

PHIL 147 - Markets, Ethics & Law

Professor:

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Office Hours: Thursday 1-2:50pm
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Description of the Course:

As individuals and as members of societies we make choices that can be evaluated from a moral point of view. Sometimes such evaluations are relatively easy but often it is unclear, or subject to fierce disagreement, what morality requires of us. If we are relatively affluent, for example, how far must we assist those who are poor? Are we behaving wrongly if we buy expensive sunglasses or MP3 players when the money could instead be given to Oxfam to help fight malnutrition in the developing world? This course aims to provide you with an introduction to ethical issues that arise regarding markets or that concern the law. Topics may include property rights, consumption, corporate social responsibility, foreign aid, animal rights, abortion, infanticide, and others. The course will consider various arguments about the virtues and vices of market activities as well as several applied topics in ethics.

Objectives:

I hope that by the end of this course you will be able to 1) relay and analyze some of the main arguments about the topics covered in the readings, 2) create, consider objections to, and defend your own views on these important topics orally and in writing, and 3) demonstrate an understanding of some important moral and political questions that arise regarding the topics we will cover.

Conduct of Course:

There will be a reading assignment for every lecture. To facilitate the discussion, it is essential that you come prepared to each class. You should therefore be prepared to give your opinion about the arguments of the assigned readings as well as your preliminary response to the wider questions raised by the readings. Specifically, you should come to classes with a considered view regarding the main thesis of the assigned reading: what is the content of this thesis, what reasons are adduced by the author in defense of this thesis, is the thesis plausible, and is there a better alternative?

In addition to class participation, undergraduates will write two papers and take a final exam. Your performance on these papers and the exam will constitute the majority of your grade. The first paper constitute 25% of your grade. The second paper will constitute 35% of your grade. The exam will constitute 30% of your grade. Class attendance, participation, conduct, and/or additional assignments will also constitute 10% of your grade. Assignments must be turned in 1 hour *before* the start of class on the day they are due. You should submit all assignments to turnitin.com and bring a hard copy to class.

Academic Integrity:

I really want you to succeed in this class. If you feel like you are not going to do as well as you would like please talk to me and we may be able to arrange something. If you cheat and get caught this may entail such penalties as failure in the class or even dismissal from the university. You are responsible for knowing university policies on cheating and plagiarism.

Keys to Success:

- Attendance – Nationally 85% of students who come to class every day get an A or a B. Attendance is required.
- Participation – it may seem obvious that asking questions when you are confused is a good idea, however I understand that it is very difficult for some people to speak in front of others. As this class will concentrate on argumentation it is important to practice giving and critiquing arguments in front of others. Please feel confident that if you are confused there is probably someone else who is also confused. I need to know what is confusing in order to explain it, so please speak up. I have included a 10% incentive to do this.
- Come to my office hours – if you are confused either meet with fellow students who seem to be “getting it” or come and talk to me. I can help you develop better study skills or answer questions for you.

Required Materials

The readings will be available online.

I. Introduction to Arguments and Moral Theory

September 4: Introduction

September 6: “Introduction to Arguments”

September 11: Mill, excerpts from “Utilitarianism” / Argument Assignment 1 Due

September 20: Mill, excerpts from “Utilitarianism” / Argument Assignment 2 Due

September 25: Nickel, “Human Rights”

September 27: O’Neil, “The Dark Side of Human Rights”

II. Extending Ethics: Consumption, Property, and the Environment

October 2: Writing Philosophy (do writing exercises)

October 4: Case Study: The Jewelmer Corporation, Read: Willott, “Population”

October 9: Sagoff, “Do We Consume Too Much?”

October 11: Hardin, “The Tragedy of the Commons”

October 16: Schmidtz, “The Institution of Property”

October 18: Case Study: Salmon in the Pacific Northwest, Read: Matthews, “Letting the World Grow Old” / First Paper Due

III. Beyond the Law: Animals Rights, Abortion, and Infanticide

October 23: Singer, “All Animals are Equal”

October 25: Schmidtz, “Are all Species Equal?”

October 30: Singer, “Justifying Infanticide” and “Taking Life the Embryo and the Fetus”

November 1: Don Marquis, "Why Abortion is Immoral, Gonzales v. Carhart Kennedy Opinion:
<http://www.law.cornell.edu/supct/html/05-380.ZO.html>

November 6: Thompson, "A Defense of Abortion", Gonzales v. Carhart Ginsburg Dissent:
<http://www.law.cornell.edu/supct/html/05-380.ZD.html>

IV. Beyond Markets: Poverty and Global Justice

November 8: Singer, "Famine, Affluence, and Morality"

November 13: Arthur, "Famine Relief and the Ideal Moral Code"

November 15: Pogge, "Eradicating Systematic Poverty: Brief for a Global Resources Dividend"

November 20: Risse, "Do We Owe the Global Poor Assistance or Rectification?"

November 27: Hassoun, "World Poverty and Individual Freedom" / Second Paper Due

V. Markets, Ethics and Law: Intellectual Property and Corporate Social Responsibility

December 4: Introduction to Globalization, Read: "The World Trade Organization"

December 6: Barnard, "In the High Court of South Africa, Case No. 4138/98: The Global Politics of Access to Low-Cost AIDS Drugs in Poor Countries"

December 11: Hassoun, "Fair Trade Bio"

December: 14: Review

I will attempt to inform you as soon as possible if I make changes to this syllabus