

Contemporary Moral Issues
Philosophy 111/501
TR 12:45-2:00PM MILS 110

Instructor: Tom Ellis

Office: 302 A Bolton Hall

Hours: TR 2:15 – 3:30, W 1:00 – 2:30 and by appointment

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Text: Barbara MacKinnon, *Ethics: Theory and Contemporary Issues*, 5th Edition.
Belmont California: Wadsworth Publishing, 2007.

Course Description: This course, as its title suggests, is an introduction to moral theory with an emphasis upon application to contemporary moral problems. Its goals are (1) to familiarize you with various moral theories, (2) to provide you with a deeper understanding of some pressing moral issues, and (3) to develop your critical thinking and writing skills. The aim of this course is not to teach you *what* to think, but rather *how* to think about morality.

Grading: Grades in this course will be calculated as follows:

50% - Two in-class exams. These exams will be essay and short answer exams.

30% - Final exam. This exam will also be essay and short answer.

20% - 4 short (1-3 page) article summaries/responses.

Schedule: (This schedule is *very* tentative at the moment and subject to revision as we progress through the semester. For the most up to date version of the schedule please refer to the course web site listed above.)

August 29 : Course overview and introduction
August 31: Chapter 1 – Ethics and Ethical Reasoning (pp. 1-11)
September 05: Chapter 1 – Plato's *Euthyphro* (pp. 12-16), *Meno* (handout)
September 07 : Chapter 2 – Ethical Relativism (pp. 18 – 28)
September 12 : Chapter 3 – Egosim (pp. 31 – 48)
September 14 : Chapter 4 – Utilitarianism (pp. 49 – 60)
September 19 : Chapter 4 – Utilitarianism (pp. 60 -71)
September 21: Chapter 5 - Kant's Moral Theory (pp 72 – 94)
September 26 : Chapter 6 – Natural Law & Natural Rights (pp. 95 – 107)
September 28 : Chapter 7 – Virtue Ethics (pp. 109 – 130)
October 03 : Feminist Thought and the Ethics of Care (handout)
October 05: **Exam 1** (bring a blue book!)
October 10 : Chapter 9 – Abortion (pp. 162 – 194)
October 12 : Abortion cont. - (handouts available on web site)

October 17 : Chapter 14 – Legal Punishment (pp. 300 – 326)
 October 19 : **No Class** – (Please review [How to Read A Philosophy Paper](#) article)
 October 24 : Chapter 10 – Sexual Morality (pp. 197 – 218)
 October 26 : Sexual Morality cont. (handouts available on web site)
 October 31 : Chapter 11 – Pornography (pp. 220 – 241)
 November 02 : Chapter 12 – Equality and Discrimination (pp. 244 – 267)
 November 03 : Last day to Q-drop, withdraw, or change KINE 198/199 grade type.
 November 07 : Chapter 13 – Economic Justice (pp. 270 – 297)
 November 09 : **Exam 2** (bring a blue book!)
 November 14 : Environmental Ethics/Animal Rights (pp. 329-340, pp. 360-367)
 November 16 : Chapter 17 – Stem-Cells, Cloning, & Genetics (pp. 387 – 416)
 November 21 : Genetics/Cloning cont. (handouts available on web site)
 November 23 : Thanksgiving holiday! (be thankful for something)
 November 24 : A&M vs. Texas (**Gig 'em, Ags!!!**)
 November 28 : Chapter 19 – Global Issues and Globalization (pp. 444 – 467)
 November 30 : Chapter 18 – Violence, Terrorism, & War (pp. 419 – 442)
 December 05 : Violence, Terrorism, & War cont. (handouts on web site)
 December 07 : Dead day (Study!!!!)
 December 13 : **Final Exam 8:00-10:00AM** (bring a blue book or two!)

How to do well in this class: Do the assigned readings **before** coming to class. The lectures are designed to supplement and enhance the readings, not as a replacement. In addition, this topic material lends itself well to discussion, and discussion will be greatly improved if you have acquainted yourself with the material before we discuss it in class. You should also attend class. Regularly. While attendance does not officially factor into your grade, there will be material presented during lecture which you will be responsible for on the exams. If you aren't there, you might miss something crucial to your success on the upcoming exam. Additionally there may be the occasional extra credit quiz or two, and you wouldn't want to miss that. Also, don't be afraid to ask questions! Philosophical readings can often be puzzling. Sometimes we need a little help wrapping our head around the ideas that the author is trying to convey. There's no shame in that. So don't be embarrassed or ashamed to ask questions about the material.

Aggie Code of Honor: As Aggies we are bound by an honor code which states that “[An Aggie does not lie, cheat, or steal, or tolerate those who do.](#)” Therefore anyone who is suspected of academic misconduct will be dealt with accordingly. If you are unfamiliar with Texas A&M University’s rules regarding what constitutes academic misconduct, please refer to the appropriate section of the Student Rules handbook. It may be viewed on-line at <http://student-rules.tamu.edu/rules20.htm>.

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Policy Statement:

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you believe you have a disability requiring accommodation, please contact the Department of Student Life, Disability Services in Cain Hall, Room B118, or call (979) 845-1637. More information may be found at <http://disability.tamu.edu/>