

**FYSM 1209: CONTEMPORARY MORAL, SOCIAL AND RELIGIOUS ISSUES  
CARLETON UNIVERSITY  
PROFESSOR KEN FERGUSON**

**COURSE SYLLABUS**

**TERM:** Fall/Winter Terms, 2009/2010  
**TIME:** Monday and Wednesday. 8:35-9:55 AM  
**LOCATION** Southam Hall, Rm 313  
**INSTRUCTOR:** Ken Ferguson  
**OFFICE:** Paterson Hall, 329B  
**OFFICE HOURS:** Monday and Wednesday 11:30-12:30  
**PHONE:** Office: (613) 520-2600, ext. 6307  
**EMAIL:** [ken\\_ferguson@carleton.ca](mailto:ken_ferguson@carleton.ca)

**COURSE DESCRIPTION**

The purpose of this course is to examine a number of difficult and controversial issues that confront contemporary societies. Some of these issues are relatively new in so far as they arise out of recent developments in science, particularly in the biological and medical sciences. For example, are such practices as human cloning, genetic engineering (whether in the case of humans or other organisms), assisted suicide, abortion, the marketing of human organs for transplants, and many others, morally permissible, and, a somewhat different question, should they be made legal? Other issues, though by new means new, have taken on greater urgency and relevance as a result of recent changes or events in our physical, social, political or economic surroundings: What is the source and extent of our obligations to protect the environment, particularly in view of the problem of global warming? Would it be permissible, and should it be legal, for states to engage in torture, or to eavesdrop on their citizens, in order to protect them from terrorist attacks? Still other issues have long been discussed but continue to be the subject of disagreement and often heated debate: Should individuals be permitted to say or do anything they please as long as they harm no one else, or are there other legitimate grounds for limiting a person's freedom? What obligations do societies have toward their individual members? Do they have an obligation to provide them with free health care, with a decent job, a decent place to live, a paid vacation? To what extent are we morally required to help the poor, whether in our own country or in other parts of the world? To what extent do we have obligations toward animals?

In discussing these, and other, issues it is important to keep in mind that our goal is not merely to express our own opinions; rather, we will be engaged in an *inquiry*. We want to know what positions might be adopted with respect to these issues, what arguments have been, or might be, offered for and against these different positions, and we want to subject these arguments to a rigorous critique in order to determine, *to the extent that this may be possible*, where the truth of the matter lies. To do this effectively, it will be necessary first to spend some time dealing with more theoretical questions about morality; first and foremost, of course, we will need to ask what considerations are relevant to whether an act, or practice, or institution is right or wrong. We will therefore begin the course by looking at some of the more prominent moral theories that have been developed by philosophers and others in response to this question. These theories will not only provide us with some useful tools for dealing with particular issues in applied ethics, but, as we will see, are of great interest in their own right.

## **AIMS OF THE COURSE**

In addition to the enjoyment and satisfaction derived from learning about a new field of inquiry they may not previously have been familiar with, it is hoped that students will benefit from the course in the following ways:

- become more aware of their own preconceptions and biases with respect to ethical issues
- become better able to adopt a reflective, critical attitude toward their own moral beliefs
- acquire the reasoning and analytical tools needed to engage in intelligent discussion of ethical issues
- develop improved reading, writing, speaking and presentation skills
- develop a greater sensitivity for, and hence become better able to detect, ethical issues
- acquire a greater appreciation for the diversity of beliefs and attitudes towards ethical issues

## **REQUIRED TEXT**

A course pack of readings with the title, *FYSM 1209: Contemporary Moral, Social and Religious Issues*, has been prepared by the Instructor. This course pack can only be purchased at **Haven Books**, which is located at 43 Seneca Street, just off Campus. Their phone number is: (613) 730-9888.

There will also be some required readings which will be put on reserve in the University Library, as well some online readings.

## **COURSE REQUIREMENTS**

- 1. Participation in class (10%):** Students are expected to attend class regularly and contribute to class discussion. (Attendance will be taken.) Evaluations will be based, obviously, on both the frequency and quality of contributions to the discussion.
- 2. Short Essays (25%):** Students will be required to write three essays during the course of the year. One of these will be rather short (500-1000 words), while the others will be somewhat longer (1000-1500 words). They will be discussion essays which require analysis and evaluation of some issue, not research papers. Dates for submission of these essays are: 1<sup>st</sup> (500 words) – October 7; 2<sup>nd</sup> – November 18; and 3<sup>rd</sup> – February 15. (Topics will be made available well in advance of these dates.)
- 3. Take-home Exam at the end of the Fall Term (20%):** The exam will consist of essay questions on some of the material covered during the fall term. The questions will be made available to students by December 2, and the completed exam will be due in the philosophy drop box (on level 3A of Paterson Hall) by December 18.
- 4. Presentations (20%):** Two presentations will be required, one in each term. One of these, and possibly both, will take the form of participation in a debate, and so will involve team work (although each student's work will be evaluated separately).
- 5. Term Paper (25%):** Students will be required to submit a major term paper (3000-4000 words) which will deal with some issue in applied ethics. An early draft of the term paper must be submitted by March 1. The final draft will then be written in light of the instructor's comments.

## **WEB CT**

Students must ensure that they have access to the Web CT for this course, as course notes as well as other information and material will be posted on it. (If you do not know how to access it, please contact the Instructor.)

## **ATTENDANCE POLICY**

Attendance will be taken, as participation in class is part of the required course work.

## OUTLINE OF TOPICS AND READINGS

(In addition to the readings below there will be some required readings which will be on reserve in the University Library and some which are online.)

### I. Introduction to Ethics

**Reading 1:** Barbara MacKinnon, *Ethics: Theory and Contemporary Issues*, (Toronto, Thomson/Wadsworth, 2004) chapter 1, "Ethics and Ethical Reasoning." pp. 2-12

### II. Normative Ethical Theories

#### The Divine Command Theory

**Reading 2:** John Arthur, "Morality, Religion and Conscience," from *Morality and Moral Controversies*, 8<sup>th</sup> edition, edited by John Arthur and Steven Scalet (Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 2009) pp. 16-23

#### Ethical Egoism

**Reading 3:** Thomas Hobbes, (selections originally from *The Leviathan*) from *The Moral Life: An Introductory Reader in Ethics and Literature*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, edited by Louis Pojman and Louis Vaughan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007) pp. 41-53

**Reading 4:** Baruch Brody, "Morality and Rational Self-Interest", *Morality and Moral Controversies ...* pp.8-15

#### Utilitarianism

**Reading 5:** John Stuart Mill, *Utilitarianism*, (selections) from *Contemporary Moral Problems*, 8<sup>th</sup> edition, edited by James White (Toronto: Thomson/Wadsworth, 2006) pp. 38-44

**Reading 6:** Robert Nozick, "The Experience Machine", from *Vice and Virtue in Everyday Life*, 7<sup>th</sup> edition, edited by Christina Sommers and Fred Sommers ((Toronto: Thomson/Wadsworth, 2007) pp. 63-65

**Reading 7:** Bernard Williams, "Against Utilitarianism", from *The Moral life ...* pp. 265-277

#### Kantian Ethics

**Reading 8:** Immanuel Kant, "The Categorical Imperative" from *Ethics: Theory and Contemporary Issues* 4<sup>th</sup> edition, edited by Barbara MacKinnon ((Toronto: Thomson/Wadsworth, 2004) pp. 76-86

**Reading 9:** Fred Feldman, "Kantian Ethics", from *Ethical Theory: Classical and Contemporary Readings*, edited by Louis Pojman (Toronto: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1995) pp. 288-301

#### Virtue Ethics

**Reading 10:** Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, from *Morality and Moral Controversies ...* pp. 50-56

**Reading 11:** Justin Oakley, "A Virtue Ethics Approach" from *Philosophy: A New Introduction*, edited by Douglas Mann and Elijah Dunn (Toronto: Wadsworth, 2005) pp. 445-451

### III. Issues in Meta-Ethics

#### Why Be Moral?

**Reading 12:** Paul Taylor, "The Ultimate Question", from *Argument and Analysis ...* pp.162-170

### Moral Nihilism

**Reading 13:** Friedrich Nietzsche, “Beyond Good and Evil”, from *Introduction to Philosophy: Classical and Contemporary Readings*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, edited by Louis Pojman (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2004) pp. 600-608

### Moral Skepticism

**Reading 14:** J.L. Mackie, “Subjectivism, Objectivism, and the Error Theory”, from *Philosophical Ethics*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, edited Tom Beauchamp (Toronto: McGraw-Hill, 1991) pp.111-115

**Reading 15:** Louis Pojman, “A Critique of Mackie’s Theory of Moral Subjectivism”, from *Introduction to Philosophy: Classical and Contemporary Readings ...* pp. 510-514

### Moral Realism

**Reading 16:** Richard Boyd, “How to be a Moral Realist”, from *Philosophical Ethics ...* pp. 118-122

### Ethical Relativism

**Reading 17:** Ruth Benedict, “In Defense of Moral Relativism”, from *Introduction to Philosophy: Classical and Contemporary Readings*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition ... pp. 484-489

**Reading 18:** James Rachels, “The Challenge of Cultural Relativism”, from *Reason and Responsibility: Readings in Some Basic Problems of Philosophy*, 9<sup>th</sup> edition, edited by Joel Feinberg (Toronto: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1996) pp. 488-494

## IV. Issues Related to Human Rights, Liberty and Social Justice

### Human Rights

**Reading 19:** The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, from *Vice and Virtue in Everyday Life ...* pp.187-192

**Reading 20:** John Hospers, “What Libertarianism Is” from *Contemporary Moral Problems ...* pp. 321-329

**Reading 21:** Henry Shue, “Basic Positive Subsistence Rights”, from *Social and Political Philosophy: Contemporary Readings*, edited by George Sher and Baruch Brody (Toronto: Harcourt Brace College Publishers, 1999) pp. 652-664

### Liberty and the Limits of State Authority

**Reading 22:** John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty* (selections) from *Social and Political Philosophy: Contemporary Readings ...* pp. 70-83

**Reading 23:** Joel Feinberg, “Harmless Immoralities and Offensive Nuisances”, from *Philosophical Ethics: An Introduction to Moral Philosophy ...* pp. 407-410

**Reading 24:** Ronald Dworkin, “Paternalism”, from *Philosophical Ethics: An Introduction to Moral Philosophy ...* pp. 415-418

**Reading 25:** “Prohibiting Racist Speech on Campus: A Debate”, Charles Lawrence and Gerald Gunther, from *Morality and Moral Controversies ...* pp. 542-548

**Reading 26:** Alan Dershowitz, “Political Correctness, Speech Codes and Diversity”, from *Morality and Moral Controversies ...* pp. 548-549

**Reading 27:** Helen Longino, “Pornography, Oppression and Freedom: A closer Look”, from *Morality and Moral Controversies ...* pp. 550-555

**Reading 28:** Mark Wicclair, “Feminism, Pornography, and Censorship”, from *Morality and Moral Controversies ...* pp. 556-560

## War, Terrorism and Torture

- Reading 29:** Morton Weinfeld, “The Case for War”, from *Contemporary Moral Issues*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, edited by Wesley Cragg (Toronto: McGraw-Hill, 1992) pp. 470-472
- Reading 30:** Richard Nixon, “A War About Peace”, from *Contemporary Moral Issues ...* pp. 473-476
- Reading 31:** Trudy Govier, “Was the Gulf War a Just War?” from *Contemporary Moral Issues ...* pp. 476-488
- Reading 32:** Uwe Steinoff, “Torture – The case for Dirty Harry”, from *Morality and Moral Controversies ...* pp. 100-107
- Reading 33:** Alan Dershowitz, “Make Torture an Option”, from *Applying Ethics: A Text With Readings*, 9<sup>th</sup> edition, edited by Jeffrey Olin et al (Toronto: Thomson/Wadsworth, 2008) pp. 349-350
- Reading 34:** David Luban, “Torture and the Ticking Time Bomb”, from *Applying Ethics: A Text With Readings ...* pp. 351-353

## Justice, Globalization and Poverty

- Reading 35:** John Rawls, “Justice as Fairness” (selections originally from *A Theory of Justice*) from *Ethics: Theory and Contemporary Issues ...* pp. 284-290
- Reading 36:** Robert Nozick, “Distributive Justice”, (selections originally from *Anarchy, State and Utopia*) from *Ethics: Theory and Contemporary Issues ...* pp. 291-299
- Reading 37:** Milton Friedman, “The Social Responsibility of Business is to Increase its Profits”, from *Business Ethics in Canada*, 4<sup>th</sup> edition, edited by Deborah Poff (Toronto: Pearson/Prentice Hall, 2005) pp. 18-23
- Reading 38:** Peter Singer, “Famine, Affluence, and Morality”, from *What’s Wrong: Applied Ethicists and Their Critics*, edited by D. Boonin and G. Oddie (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005) pp. 537-544
- Reading 39:** John Arthur, “World Hunger and Moral Obligation”, from *What’s Wrong: Applied Ethicists and Their Critics ...* pp. 544-547

## V. Animal Rights and Environmental Ethics

### Animal Rights

- Reading 40:** Peter Singer, “All Animals Are Equal”, from *Morality and Moral Controversies ...* pp. 158-166
- Reading 41:** Bonnie Steinboch, “Speciesism and the Idea of Equality” from *Morality and Moral Controversies ...* pp. 167-173
- Reading 42:** Carl Cohen, “Do Animals Have Rights?” from *Analyzing Moral Issues*, 4<sup>th</sup> edition, edited by Judith Boss (Toronto: McGraw-Hill, 2008) pp. 768-775
- Reading 43:** Tom Regan, “The Case for Animal Rights”, from *Contemporary Moral Issues: Diversity and Consensus*, edited by Lawrence Hinman (Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Pearson/Prentice Hall, 2006) pp.394-401

### Ethical Issues Related to the Environment

- Reading 44:** William Baxter, “People or Penguins”, from *The Moral Life ...* pp. 933-941
- Reading 45:** Aldo Leopold, “The Land Ethic”, from *Analyzing Moral Issues ...* pp. 776-779
- Reading 46:** Bill Devall and George Sessions, “Deep Ecology”, from *Analyzing Moral Issues ...* pp. 780-785
- Reading 47:** Ramachandra Guha, “Radical Environmentalism and Wilderness Presevation: A Third World Critique”, from *Contemporary Moral Issues: Diversity and Consensus...* pp. 454-63

## VI. Issues in Bioethics

<b>Human Cloning</b>
<p><b>Reading 48:</b> Leon Kass, “Preventing an braver New World”, from <i>What’s Wrong: Applied Ethicists and Their Critics</i> ... pp. 682-685</p> <p><b>Reading 49:</b> David Elliott, “Uniqueness, Individuality and Human Cloning”, <i>What’s Wrong: Applied Ethicists and Their Critics</i> ... pp. 686-687</p>
<b>Genetic Engineering</b>
<p><b>Reading 50:</b> Walter Glannon, “Genetic Enhancement”, from <i>Biomedical Ethics</i>, 6<sup>th</sup> edition, edited by Thomas Mappes and David DeGrazia (Toronto: McGraw-Hill, 2006) pp. 601-606</p> <p><b>Reading 51:</b> Dan Brock, “Genetic Engineering”, from <i>Biomedical Ethics</i> ... pp. 606-612</p>
<b>Euthanasia</b>
<p><b>Reading 52:</b> Rodriguez v. British Columbia”, from <i>Readings in Biomedical Ethics: A Canadian Focus</i>, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, edited by Eike-Hennen W. Kluge (Toronto: Pearson/Prentice Hall, 2005) pp. 358-361</p> <p><b>Reading 53:</b> James Rachels, “Active and Passive Euthanasia”, from <i>Readings in Biomedical Ethics: A Canadian Focus</i>, pp. 364-368</p> <p><b>Reading 54:</b> Richard Doerflinger, “Assisted Suicide: Pro-Choice and Anti-Life”, <i>Readings in Biomedical Ethics: A Canadian Focus</i> ... pp. 368-374</p>
<b>Abortion</b>
<p><b>Reading 55:</b> Mary Anne Warren, “On the Moral and Legal Status of Abortion”, from <i>Contemporary Moral Problems</i> ... pp. 114-125</p> <p><b>Reading 56:</b> Don Marquis, “An Argument that Abortion is Wrong”, from <i>Contemporary Moral Problems</i> ... pp. 126-137</p>
<b>Marketing Human Organs</b>
<p><b>Reading 57:</b> Ruth Chadwick, “The Market for Bodily Parts: Kant and Duties to Oneself”, from <i>What’s Wrong: Applied Ethicists and Their Critics</i> ... pp. 492-499</p> <p><b>Reading 58:</b> G.V. Tadd, “The Market for Bodily Parts: A Reply to Chadwick”, from <i>What’s Wrong: Applied Ethicists and Their Critics</i> ... pp. 500-505</p>

# Department of Philosophy and Carleton University Policies

## **Assignments:**

Unless specifically told otherwise by their instructors, students:

- must not use a plastic or cardboard cover or paper clips
- must staple the paper
- must include the following in the lower right corner of the cover sheet:
  - student name
  - student number
  - course number and section
  - instructor's name
- The Philosophy Department does not accept assignments by FAX. You may send them by courier, if necessary.
- No assignments will be accepted after the last day for handing in term work.
- Assignments handed in through the essay box (just inside the glass doors, Paterson Hall, Floor 3A) must be dropped into the box by 4:15 on a regular business day in order to be date-stamped with that day's date. Assignments handed in after 4:15 or on a non-business day will be stamped as having been handed in on the next business day.
- Students are required to keep copies of their assignments. If your paper is lost at any point, you will be considered not to have submitted it if you cannot produce a copy immediately on request.

## **Deferrals for Term Work:**

If you miss a final examination and/or fail to submit a final assignment by the due date because of circumstances beyond your control, you may apply for a deferral of examination/assignment. For deferred examinations, you must apply within 5 working days after the scheduled date of your exam. To apply for deferral of a final assignment, you must apply within 5 working days of the last scheduled day of classes. Visit the Registrar's Office for more information.

## **Plagiarism:**

It is the responsibility of each student to understand the meaning of 'plagiarism' as defined in the Undergraduate or Graduate Calendars, and to avoid both committing plagiarism and aiding or abetting plagiarism by other students. (Undergraduate Calendar Academic Regulations, section 14.3, page 56 or <http://www.carleton.ca/cu0809uc/regulations/acadregsuniv14.html#14.3>)

## **Academic Accommodation:**

*For Students with Disabilities:* Students with disabilities requiring academic accommodations in this course must register with the Paul Menton Centre for Students with Disabilities (PMC) for a formal evaluation of disability-related needs. Documented disabilities include but are not limited to mobility/physical impairments, specific Learning Disabilities (LD), psychiatric/psychological disabilities, sensory disabilities, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), and chronic medical conditions. Registered PMC students are required to contact the PMC every term to have a Letter of Accommodation sent to the Instructor by their Coordinator. In addition, students are expected to confirm their need for accommodation with the Instructor no later than two weeks before the first assignment is due or the first in-class test/midterm. If you require accommodations only for formally scheduled exam(s) in this course, you must request accommodations by the last official day to withdraw from classes in each term.

*For Religious Observance:* Students requesting academic accommodation on the basis of religious observance should make a formal, written request to their instructors for alternate dates and/or means of satisfying academic requirements. Such requests should be made during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist, but no later than two weeks before the compulsory academic event. Accommodation is to be worked out directly and on an individual basis between the student

and the instructor(s) involved. Instructors will make accommodations in a way that avoids academic disadvantage to the student.

Students or instructors who have questions or want to confirm accommodation eligibility of a religious event or practice may refer to the Equity Services website [www.carleton.ca/equity/holy\\_days/](http://www.carleton.ca/equity/holy_days/) for a list of holy days and Carleton's Academic Accommodation policies.

*For Pregnancy:* Pregnant students requiring academic accommodations are encouraged to contact an Equity Advisor in Equity Services to complete a *letter of accommodation*. The student must then make an appointment to discuss her needs with the instructor at least two weeks prior to the first academic event in which it is anticipated the accommodation will be required.

## **Important Dates:**

Sept. 10	Classes start (after Orientation events).
Sept. 23	Last day for registration and course changes in Fall term and two-term courses.
Sept. 30	Last day for entire fee adjustment when withdrawing from fall term or two-term courses.
Oct. 9	University Day – no classes.
Oct. 12	Thanksgiving Day – university closed.
Nov. 16	Last day to withdraw from Fall term courses (academic purposes only).
Nov. 23	Last day for tests or examinations in courses below 4000 level before the Final Examination period.
Dec. 8	Last day of classes, Fall term. Last day for handing in term assignments, subject to any earlier course deadline.
Dec. 9-22	Final examinations for Fall courses, mid-terms for Fall/Winter courses.
Jan. 4	Winter term classes begin.
Jan. 15	Last day for registration and course changes in Winter term classes.
Jan. 31	Last day for entire fee adjustment when withdrawing from winter courses or winter portion of two-term courses.
Feb. 15-19	Winter Break, classes suspended.
Mar. 12	Last day to withdraw from Fall/Winter and Winter term courses (academic purposes only).
Mar. 24	Last day for tests or examinations in courses below 4000 level before the Final Examination period.
Apr. 5	Last day of Fall/Winter and Winter term classes.
Apr. 7	Winter term ends; last day for handing in term assignments, subject to any earlier course deadline.
Apr. 8-24	Final Examinations.

## **Addresses:**

Department of Philosophy:	3A46 Paterson Hall <a href="http://www.carleton.ca/philosophy">www.carleton.ca/philosophy</a> 520-2110
Registrar's Office:	300 Tory <a href="http://www.carleton.ca/registrar">www.carleton.ca/registrar</a> 520-3500
Student Academic Success Centre:	302 Tory <a href="http://www.carleton.ca/sasc">www.carleton.ca/sasc</a> 520-7850
Paul Menton Centre:	500 University Centre <a href="http://www.carleton.ca/pmc">www.carleton.ca/pmc</a> 520-6608
Writing Tutorial Service:	4 <sup>th</sup> Floor, Library <a href="http://www.carleton.ca/wts">www.carleton.ca/wts</a> 520-6632
MacOdrum Library	<a href="http://www.library.carleton.ca">www.library.carleton.ca</a> 520-2735