

FYSM 1209
CONTEMPORARY MORAL, SOCIAL & RELIGIOUS ISSUES
CARLETON UNIVERSITY
PROFESSOR KENNETH FERGUSON

COURSE SYLLABUS

TERM:	Fall/Winter Terms, 2019/20	OFFICE:	Paterson Hall, 3A56
TIME:	Wed/Friday 1:05-2:35	OFFICE HOURS:	Tues/Thur, 3:00 – 4:00
LOCATION	TBA	EMAIL:	kenneth.ferguson@carleton.ca
INSTRUCTOR:	Ken Ferguson		

FYSM 1209 [1.0 credit]

Contemporary Moral, Social, and Religious Issues

Philosophical problems associated with such topical issues as feminism; atheism vs. theism; the meaning of life; moral relativism vs. moral objectivism; egoistic vs. non-egoistic ethics; euthanasia and capital punishment; legal paternalism; freedom of the will.

Precludes additional credit for [PHIL 1500](#) and [PHIL 1550](#). Prerequisite(s): normally restricted to students entering the first year of a B.A., B.Cog.Sc., B.Co.M.S., B.Econ. or B.G.In.S. program.

Seminars three hours a week.

DETAILED 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 social and 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 or 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 serious 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, 4th edition, by Lewis Vaughn (W.W. Norton & Company). This text is available in the University Bookstore.

The text will be supplemented by online readings. A complete list of all readings for the course is posted on CuLearn with the title **Topics and Readings**.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

- 1. Essays 25%:** Students will be required to write three short essays during the course of the year, two in the fall semester and one in the winter semester. These will be discussion essays that require analysis and evaluation of some issue, not research papers which require extensive use of library, Internet or other sources. The first essay will be due on Oct. 1, 2019, the second on Dec. 1, 2019, and the third on Feb. 14, 2020.
- 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, and will be due on April 1, 2020.

- 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 two weeks before the end of the 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 group presentations will be required, one in each term. One of these may involve participation in a debate.
- 5. Class Participation 15%:** Students are expected to attend class regularly and contribute to class discussion. Evaluations will be based on the quality of student's contributions to discussions.

More details will be provided about each of these requirements in class.

Access to CuLearn

Students must ensure that they have access to CuLearn for this course, as lecture slides and other information and material will be posted on it.

OUTLINE OF TOPICS AND READINGS

FALL SEMESTER

I. Introduction
No reading
II. Morality and Religion
Vaughn, Chapter 1, "Ethics and the Examined Life" pp. 2-12
Readings in Vaughn:
1) "What is the Socratic Method", Christopher Phillips
2) <i>The Euthyphro</i> , Plato
Optional Readings:
-Peter Singer and Marc Hauser "Godless Morality", (Google the title.)
-Theodore Schick, "Morality Requires God ...or Does It?", available at: http://www.secularhumanism.org/library/fi/schick_17_3.html

III. Subjectivism, Relativism and Emotivism

Vaughn, Chapter 2, pp. 21-31

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)

IV. Moral Reasoning

Vaughn, Chapter 3, pp. 41-62

V. Moral Theories

Vaughn, Chapter 4, "The Power of Moral Reasoning", pp. 67-77

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 Metaphysics of Morals*, Immanuel Kant

Optional:

(b) Natural Law Theory

Vaughn, Chapter 6

(c) The Ethical Theory of W.D. Ross

Reading: "Prima Facie Duties", available online at:
<http://core.ecu.edu/phil/mccartyr/1175docs/PrimaFacieDuties.pdf>

VIII. Chapter 12. Drug Use, Harm, and Personal Liberty

Vaughn, Chapter 12, pp. 350-379

Readings by Thomas Szasz, Peg O'Connor and James Wilson

IX. Euthanasia and Physician Assisted Suicide

Vaughn, Chapter 10, pp. 264--309

Readings in Vaughn by Rachels, J. Gay-Williams, Dan W. Brock, Philippa Foot and Daniel Callahan.

X. Altering Genes, Human Cloning, and Research into Overcoming Aging

Vaughn, Chapter 9

The Wisdom of Repugnance, Leon Kass
Genetic Enhancement, Walter Glannon
Cloning Human Beings, Dan W. Brock
 Online readings on overcoming Aging

Brief Outline of Topics and Readings: Winter Semester

- 1) The Limits of Individual Freedom
- 2) Issues Related to Sexual Morality
- 3) Terrorism and Torture
- 4) Capital Punishment
- 5) Poverty, Justice and Globalization
- 6) Human Values, the Environment, and Climate Change
- 7) Animal Rights and Animal Welfare
- 8) The Ethics of Warfare
- 9) Equality and Affirmative Action

Department of Philosophy and Carleton University Policies (Fall/Winter 2019-20)

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 on the first page: student name and number; course name and number; instructor's name.
- No assignments will be accepted after the last day for handing in term work – see dates below.
- 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.

Evaluation:

Standing in a course is determined by the course instructor subject to the approval of the Faculty Dean. This means that grades submitted by the instructor may be subject to revision. No grades are final until they have been approved by the Dean.

Deferrals for Final Exams:

If you miss a final examination (formally scheduled or take-home) because of circumstances beyond your control, you may apply for a deferral. You must apply within 3 working days after the scheduled date of your formally scheduled exam or within 3 working days after the due date of a take-home exam. Visit the Registrar's Office for more information:

<http://calendar.carleton.ca/undergrad/regulations/academicregulationsoftheuniversity/acadregsuniv2/#2.5>

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.

<https://carleton.ca/registrar/academic-integrity/>

Academic Accommodation:

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

If you have a documented disability requiring academic accommodations in this course, please contact the Paul Menton Centre for Students with Disabilities (PMC) at 613-520-6608 or pmc@carleton.ca for a formal evaluation or contact your PMC coordinator to send your instructor your Letter of Accommodation at the beginning of the term. You must also contact the PMC 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 your instructor as soon as possible to ensure accommodation arrangements are made. carleton.ca/pmc

Pregnancy obligation: write to your professor 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 your professor 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/>

Survivors of Sexual Violence: as a community, Carleton University is committed to maintaining a positive learning, working and living environment where sexual violence will not be tolerated, and is survivors are supported through academic accommodations as per Carleton's Sexual Violence Policy. For more information about the services available at the university and to obtain information about sexual violence and/or support, visit: carleton.ca/sexual-violence-support

Accommodation for Student Activities: Carleton University recognizes the substantial benefits, both to the individual student and for the university, that result from a student participating in activities beyond the classroom experience. Reasonable accommodation must be provided to students who compete or perform at the national or international level. Please contact your instructor 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. <https://carleton.ca/senate/wp-content/uploads/Accommodation-for-Student-Activities-1.pdf>

For more information on academic accommodation, please contact the departmental administrator or visit: students.carleton.ca/course-outline

Important Dates:

Sept. 4	Classes start.
Sept. 17	Last day for registration and course changes for fall term and fall/winter (two-term) courses.
Sept. 30	Last day for entire fee adjustment when withdrawing from fall term or two-term courses. Withdrawals after this date will result in a permanent notation of WDN on the official transcript.
Oct. 14	Statutory holiday. University closed.
Oct. 21-25	Fall Break – no classes.
Nov. 22	Last day for summative tests or examinations, or formative tests or examinations totaling more than 15% of the final grade, before the official examination period.
Dec. 6	Last day of fall term classes. Classes follow a Monday schedule. Last day for academic withdrawal from fall term courses. 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 a fall term course.
Dec. 9-21	Final examinations for fall term courses and mid-term examinations in two-term courses. Examinations are normally held all seven days of the week.
Dec. 21	All take-home examinations are due.
Jan. 6	Classes begin.
Jan. 17	Last day for registration and course changes in the winter term.
Jan. 31	Last day for a full fee adjustment when withdrawing from winter term courses or from the winter portion of two-term courses. Withdrawals after this date will result in a permanent notation of WDN on the official transcript.
Feb. 17	Statutory holiday. University closed.
Feb. 17-21	Winter Break – no classes.
Mar. 24	Last day for summative tests or examinations, or formative tests or examinations totaling more than 15% of the final grade, in winter term or fall/winter courses before the official examination period.
Apr. 7	Last day of two-term and winter term classes. Last day for academic withdrawal from fall/winter and winter courses. Last day for handing in term work and the last day that can be specified by a course instructor as a due date for two-term and for winter term courses.
Apr. 10	Statutory holiday. University closed.
Apr. 13-25	Final examinations for winter term and two-term courses. Examinations are normally held all seven days of the week.
Apr. 25	All take-home examinations are due on this day.

Addresses:

Department of Philosophy:	3A35 Paterson Hall www.carleton.ca/philosophy 520-2110
Registrar's Office:	300 Tory www.carleton.ca/registrar 520-3500
Academic Advising Centre:	302 Tory www.carleton.ca/academicadvising 520-7850
Writing Services:	4 th Floor, Library http://www.carleton.ca/csas/writing-services/