

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

COURSE SYLLABUS

TERM:	Fall/Winter Terms, 2012/13	OFFICE:	Paterson Hall, 3A 51
TIME:	Mon/Wed 10:05-11:25	OFFICE HOURS:	Mon: 11:30-12:30/Wed: 1-2
LOCATION	Tory Building 213	PHONE:	Office: (613) 520-2600
INSTRUCTOR:	Ken Ferguson	EMAIL:	ken_ferguson@carleton.ca

COURSE DESCRIPTION

The purpose of this course is to introduce students to ethics as a field of study and to examine in detail a number of difficult and controversial moral issues that confront contemporary societies.

In the first part of the course we will discuss some issues concerning the general nature of morality: Does morality depend in some essential way on religion? Do the same moral standards apply universally, or is morality relative to different societies or cultures? How is morality related to self-interest? What is it that ultimately determines whether an act is right or wrong? Is it the effect the act is likely to have on human happiness or something else?

In the remainder of the course we will examine a wide range of issues in what is called applied or practical ethics. Some of these issues are relatively new in that 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, prenatal screening for the purpose of aborting fetuses that suffer from disabilities, and euthanasia or assisted suicide morally permissible? Other issues, though by new means new, have taken on greater urgency and relevance as a result of recent changes or events in our social, political, economic or natural surroundings: What is the source and extent of our obligations to protect the environment, particularly in view of the problem of global warming? To what extent do we have obligations toward animals and other living things? 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 states or societies have toward their individual members? To what extent are we morally required to help the poor, whether in our own country or in other parts of the world?

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.

AIMS OF THE COURSE

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

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

REQUIRED TEXT

Doing Ethics: Moral Reasoning and Contemporary Issues, 2nd edition, by Lewis Vaughn (W.W. Norton & Company). This text is available in the University Bookstore.

This text will be supplemented by online readings which will be announced as we go along.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

1. **Essays 25%:** Students will be required to write three essays during the course of the year, two in the fall semester and one in the winter semester. These will be discussion essays which require analysis and evaluation of some issue, not research papers which require extensive use of library, Internet or other sources.
2. **Major Research Paper 20%:** Students will be required to submit a major term paper (3000-4000 words) on some issue, or issues, in applied ethics. An early draft of the term paper should be submitted by March 1. The final draft will then be written in light of the instructor's comments.
3. **Take-home Exams 20%:** There will be a take-home exam at the end of each term. The questions for these will be made available to students in the last week of each semester, and the completed exam will be due in the philosophy drop box (on level 3A of Paterson Hall) later in the exam period.
4. **Class 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.
5. **Class Participation 15%:** Students are expected to attend class regularly and contribute to class discussion. Evaluations will be based on both the frequency and quality of contributions to the discussion.

More details will be provided about each of these requirements later.

WEB CT

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

OUTLINE OF TOPICS AND READINGS: FALL SEMESTER

Note: The Topics listed below may be supplemented, or, in some cases, even replaced, by other topics and issues that happen to be of special interest to students. Please give some thought to other ethical issues that interest you and which you might like to discuss in class.

I. Introduction
No reading
II. Morality and Religion
Vaughn, Chapter 1
Readings in Vaughn:
1) "What is the Socratic Method", Christopher Phillips
2) <i>The Euthyphro</i> , Plato
3) "Common-Sense Religion", Daniel Dennett

Optional Readings:

“Godless Morality”, Peter Singer and Marc Hauser (To obtain this article, google the title.)
 “What is Humanism?”, from the website of the British Humanist Association, available at:
<http://www.humanism.org.uk/about/philosophers/books-and-publications/what-is-humanism>

III. Subjectivism, Relativism and Emotivism

Vaughn, Chapter 2

Readings in Vaughn:

- 1) “Anthropology and the Abnormal”, Ruth Benedict
- 2) “Trying Out One’s New Sword”, Mary Midgley

Additional Readings:

- 3) “The Universal Declaration of Human Rights” (google)
- 4) “The Challenge of Cultural Relativism”, James Rachels, available at:
<http://www.nd.edu/~bgoehrin/literature/Rachels.html> (Or google title)
- 5) “The Objective Basis of Morality”, Thomas Nagel (Google title and author.)
- 6) “Cosmopolitanism: How to be a Citizen of the World”, Mother Jones interview with W.A. Appiah (Google title.)

IV. Moral Reasoning

Vaughn, Chapter 3

Online Reading: *The Crito*, by Plato

V. Moral Theories

Vaughn, Chapter 4, pp. 65-74

VI. Consequentialist Moral Theories**(a) Ethical Egoism**

Vaughn, Chapter 5
 Online reading: *Leviathan* (selection), Thomas Hobbes

(b) Utilitarianism

Vaughn, Chapter 5
 Reading in Vaughn: *Utilitarianism*, John Stuart Mill

VII. Non-Consequentialist Moral Theories**(a) Kant’s Ethics**

Vaughn, Chapter 6
 Reading in Vaughn: *Fundamental Principles of the Metaphysic of Morals*, Immanuel Kant

(b) Natural Law Theory

Vaughn, Chapter 6

VIII. Ross's Ethics and Particularism
Online Reading: Jan Garret, "A Simple and Usable Ethical Theory Based on the Ethics of W.D. Ross", available online at: http://www.wku.edu/~jan.garrett/ethics/rossethc.htm
IX. Freedom of Speech, Pornography, and Censorship
Vaughn, Chapter 11 Readings in Vaughn: John Stuart Mill, <i>On liberty</i> (selections) Catherine MacKinnon, "Pornography, Civil Rights, and Speech" Wendy McElroy, "A Feminist Defense of Pornography" Susan Brison, "'The Price We Pay'? Pornography and Harm"
X. Same-Sex Marriage and Related issues
Vaughn, Chapter 12 Readings in Vaughn: Maggie Gallagher, "What Marriage is for" Jonathan Rauch, "On Marriage" Richard Moher, "On Gay Rights" Alan Goldman, "Plain Sex"
XI. Capital Punishment
Vaughn, Chapter 10 Readings in Vaughn: <i>The Ultimate Punishment: A Defense</i> by Ernest van den Haag <i>Justice, Civilization, and the Death Penalty: Answering van den Haag</i> by Jeffrey H. Reiman <i>A Life for a Life</i> by Igor Primoratz <i>What Do Murderers Deserve?</i> by David Gelernter <i>In Defense of the Death Penalty</i> by Louis P. Pojman <i>Capital Punishment</i> by Anthony G. Amsterdam

Brief Outline of Topics and Readings: Winter Semester 2013

- 1) The Ethics of Abortion
- 2) Euthanasia, Physician Assisted Suicide and Other End of Life Issues
- 3) Should the Sale of Human Organs be legalized?
- 4) Should Human Cloning and/or Genetic Engineering be legal?
- 5) Equality and Affirmative Action
- 6) Poverty, Justice and Globalization
- 7) Human Values, the Environment and Climate Change
- 8) Animal Rights and Animal Welfare
- 9) The Ethics of Warfare
- 10) Terrorism and Torture

Department of Philosophy and Carleton University Policies (2012-13)

Assignments:

Unless specifically told otherwise by their instructors, students:

- must not use a plastic or cardboard cover or paper clips
- must staple the paper (there is a stapler on the essay box)
- 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 – see dates in next column.
- 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, or <http://www4.carleton.ca/calendars//ugrad/current/regulations/acadregsuniv14.html#14.3>)

Academic Accommodation for Students with Disabilities:

The Paul Menton Centre for Students with Disabilities (PMC) provides services to students with Learning Disabilities (LD), psychiatric/mental health disabilities, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD), chronic medical conditions, and impairments in mobility, hearing, and vision. If you have a disability requiring academic accommodations in this course, please contact PMC at 613-520-6608 or pmc@carleton.ca for a formal evaluation. If you are already registered with the PMC, contact your PMC coordinator to send me your Letter of Accommodation at the beginning of the term, and no later than two weeks before the first in-class scheduled test or exam requiring accommodation (if applicable). After requesting accommodation from PMC, meet with me to ensure accommodation arrangements are made. Please consult the PMC website for the deadline to request accommodations for the formally-scheduled exam (if applicable).

You can visit the Equity Services website to view the policies and to obtain more detailed information on academic accommodation at <http://carleton.ca/equity/accommodation>.

Important Dates:

Sept. 6	Classes start (after Orientation events).
Sept. 19	Last day for registration and course changes in Fall and Fall/Winter courses.
Sept. 30	Last day for entire fee adjustment when withdrawing from Fall term or two-term courses.
Oct. 5	University Day – no classes.
Oct. 8	Thanksgiving Day – university closed.
Nov. 19	Last day for tests or examinations in courses below 4000-level before the Final Examination period.
Dec. 3	Last day of classes, Fall term. Last day for handing in term work and the last day that can be specified by a course instructor as a due date for Fall term courses.
Dec. 3	Last day to withdraw from Fall term courses (academic purposes only).
Dec. 4-5	No classes take place. Review classes may be held, but no new material may be introduced.
Dec. 6-19	Final examinations for Fall courses, mid-terms for Fall/Winter courses.
Dec. 19	Take-home exams are due.
Jan. 7	Winter term classes begin.
Jan. 18	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. 18	Family Day – university closed
Feb. 18-22	Winter Break, classes suspended.
Mar. 27	Last day for tests or examinations in courses below 4000-level before the Final Examination period.
Mar. 29	Good Friday – university closed
Apr. 10	Last day of Fall/Winter and Winter term classes. Last day for handing in term work and the last day that can be specified by a course instructor as a due date for term work for Fall/Winter and Winter term courses. NOTE: On this day all classes follow a Friday schedule.
Apr. 10	Last day to withdraw from Fall/Winter and Winter term courses (academic purposes only).
Apr. 11-12	No classes take place. Review classes may be held, but no new material may be introduced.
Apr. 13-27	Final Examinations.
Apr. 27	Take-home exams are due.

Addresses:

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