

CONTEMPORARY MORAL ISSUES

Welcome to the class! I hope that this course will be of help to you, as you sort through some of the difficult moral issues we face today; and that our discussions stay with you long after the class ends. As Plato says, the end of education is a whole, complete, person. I'm glad you decided to take this class!

Instructor: Dr. Mark Bernier.

Office:

Office Hours:

Phone:

Email:

COURSE DESCRIPTION: The goal of this course is understand and analyze both ethical theory (normative ethics) and particular moral problems (applied ethics). We will begin by looking at some of the major ethical theories, including virtue theory, deontology, and consequentialism. We will then turn to topics that are the center of recent debates; for example, abortion, capital punishment, war and terrorism (and so forth).

COURSE TEXT (REQUIRED): *Disputed Moral Issues: A Reader, Second Edition*, by Mark Timmons (Oxford University Press, 2011). Unless otherwise noted, all readings are from this book. Bring your book to every class.

REQUIREMENTS

- **TWO EXAMS:** 20% each.
- **ONE PAPER:** 20% each. Paper will be 5-7 pages long.
- **PRESENTATION:** 20%.
- **PARTICIPATION:** 20%. This includes: attendance, quizzes, in-class writing, and *quality* contribution to discussion in class.

SCHEDULE OF READINGS AND ASSIGNMENTS (SUBJECT TO REVISION)

WEEK ONE

- Introduction. What is a moral theory?
- Readings: What is a Moral Theory? (1-6); Coping with Many Moral Theories (31-35)

WEEK TWO

- Consequentialism
- Readings: Consequentialism (6-11); Bentham: The Principle of Utility (38-42).

WEEK THREE

- Consequentialism (continued); Kantian Ethics
- Readings: Kantian Moral Theory (15-20); Kant: The Moral Law (47-54)

WEEK FOUR

- Kantian Ethics (continued)

WEEK FIVE

- Rights; Virtue Ethics
- Readings: Rights-Based Moral Theory (20-25); Locke: Natural Rights (55-58);

Aristotle: Virtue and Character (58-66)

WEEK SIX

- Natural Law Theory; First Topic: Abortion
- Readings: Natural Law (12-15); Pope John Paul II (381-390); Mary Anne Warren (384-390)

WEEK SEVEN

- Abortion
- Readings: Judith Jarvis Davis (391-399); Dan Marquis (400-404)

WEEK EIGHT

- Abortion
- Readings: Rosiland Hursthouse (411-420)
Law & Order (we will watch an episode in class)

WEEK NINE

- Monday: **in-class debate!**
- Wednesday: **First Exam**

WEEK TEN

- Euthanasia
- Readings: J. Gay Williams (299-302); James Rachels (303-306); Bonnie Steinbock (307-312)

WEEK ELEVEN

- Death Penalty
- Readings: Kant (478-480); Stephen Nathanson (481-486)

WEEK TWELVE

- Death Penalty
- Readings: Ernest Van den Haag (487-491); Jeffrey H. Reiman (492-494)

WEEK THIRTEEN

- War/Terrorism
- Readings: Richard A. Wasserstrom (512-515); Haig Khatchadourian (516-523)

WEEK FOURTEEN

- War/Terrorism
- Readings: Michael Walzer (524-529)

WEEK FIFTEEN

- Torture
- Readings: Henry Shue (540-5548); Alan M. Dershowitz (549-559)
- Presentations begin

WEEK SIXTEEN

- Presentations: continued

FINAL EXAM