Contemporary Moral Issues (Phil 140)

Syllabus, Fall 2008

Mon/Wed 12:00-12:50; SHM 2102

This course explores currently debated issues concerning life and death. It introduces you to philosophical reasoning on controversial topics including abortion, euthanasia, and capital punishment. The course aims to help you to develop your ability to understand, evaluate, and construct arguments in the realm of applied ethics.

Go to Schedule

Teaching Assistants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mark Engleson</th>
<th>Lisa Leininger</th>
<th>Vincent Picciuto</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Office</td>
<td>Skinner 1107A</td>
<td>Skinner 1128</td>
<td>Skinner 1103C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Telephone</td>
<td></td>
<td>301-405-2406</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Email</td>
<td><a href="mailto:mengleso@umd.edu">mengleso@umd.edu</a></td>
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<td><a href="mailto:vpicciuto@gmail.com">vpicciuto@gmail.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Office Hours</td>
<td>Monday and Tuesday 1-2:00</td>
<td>Thursday 1-3</td>
<td>Monday and Wednesday 1-2</td>
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Web page:

http://www.philosophy.umd.edu/Faculty/SKerstein/cmifall2008syllabus.htm

This page will contain a syllabus with links to the following: several readings for the course, outlines of each lecture, sample exams, paper guidelines and so forth.

Texts:

All readings are available as PDF files on the ELMS (Blackboard) site for this course. There is no textbook.

Requirements:

Three examinations (including a final), two 3-page papers, and quizzes

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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Quizzes 6 during semester</th>
<th>15% of grade</th>
<th>4 best scores count</th>
<th>Short Exam September 24</th>
<th>15% of grade</th>
<th>On Intro - Part 2</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Paper I</td>
<td>due October 29</td>
<td>15% of grade</td>
<td>topics to be announced</td>
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<tr>
<td>Midterm Exam</td>
<td>November 10</td>
<td>20% of grade</td>
<td>On Parts 3-5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Paper II</td>
<td>due December 3</td>
<td>15% of grade</td>
<td>topics to be announced</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Exam</td>
<td>Dec. 19 8:00-10:00 AM</td>
<td>20% of grade</td>
<td>On Parts 6-9</td>
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Academic integrity:
The University of Maryland Honor Pledge reads: "I pledge on my honor that I have not given or received any unauthorized assistance on this assignment/examination." The Pledge statement should be handwritten and signed on the front of your exams and papers. Students who fail to write and sign the Pledge will be asked to confer with the instructor.

The Student Honor Council identifies four types of academic dishonesty: cheating, fabrication, facilitating academic dishonesty, and plagiarism. It is your responsibility to understand what constitutes dishonesty of these four types. Please consult the Student Honor Council Website or speak to the instructor or a teaching assistant if you would like any clarification (e.g., regarding what constitutes plagiarism).

The teaching assistants and I take incidents of academic dishonesty very seriously. We will forward to the office of judicial programs any cases of it that come to our attention.

**Discussion sections:**

- They are an integral part of this course. You are expected to attend them. (Note that several quizzes will be given in discussion sections.)
- If your teaching assistant judges that you have performed well in discussion sections and your grade is on a borderline, then your assistant may push it upward.

**Exams:**

- Exams will test your comprehension of material presented in readings, lectures, and discussion sections. They may contain true/false or multiple choice questions, and they will contain essay questions. Please note that you will be expected to understand details from the readings even if these details are not covered specifically in lectures.
- If you have a university-approved excuse for missing an examination, you may take a make-up. However, you must alert your teaching assistant (by email or phone) that you will be absent prior to the exam, unless unusual circumstances prevent you from doing so.

**Grading:**

- Your final grade will depend on the percentage you earn of the total points possible in the class: A+: 98-100; A: 94-97; A: 90-93; B+: 87-89; B: 84-86; B: 80-83; C+: 77-79; C: 74-76; C: 70-73; D+: 67-69; D: 64-66; D: 60-63.
- There will be no opportunities for extra credit. (But recall that if your teaching assistant judges that you have performed well in discussion sections and your grade is on a borderline, then your assistant may push it upward.)
- Failure to complete an assignment will result in your receiving no points (a zero) for that assignment.

**Papers:**

- Paper topics will be distributed approximately 7 days before the papers are due.
- Unless accompanied by a university-approved excuse, papers will be penalized one full grade for each school day they are late. For example, if your paper is due on Monday, you may turn it in on Tuesday, but then the highest grade you could receive on the paper would be a B+.
- Papers will not be accepted via email.

**Quizzes:**

- The two lowest of your six quiz scores will be dropped from your final grade. Only university approved excuses will enable you to make up a missed quiz.
- If you wish to make up a missed quiz, you must inform your teaching assistant no more than one week after the date the quiz was given, unless extraordinary circumstances, e.g., extended illness, prevent you from doing so. It is your responsibility to determine whether a quiz was given during a session you did not attend.
- Quizzes, which last approximately 5 minutes, focus on details of the reading for the day of the quiz or prior readings in the part of the course with which we are concerned on the day of the quiz. Suppose, for example, that we are on Part 3 of the course, namely Abortion. On one session during our study of this topic, we might have a quiz. That session might be a Friday discussion. The quiz will focus either on the reading for this session (if there is any) or some prior reading regarding abortion. You are responsible for doing the readings assigned for a particular day before coming to class.
- The dates for quizzes will not be announced in advance. Quizzes will often be given at the very beginning of class (including at the beginning of discussion sections). If you arrive late and miss all or part of a quiz, you will not be permitted to make it up, unless, of course, you provide a university approved excuse for your lateness.

**Religious Observances:**

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You will not be penalized for any absence that results from religious observance. However, it is your responsibility to inform your teaching assistant in advance of any intended absences for religious observance. (You should notify him or her by September 15th.)

Students with Disabilities:

- Students with disabilities should inform the instructor of their needs as soon as possible so that appropriate accommodations can be made.

Schedule: Updated on

(Readings might be altered as the course progresses. If there are any changes, they will be posted on the course web page and announced in class.)

Introduction
Sept. 3: Introduction

No Discussion Sections Sept. 5
Sept. 8: Arguments

1: Animal Rights
Sept. 10: Peter Singer, "All Animals Are Equal"
Sept. 15: Carl Cohen, "The Case for the Use of Animals in Biomedical Research"

2: Relativism and Objectivism
Sept. 17: Ruth Benedict: "Anthropology and the Abnormal"
Correction: Sept. 22: James Rachels: "The Challenge of Cultural Relativism"

Sample Exam Questions
Sept. 24: Short Exam

No Discussion Sessions on Sept. 26

3: Abortion
Sept. 29: Mary Anne Warren, "On the Moral and Legal Status of Abortion" FOCUS ON 302-307 (II and the "Postscript on Infanticide")
Oct 1: Don Marquis, "Why Abortion is Immoral"
Oct. 6: Don Marquis, "Why Abortion is Immoral" continued
Oct. 8: Judith Jarvis Thomson, "A Defense of Abortion"

4: Euthanasia
Oct. 15: James Rachels: "Active and Passive Euthanasia"
Oct. 20: Dan W. Brock: "Voluntary Active Euthanasia"

Paper 1 Topics
Oct. 22: Leon Kass: "Is There a Right to Die"?

Paper 1 Due October 29

5: Capital Punishment  (PLEASE NOTE CHANGES IN READINGS AND SCHEDULE.)
Nov 3: Jeffrey Reiman: "Justice, Civilization, and the Death Penalty"
Nov. 5: Jeffrey Reiman: "Justice, Civilization, and the Death Penalty" continued
Nov. 10: Midterm

6: Should the Numbers Count?
NO CLASS: Nov. 12: John Taurek: "Should the Numbers Count?"
No discussion sections Friday, Nov. 14

7: World Hunger
Nov. 17: Peter Singer: "Famine, Affluence, and Morality"
Nov. 19: James R. Otteson, "Limits on Our Obligation to Give" [Skip Section III]
Nov. 24: Singer vs. Otteson continued

8: Organ Shortage
Nov. 26: Arthur Matas: "The Case for Living Kidney Sales: Rationale, Objections and Concerns"

Paper 2 Topics
Thanksgiving
Dec. 1: Kantian Condemnation of Commerce in Organs (no reading)

Paper 2 Due Dec. 3

9: Enhancement
Dec. 3: Michael Sandel: "The Case Against Perfection"
Dec. 8: Frances Kamm: "Is There a Problem with Enhancement?" (You will not be tested on section II of this essay. Skip reading this section if you like.)
Dec. 10: Julien Savulescu: "Procreative Beneficence: Why We Should Select the Best Children"
Dec. 19, 8:00-10:00 AM, Final Exam

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