

**PHIL 118b: CONTEMPORARY MORAL PROBLEMS
SYLLABUS**

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

This course provides an introduction to important philosophical debates about contemporary moral issues. Topics include: animal rights, abortion, euthanasia, environmentalism, global justice and famine relief, racism, sexism, pornography, sexual morality, and gay marriage.

PREREQUISITES: none

TEXTS: *Disputed Moral Issues: A Reader*, ed., Mark Timmons (2007)

REQUIREMENTS:

Reading, discussing, and writing about the topics covered are the central activities of this class. One goal of the course is to help students develop their critical and argumentative skills. Because of this, participation is an especially important component of the course.

GRADES

10%- Argument Analyses
25% - First Paper
35% - Second Paper
10% - Attendance and Participation
20% - Final Exam

ASSIGNMENT SCHEDULE

Please complete the readings *before* lecture on the date listed.

Session 1: Introduction: Ethical Questions, Philosophical Methodology, Logical arguments

Session 2: Three Moral Theories: Utilitarianism, Kantianism and Virtue Ethics:
Reading: Introduction section 2A (DMI, 6-11), 2C (DMI, 15-20), 2E (DMI, . 23-24).

Session 3: Animal Rights:
Reading: Peter Singer, "All Animals Are Equal" (DMI 477)
Michael Pollan, "An Animal's Place"

Session 4: Consuming Animals
Reading: Carl Cohen: "In Defense of Speciesism" (DMI 485)
Peter Wenz, "An Ecological Argument for Vegetarianism"

First Argument Analysis Due

Session 5: Environmentalism
Reading: Paul Taylor, "The Ethics of Respect for Nature" (DMI 522)
Janna Thomson, "A Refutation of Environmental Ethics" (DMI, 533)

Session 6: Abortion:
Reading: Judith Jarvis Thomson, "A Defense of Abortion" (DMI, 284)
Don Marquis "Why Abortion is Immoral" (DMI, 292)

Session 7: Global Justice I
Reading: Peter Singer, "Famine Affluence and Morality" (DMI, 452).

Session 8: Global Justice II

Reading: John Arthur, "World Hunger and Moral Obligation" (DMI, 458)
Garret Hardin, "Lifeboat Ethics" (DMI 447)

First Paper Due

Session 9: Racism and Sexism

Reading: Anthony Appiah, "Racisms"
Marilyn Frye, "Oppression"

Session 10: Affirmative Action

Reading: Luke Charles Harris and Uma Narayan, "Affirmative Action as Equalizing Opportunity"
Louis Pojman, "Why Affirmative Action is Immoral" (DMI 218).

Session 11: Free Speech and Pornography

Reading: The Attorney General's Commission on Pornography (DMI, 92)
Ronald Dworkin: "Liberty and Pornography" (DMI, 107)
Judith Hill, "Pornography and Degradation" (DMI, 111)
Ann Garry, "Sex Lies and Pornography"

Session 12: Sexual Morality

Reading: Vatican Declaration on Some Questions of Sexual Ethics (DMI, 41)
Mario Punzo, "Morality and Human Sexuality"

First Paper Optional Rewrite Due

Session 13: Homosexuality and Gay Marriage:

Reading: John Corvino, "Why Shouldn't Tommy and Jim Have Sex?" (DMI, 68)
Cheshire Calhoun, "Defending Marriage"
Film: "Tying the Knot"

Second Argument Analysis Due

Session 14: Euthanasia and Suicide:

Reading: Immanuel Kant, "Suicide as a Violation of Duty to Oneself" (DMI, 241)
Richard Doerflinger, "Assisted Suicide: "Pro-Choice or Anti-Life?" (DMI, 256)

Session 15: War Terrorism and Torture:

Reading: Michael Walzer, "After 9/11: Five Questions about Terrorism" (DMI, 409)
Alan Dershowitz, "Should the Ticking Bomb Terrorist be Tortured" (DMI, 432)

Second Paper Due