Rather, we must develop *arguments* consisting of reasons that rationally support moral conclusions. This means that we must learn to be critical thinkers: some arguments are better than others, and learning the methods of philosophical analysis will enable us to assess the many arguments that will be our topic of study.

Electronic Readings: All required readings throughout the semester will be available on-line, through the Vista website.

Web Site: You can access the web site by going to <http://www.trcc.commnet.edu/>. When you log in with your TRCC NetID, you should see a link for Philosophy K111. The link takes you to printable copies of handouts, readings, the syllabus, the discussion forum, and much else. You should check the course web site regularly to find announcements, schedule changes, the syllabus, etc.

Course Requirements: Final grades will be calculated as follows:

- (1) One midterm exam (28% of final grade)
- (2) One final exam (30%)
- (3) Two quizzes (24%)
- (4) Participation in class (6%)
- (5) Article Summaries (12%)
- (6) All of the scheduled reading described below

Mid-term and Final Exams: Both the midterm and the final exam will consist of one multi-part essay question. In *advance* of these exams I will make a list of 8-10 potential questions available on the course web-page. The exams will feature one question selected from this list. Student's grade is based on their demonstration of understanding the concepts and arguments that are relevant to the questions. In addition to essay questions, the exam will consist in multiple choice, true/false questions, and distinction explanations.

Quizzes: There will be two quizzes. The format of the quizzes will be multiple choice, true-false, and short answer.

Article Summaries: Each week we have class (except for the midterm and final exam weeks) students must submit an "article summary". These summaries are to be submitted on the Vista webpage in the discussions forum. Summaries are due by 10 am on Thursday. Vista will not permit postings after this time. Article summaries consist in three parts:

1. A summary of the article. What problem does the article address? How does it address this problem? What are its main points?

This section should be about 150 words. Do not just rephrase sentences from the text. Instead, break down the material. Write as though you are explaining the article to an intelligent high-school student.

Each week multiple articles are assigned. Pick one to write your summary on (you do not have to write summaries for each assigned article).

2. A criticism/ thought/ comment/ application about the article. Here is your chance to say what you think about the article. Do you find a particular argument compelling or especially interesting? Is there an argument that you think is unsound or particularly weak? Do you see some respect in which the

article relates to something else or some aspect of your life? There is no strict word requirement for this section.

3. A question about the article. Just that – a question about the article. Something that you would like clarification on.

Important guidelines for article summaries:

- (1) Students can miss one summary without losing any credit.
- (2) Label each section (1), (2), and (3).
- (3) If multiple readings are assigned for the class, please pick *one* reading to focus on.
- (4) Students must complete the summaries independently. I encourage you to discuss articles with one another outside of class, but article summaries must be the exclusive product of *your* mind rather than a group's mind.
- (5) I will not accept, under any circumstance, late summaries, handwritten summaries, or emailed summaries.

Participation: Philosophy is hard. There are no stupid questions or comments in this course. The more students get involved, the more fun we will have. There will also be group-work throughout the semester.

Policy on Academic Misconduct and Absence from Class: It should go without saying that plagiarism is a serious offense and cannot be tolerated in any way, shape, or form. Attempts to represent someone else's work as one's own will earn a failing grade on the assignment in question and possibly for the entire course. All such cases are referred to the Dean of Students for further disciplinary review.

Students who miss a mid-term, quiz, or in-class writing assignment, need to provide official documentation (e.g. doctor's slip) or will lose substantial credit. If students know that they will be unable to attend a class when an assignment is scheduled they must inform the instructor at least two weeks in advance of the class.

Students who fail to attend the final exam are automatically referred to the dean of students.

Schedule of Readings:

Date	Subject	Assignment
Aug 26	Introduction	
Aug 31	Philosophical Analysis I	Singer, "Famine, Affluence, and Morality"
Sept 2		"Argument Analysis"
Sept 7	Philosophical Analysis II	Sober, "Deductive Arguments." "Logic Handout"
Sept 9		Sober, "Inductive and Abductive Arguments"
Sept 14	Conventionalism	QUIZ !!! Rachels, "The Challenge of Cultural Relativism".
Sept 16		Plato, "Euthyphro"
Sept 21	Utilitarianism	Bentham, "The Hedonic Calculus" Mill, "Selections from <i>Utilitarianism</i> "
Sept 23		Nozick, "The Experience Machine"
Sept 28	Kant's moral theory	Kant, "Selections from <i>Groundwork on the Metaphysics of Morals</i> "
Sept 30		Feldman, "Kantian Ethics"
Oct 5	Respect for persons	O'Neill; "Kant and Utilitarianism Contrasted"
Oct 7		TBA
Oct 12		MIDTERM EXAM
Oct 14	Abortion: Part 1	Noonan, "An almost Absolute Value in History"
Oct 19	Abortion: Part 2	Warren, "On the Legal and Moral Status of Abortion";
Oct 21		Warren, "Postscript on Infanticide"
Oct 26	Abortion: Part 3	Thompson, "A Defense of Abortion"
Oct 28		TBA
Nov 2	State of Nature	QUIZ!!! Hobbes, "Selections from Leviathan"
Nov 4	Social Contract	Locke, "Selections from Locke's Second Treatise of government"
Nov 9	Distributive Justice	Rawls, "A Theory of Justice"
Nov 11	Veteran's Day	No Class

Nov 16	Distributive Justice Continued	Nozick, "The Entitlement Theory"
Nov 18	The Harm Principle	Mill, "Selections from <i>On Liberty</i> "
Nov 30	Pornography and Harm	MacKinnon, "Pornography, Civil Rights, and Speech"
Dec 2		Lynn, "Pornography and Free Speech: The Civil Rights Approach"
Dec 7	Topic to be chosen by class	
Dec 9		
Dec 14	Review	
Dec 16		FINAL EXAM!!!