

PHIL210-002: Current Ethical Issues

Updated January 10, 2009

Mon-Fri.: 12:00-12:50 am, Languages & Literature Building 213
University of Central Washington, Ellensburg, Winter Quarter, 2009

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Note to the Student: Course contents will be made available on **Blackboard (Beginning Jan. 5th)**. Such contents include ppt slides, notes, announcements, and syllabus updates. I will be circulating the announcement via email. *It is therefore important to check your email address specified in the Safari System frequently!*

Course Overview & Statement of Purpose

This course will teach students to think critically about many contemporary and clearly contentious moral issues, including euthanasia, abortion, capital punishment, war, and terrorism. Such questions these topics engender will be addressed from a disciplined philosophical perspective. In exploring such questions within such a framework, the student will be introduced to the basics of philosophical analysis focused upon questions of value in both concrete and in abstract sense, i.e. “applied ethics” and “metaethics.”

No philosophical prerequisite material or ability is assumed or expected from the student, other than an openness for rational reflection and inquiry. This would entail some critical thinking and analysis, i.e. a willingness to critically examine basic presuppositions and entertain others. Most important, the student must apply such skills to the points made in the selected readings and articles, which would require he or she successfully analyzing (redacting) and critically engaging the *essential* arguments in the articles. As in most philosophical activity, the goal is not so much arriving at fixed “answers”, but instead to develop a systematic framework for disciplined dialectic and critical inquiry; or to acquire methods for systematically *questioning* in a coherent and consistent way.

Student Learning Objectives

In the light of the above Statement of Purpose and Course Overview, the student learning objectives include:

1. Acquiring the objective content of the assigned readings, which will be assessed through a short expository focus paper (due before the middle of the quarter), the midterm exam, and in the final examination.
2. Based on point 1. above, acquiring the skills necessary for *informed* critical reflection on the reading assignments and on general discussion questions, exemplified and assessed

- through writing assignments: An analytical paper (assigned after the middle of the quarter) as well as essay questions in the final exam.
3. Based on points 1. and 2. above, acquiring the appropriate skills for philosophical inquiry particular to the nature and level of this course, assessed through *participation in the discussion periods* and attendance.

Course Assignments & Grading Policy:

You are expected to attend class regularly, to carefully study assigned readings, and to complete all assignments:

Focus Papers

- **Expository Focus paper 1 (~3-4 pages)**: assigned **Friday, January 23rd** & due **Friday, February 13th** (25% of grade)
- **Analytical Focus paper 2 (~4-6 pages)** assigned **Friday, February 13th** & due **Friday, March 6th** (30% of grade)

Exams & Quizzes

- Discussion Quizzes (10% of grade)
- Final exam, (25% of grade)

Attendance & Participation

- Attendance (5% of grade)
- Participation (5% of grade)

N.B.: Quizzes, Attendance, and Participation

- A **short quiz** (a few T or F questions and/or short 1-2 sentence answers) will be given at the **beginning of each discussion day** (see **Detailed Class Schedule** below). **Your lowest two quiz scores will be dropped.**
- **Attendance** will be taken **at least** 4 times per week. If you have missed a class, and you think your absence is excused, see ***Make Up Policy*** below. (You must furnish official University-approved documentation **in person**). **Emailed excuses and/or explanations will not be accepted--I will automatically delete them without response.**
- Your **participation** will be taken primarily into account during discussion days and activities. You are also welcome to ask questions during lecture/instruction days, however, please reserve longer discussion points for the discussion days.

Important Dates

- **Final Exam:** Location (unless otherwise announced): **Classroom (LL213)** & date and time:
Mon-Fri @ 12:00pm Friday, March 20th 12:00 pm-2:00pm

(Check Safari: <http://www.cwu.edu/~regi/schedules/0809FinalCal.pdf>)

for any possible updates or changes). Link for the Fall Academic Calendar:
<http://www.cwu.edu/~regi/schedules/Fall2008AcadCal.pdf>

- **Martin Luther King Jr. Day:** No classes & Administrative offices closed **Monday, January 19th, 2009.**
- **President's Day:** No classes & Administrative offices closed **Monday, February 16th, 2009.**
- **Last Day of Regularly Scheduled Class Meetings: Friday, March 13th, 2009.**

Final Grade Scale

Your final grade will depend on the percentage you earn of the total points possible in the class:
A: 89.5%-100.0%; **B:** 79.5.0% -89.4% ; **C:** 69.5% - 79.4%; **D:** 59.5%-69.4%; **F:**< 59.5%

Incomplete Grade and Late Policy

- An "I" grade shall only be awarded, based on the discretion of the instructor. Subject to this discretion, the student must have **satisfactorily** completed a **sufficient** portion of the course by the end of the term. For further details, see p. 30, *CWU Catalog for the Academic Year 2008-2009*.
- Assignments submitted late will receive a penalty of one letter grade (10%) per school day late.

Make-Up Policy

If you will be (or have been) absent for an exam or a class in which an assignment is due, you will need to provide a university-approved justification for your absence in order to be allowed to take a make-up exam or quiz, or to hand in the assignment late.

Class Meeting Cancellation Policy

If under very usual extenuating circumstances (i.e., severe weather-related, etc.) I will be forced to cancel the class on such a particular day, in addition to following Department guidelines I will strive to my utmost to circulate via email and post on Blackboard the evening before to inform you in advance. The same goes in cases of sudden University closures or delays. Please bear in mind that in the event of a sudden class cancellation, unless I notify you otherwise you are still responsible for reading the material assigned for that day. Moreover, if any assignment is due on that particular day (in the event of a class cancellation), the assignment shall be due on the following business day (assuming class will resume), without late penalties in this (and only in this) particular case.

Proscribed Behavior & Classroom Courtesy

Disruptive behavior of any kind will not be tolerated. Such behavior includes, but is not limited to, overt and covert behavior violating CWU's policy on diversity, as well as meeting any item(s) constituting sexual harassment. For further details, please consult the Appendices of *CWU Catalog for the Academic Year 2008-2009*. Other forms of proscribed behavior would violate the norms of courtesy, as judged by the discretion of the instructor. Aside from obvious norms, such as refraining from unruly behavior (whether in the form of verbal outbursts or other) such norms of courtesy would also include:

- Remember that oral participation in philosophy entails *well-thought out* questions posed in a rational framework. If necessary, write your question down and/or rehearse it silently before sharing it in class. Make an effort to be succinct, clear, and concise. (Note: If you prefer, you may also email questions for discussion section. More details concerning email policy shall be posted in the **Announcements** section of the Blackboard site for this course).
- Refraining from private conversation and/or other forms of communication among peers both inside and outside of class (i.e., texting, emailing, etc.) during lectures or discussion days.
- **Switching cell phones off during class.**
- Avoiding eating and drinking in class. If you *must*, do so noiselessly and with utmost discretion.

Failure to comply with *any* of the above standards may result in your physical removal from class; whether by explicit request from the instructor or by escort from Campus Security (for serious violations thereof), in addition to further disciplinary measures as set forth by the policies stated in the Appendices of *CWU Catalog for the Academic Year 2008-2009*.

Plagiarism and Academic Dishonesty

There are 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. For further information, please consult the policies stated in the Appendices of *CWU Catalog for the Academic Year 2008-2009*. Incidents of academic dishonesty are taken very seriously, and will be forwarded to the office of judicial programs any cases of it that come to attention.

Special Accommodations/Disabilities

Students with disabilities who wish to arrange for academic adjustments in this class are encouraged to provide me with a copy of their Confirmation of Eligibility of Academic Adjustments and meet with me as soon as possible to discuss their needs and the manner in which their accommodations will be delivered.

Course Textbook

- **(Required)** Lewis Vaughn, *Doing Ethics: Moral Reasoning and Contemporary Issues* (4th edn), W. W. Norton & Co., 2008. ISBN-13: 973-0-393-92710-8

Note that the above is an instructional textbook as well as an abridged source or anthology concerning some contemporary responses by ethicists regarding the topics we shall cover in class. We shall cover most (if not all—time permitting) the following major issues in the following order, beginning the week of January 12th: *Abortion, Euthanasia & Assisted Suicide, War & Terrorism, Capital Punishment, Animal & Environmental Rights, Affirmative Action, Privacy & Censorship*. In addition from selected readings from this textbook, other articles and sections from books will be made available in the form of photocopied handouts, (made available on Blackboard). Such selections will come from some or all of the following:

The American Medical Association's Code of Ethics, "Withholding Life-Sustaining Treatment/ Euthanasia", (1990) and The Hippocratic Oath (~500 BC)

US Supreme Court Justice H. Blackmun's Majority Opinion (excerpts), *Roe vs. Wade*, 1974.

Phillip Bobbitt, *Terror and Consent : The Wars of the Twenty-First Century*, NY: Alfred Knopf, 2008.

David Boonin & Graham Oddie, *What's Wrong? Applied Ethicists and Their Critics*, NY & Oxford, UK: Oxford U. Press, 2005.

Peter Carruthers, "The Animals Issue," manuscript (1992)

Joel Feinberg & Russ Shafer-Landau, eds., *Reason and Responsibility: Readings in Some Basic Problems of Philosophy (11th edn)*, Wadsworth, 2002.

Larry May, Shari Collins-Chobanian, Kai Wong, eds. *Applied Ethics: A Multicultural Approach (2nd edn.)* Upper Saddle River, NJ.: Prentice Hall, 1998.

Nina Rosenstand, *The Moral of the Story: An Introduction to Ethics (5th edn.)*, McGraw-Hill, 2005.

Joel Rudinow & Anthony Graybosch, eds., *Ethics and Values in the Information Age*, Wadsworth, 2002.

Stephen Satris, *Taking Sides: Clashing Views on Moral Issues (10th edn.)* Dushkin, McGraw-Hill, 2006.

Anthony Weston, *Creative Problem-Solving in Ethics*, NY & Oxford, UK: Oxford U. Press, 2007.

Detailed Class Schedule

- Below are the details for week 1. The reading & discussion schedule shall be updated on a weekly or biweekly basis and posted on Blackboard (as an updated syllabus) no later than the beginning of each week or two week period¹. The course is essentially structured around four lectures (Mon-Thu) followed by a discussion/review day (Fri).
- The Assigned Readings are for the topic covered in class on that day, as homework. I will take roughly 5-10 minutes to answer questions you may have on the readings in the following class period. If you have further questions, please see me during office hours, or bring them up on Discussion Days.

Topic	Date	Assigned Readings
<i>Course Introduction1: A 'crash course' in Metaethics</i>	01/06/09	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Course Introduction: Relativism, Subjectivism, Objectivism (Vaughn: 1-33/ Optional: 34-40)

¹ I.e., Monday morning. Generally, however, unless otherwise noted, you should expect the updates to occur Friday afternoon or during the weekend before. As stated in p.1 above, I will circulate via email any updates or new postings I make on Blackboard.

<i>Course Introduction2: Elementary Logic</i>	01/07/09	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evaluating Arguments (Vaughn 43-60)
<i>Course Introduction3: Basic Moral Theories</i>	01/08/09	Moral Theories (Vaughn 76-93; 100-113; 134-141) Optional: 94-99, 114-133, 142-158)
	01/09/09	Quiz 1 Discussion & Q/A
<i>Ethical issue I. Abortion</i>	01/12/09	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Roe vs. Wade Decision (posted in Blackboard) Overview (Vaughn: 161-173) “Personhood, Rights and Justice” (Rosentand-posted in Blackboard), pp. 299-303, 306-326. Skip Boxes 7.3, 7.4, 7.5 optional-highly recommended
	01/13/09	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Judith J. Thompson: “A Defense of Abortion,” (Vaughn: 173-183) “First, Second, and Third-Wave Feminism” (Rosentand-posted in Blackboard), pp. 575-588. optional reading-recommended
	01/14/09	Don Marquis: “Why Abortion is Immoral” (Vaughn: 192-204)
	01/15/09	Mary Ann Warren: “On the Moral and Legal Status of Abortion” (Vaughn: 183-192) & “Postscript on Infanticide” (posted in Blackboard)
	01/016/09	Quiz 2 Discussion & Q/A

- Note: The Content of the Syllabus is liable to change, please check the Blackboard postings and other announcements for updates.**