

## **PHIL1550A: Introduction to Ethics and Social Issues**

Carleton University, winter 2014

Instructor: Dr. Matt McLennan

Office hours: Mondays 3:30 – 4:30pm, 329B Paterson Hall

Contact: Matthew.McLennan@carleton.ca

Teaching assistants: TBA

Class times and location: Tues and Thurs 2:35 – 3:55pm, Southam Hall THB

**Course description:** This course is designed to introduce students to ethics and social issues by examining basic concepts of moral philosophy and applying them to concrete problems. You will become familiar with major moral frameworks, as well as some of the most common argumentative devices and errors in moral reasoning. You will be required to use this knowledge to engage in selected debates of contemporary, practical relevance.

**Required Text:** Hugh Lafollette (ed.): *Ethics in Practice: an Anthology* (Blackwell, third edition). Available at the university bookstore.

**Evaluation:** Students will be evaluated based on one mid-term test, one essay, and a final exam.

- Midterm test: Feb. 6 (25% of course grade)
- Essay: Due IN CLASS March 11 (35% of course grade). Detailed instructions are appended below.
- Final exam: Date and location TBA (40% of course grade)

**Class Schedule:** The following is a loose schedule of lecture topics and readings. Small changes may occur as needed, and will be announced with reasonable advance notice. Readings are listed below by the number they appear in the textbook.

Week 1 (Jan. 7/9): INTRODUCTION: Frameworks for moral deliberation  
READINGS: 1, 2, 3 (plus Lafollette p.1-15)

Week 2 (Jan. 14/16): WHO COUNTS IN ETHICS? Part 1: Abortion and the idea of personhood  
READINGS: 9, 10, 11

Week 3 (Jan. 21/23): WHO COUNTS IN ETHICS? Part 2: Animal rights and welfare  
READINGS: 14, 15, 16, 17

Week 4 (Jan. 28/30): WHO COUNTS IN ETHICS? Part 3: Environmental ethics and the outer limits of moral standing  
READINGS: 60, 61, 62

Week 5 (Feb. 4/6): HARM AND PERSONAL FREEDOM Part 1: The ethics of recreational drug use, smoking, and other risks to self

READINGS: 28, 30, 31

MIDTERM TEST FEB. 6

Week 6 (Feb. 11/13): HARM AND PERSONAL FREEDOM Part 2: Do we have a right to hardcore pornography?

READINGS: 34, 35, 36

Week 7 (Feb. 18/20): WINTER BREAK – NO CLASSES

Week 8 (Feb.25/27): STRUCTURES OF OPPRESSION Part 1: Social dimensions of rape and sexual assault

READINGS: 41, 42, 43

Week 9 (March 4/6): STRUCTURES OF OPPRESSION Part 2: Systemic solutions? Affirmative action

READINGS: 44, 45, 46

Week 10 (March 11/13): GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES Part 1: War and terrorism

READINGS: 64, 65, 66, 67

ESSAY ASSIGNMENT DUE MARCH 11

Week 11 (March 18/20): GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES Part 2: World hunger

READINGS: 56, 57, 58, 59

Week 12 (March 25/27): GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES Part 3: Economic justice

READINGS: 52, 53, 55

Week 13 (April 1/3): BRAVE NEW WORLDS: Commercial surrogacy, human cloning and other new reproductive technologies

READINGS: 20, 21, 22, 23

Week 14 (April 8): REVIEW CLASS

**Essay Assignment** (40% of course grade, due in class March 11)

Answer ONE of the following questions. Your answer should demonstrate a strong knowledge of class discussions and relevant readings from the textbook, though you are permitted and encouraged to do research beyond the textbook. Above all, you must ARGUE your opinion. The point of a philosophy paper is not simply to give your opinion on a topic, but to convince the reader using reasoned argument. Essay expectations will be further discussed in class, and a loose guide to writing philosophy papers will be posted to CULearn.

1) For sake of argument, let's define "hardcore pornography" as degrading, fictive representations of sex and sexuality, including simulations of rough/violent sex, gang rape, and sexual exploitation/coercion of subordinates (teacher-student, boss-employee, etc.). *Is it better to have a society that allows hardcore pornography, or one that bans it?*

2) "Tobacco shortens one's life, cocaine debases it." (James Q. Wilson)  
To "moralize" is to pontificate on moral issues in an unphilosophical way. In the quote above, *is Wilson simply moralizing? Or are there good philosophical reasons why cocaine, as opposed to tobacco, makes a person essentially worse – damages their soul, if you prefer?*

3) Affirmative action programs are supposed to redress systemic injustices by leveling the playing field. *Does affirmative action redress systemic injustice, or is it simply a form of "reverse discrimination"?*

Approx. 8-10 pages double-spaced, not including notes and bibliography; 1.5 font.

Marks will be deducted at the rate of 5% per calendar day written work is late without valid reason. Valid reasons for late submission of written work include illness, severe stress, and family emergencies. Documentation (e.g. doctors' or counsellors' notes) is required.

## Department of Philosophy and Carleton University Policies (2013-14)

### 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:

You may need special arrangements to meet your academic obligations during the term. For an accommodation request the processes are as follows:

**Pregnancy obligation:** write to me with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist. For more details visit the Equity Services website: <http://www2.carleton.ca/equity/>

**Religious obligation:** write to me with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist. For more details visit the Equity Services website: <http://www2.carleton.ca/equity/>

**Academic Accommodations 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](mailto: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*) at <http://www2.carleton.ca/pmc/new-and-current-students/dates-and-deadlines/>

You can visit the Equity Services website to view the policies and to obtain more detailed information on academic accommodation at <http://www2.carleton.ca/equity/>

### Important Dates:

Sept. 5	Classes start (after Orientation events).
Sept. 18	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. 14	Thanksgiving Day – university closed.
Oct. 28 –	
Nov. 1	Fall Break – no classes.
Nov. 25	Last day for tests or examinations in courses below 4000-level before the Final Examination period.
Dec. 9	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. 9	Last day to withdraw from Fall term courses (academic purposes only).
Dec. 10	No classes or examinations take place. Review classes may be held, but no new material may be introduced.
Dec. 11-22	Final examinations for Fall courses, mid-terms for Fall/Winter courses.
Dec. 22	Take-home exams are due.
Jan. 6	Winter term classes begin.
Jan. 17	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. 17-21	Winter Break, classes suspended.
Mar. 25	Last day for tests or examinations in courses below 4000-level before the Final Examination period.
Apr. 8	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.
Apr. 8	Last day to withdraw from Fall/Winter and Winter term courses (academic purposes only).
Apr. 9-10	No classes or examinations take place. Review classes may be held, but no new material may be introduced.
Apr. 11-26	Final Examinations. Exams will not be held Apr. 18-20.
Apr. 18	Good Friday – university closed.
Apr. 26	Take-home exams are due.

### Addresses:

Department of Philosophy:	3A35 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
Writing Tutorial Service:	4 <sup>th</sup> Floor, Library <a href="http://www1.carleton.ca/sasc/writing-tutorial-service/">http://www1.carleton.ca/sasc/writing-tutorial-service/</a> 520-6632
MacOdrum Library	<a href="http://www.library.carleton.ca/">http://www.library.carleton.ca/</a> 520-2735