

## PHIL 1500

### Contemporary Moral, Social, and Religious Issues

**Professor:** Iain McKenna

**Office Hours:** Mondays 11:00-1:00 329B Patterson Hall

**Lectures:** Monday 1:30-3:30 302 AT

**Tutorials:** Monday 3:30-4:30 or 4:30 – 5:30

**Contact:** I can be contacted through Web CT

#### **Course Description**

What do we mean when we say that an action is “the right thing to do”? What public policies deserve our support? What goods should we pursue? What are our obligations toward others (or ourselves)? What kind of person should we strive to be? These kinds of questions are at the heart of moral philosophy. They concern not “what is the case” but rather, “what ought to be the case”. In other words, answers to moral questions are prescriptive. However, some answers are better than others...

In this course we will examine some important moral theories and their influence on various attempts to answer moral questions. We will focus on argumentation and reasoning as methods of justification for moral positions.

By the end of the course we will come to a better understanding of what constitutes a moral position and what kinds of positions are, at minimum, defensible. We will also lay the groundwork for future study in the area of moral philosophy.

#### **Required Texts**

Lewis Vaughn and Jill McIntosh, *Writing Philosophy* Oxford University Press. 2009.

Hugh LaFollette, *Ethics in Practice 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition*. Blackwell Publishing. 2007.

Both texts are available at the campus bookstore.

#### **Learning Objectives**

- identify and articulate moral issues in contemporary society
- evaluate moral arguments
- construct compelling moral arguments
- gain a basic understanding of major ethical theories

#### **Expectations**

I will expect that you will come to each class prepared to discuss the material. This means that you will need to:

- read the texts (often more than once)
- think about what you have read
- make note of points in the texts that you do not understand
- ask questions in order to improve your understanding of the texts

I will expect you to be well prepared for assignments and tests. This means that you will need to:

- take notes in class
- study
- ask questions
- find help if needed

I will expect you to be respectful toward lecturers, tutorial leaders, and other students at all times. The art of “respectful disagreement” is essential to practicing philosophy.

## Assignments

When	What	Worth
When	Register on WebCT	priceless
Each week, all year	Tutorial participation	20
September 28	Assignment 1	5
October 26	Assignment 2	5
December exam period	December exam	20
February 8	Essay 1	25
March 22	Essay 2	25
April 24	Optional take-home exam (replacing Essay 1 or Essay 2 ONLY IF both have been submitted.) NOTE: There is no scheduled final exam in this course.	25

## TENTATIVE READING SCHEDULE

DATE		TOPIC	READINGS
WEEK 1	7-09-09	General Introduction	No readings for class
WEEK 2	14-09-09	Reading Philosophy	“How to Read Philosophy” <i>Writing Philosophy</i> 3-23 “Theorizing About Ethics” and “Reading Philosophy” <i>Ethics in Practice</i> 3-12
WEEK 3	21-09-09	Reading Arguments	“How to Read an Argument” <i>Writing Philosophy</i> 23-49

DATE		TOPIC	READINGS
WEEK 4	28-09-09	Evaluating Arguments	“Famine, Affluence, and Morality” Peter Singer <i>Ethics in Practice</i> 613-623
WEEK 5	05-10-09	Ethical Theory: Consequentialism	“Consequentialism” Peter Vallentyne <i>Ethics in Practice</i> 22-31
WEEK 6	12-10-09	Thanks-giving	
WEEK 7	19-10-09	Ethical Theory: Deontology	“Deontology” David McNaughton and Piers Rawling <i>Ethics in Practice</i> 31-45
WEEK 8	26-10-09	Ethical Theory: Virtue Theory	“Virtue Theory” Rosalind Hursthouse <i>Ethics in Practice</i> 45-57
WEEK 9	02-11-09	Ethical Dilemmas	<i>Doubt</i> Movie (2008) Viewed in Class
WEEK 10	09-11-09	Ethical Dilemmas	Discussion of <i>Doubt</i>
WEEK 11	16-11-09	Punishment	“Punishment and Desert” James Rachels <i>Ethics in Practice</i> 510-519
WEEK 12	23-11-09	Capital Punishment	“In Defense of the Death Penalty” Louis P. Pojman <i>Ethics in Practice</i> 544-554
WEEK 13	30-11-09	Capital Punishment	“Against the Death Penalty” Jeffrey Reiman <i>Ethics in Practice</i> 554-562
WEEK 14	07-12-09	Capital Punishment	Dead Man Walking Movie (1995) Viewed in Class

DATE		TOPIC	READINGS
	TBA	EXAM	
WEEK 15	04-01-10	Abortion	“An Argument that Abortion is Wrong” Don Marquis <i>Ethics in Practice</i> 137-148
WEEK 16	11-01-10	Abortion	“A Defense of Abortion” Judith Jarvis Thomson <i>Ethics in Practice</i> 117-126
WEEK 17	18-01-10	Abortion	“Virtue Theory and Abortion” Rosalind Hursthouse <i>Ethics in Practice</i> 158-168
WEEK 18	25-01-10	The Environment	“The Land Ethic” Aldo Leopoldo <i>Ethics in Practice</i> 660-669
WEEK 19	1-02-10	Animals	“All Animals are Equal” Peter Singer <i>Ethics in Practice</i> 171-181
WEEK 20	8-02-10	Animals	“The Case for Animal Rights” Tom Regan <i>Ethics in Practice</i> 205-213
WEEK 21	15-02-10	BREAK	Your choice
WEEK 22	22-02-10	Economic Justice	“A Theory of Justice” John Rawls <i>Ethics in Practice</i> 565-578
WEEK 23	1-03-10	Economic Justice	“The Entitlement Theory of Justice” Robert Nozick <i>Ethics in Practice</i> 578-591

DATE		TOPIC	READINGS
WEEK 24	8-03-10	Just War	“Just War Doctrine and the Military Response to Terrorism” Joseph Boyle <i>Ethics in Practice</i> 704-715
WEEK 25	15-03-10	Preventive Force	“Nipping Evil in the Bud: The Questionable Ethics of Preventive Force” Douglas P. Lackey <i>Ethics in Practice</i> 715-726
WEEK 26	22-03-10	Humanitarian Intervention	“The Justifiability of Humanitarian Intervention” Charles R. Beitz <i>Ethics in Practice</i> 726-735
WEEK 27	29-03-10	Pacifism	“Pacifism: Reclaiming the Moral Presumption” William J. Hawk <i>Ethics in Practice</i> 735-745
WEEK 28	5-04-10	TBA	TBA

#### POLICIES AND RULES

1. **WebCT mandatory.** Each student must have a student computing account, in order to use WebCT.
2. **Written work.** No handwritten essays will be accepted; they must be typed or word-processed. Use a title page and identify yourself by **student number only**. Use any reference style, but use it consistently. Writing in the first person (e.g., “I will argue that ...,” “I find this difficult to believe because...”) is permitted.
3. **Extensions.** Deadlines will be extended only in case of documentable medical or personal emergencies. Excuses like “I had to work on my History essay” will not be accepted.
4. **Penalties.** Essays are to be submitted in tutorials, **at the start of the tutorial**, on due dates. Essays received late will be penalized by one mark per day. (For instance, an essay marked 20/25 on its merits will be reduced to 19/25 on the first day it is late and to 15/25 on the fifth day. University regulations forbid the instructor to accept term work for this course after **April 5**.)
5. **No fax.** It is Department policy that work transmitted by fax will not be accepted.
6. **Keep a copy.** It is Department policy that it is every student’s responsibility to keep a copy of each essay submitted to a Philosophy course.

7. **Submitting essays.** Essays can be submitted **in tutorials or in the locked essay deposit box** just inside the glass door to the Philosophy Department offices (Paterson 3A – look for the Philosophy Department sign) – note that papers submitted in the deposit box will be considered late even if submitted on the due date. Essays must be submitted on paper. **No binders:** essays should not be enclosed in plastic or other binders except at the specific request of the instructor. University regulations forbid the instructor to accept term work for this course after the final day of class.
8. **Deferrals for term work.** Before the end of term, you can apply to Registrar to defer the final deadline for term work.

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