

Philosophy and Society (Spring 2013)

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This is a class about Ethics. The question that will be our primary focus is *what is wrong?* We will ask this question about a variety of issues in applied ethics, including killing animals for food, abortion, redistributive taxation, and global poverty. Consider some statistics about these issues:

- Last year, more than 10 billion land animals were raised and killed for food in the U.S.*
- Since Roe v. Wade, more than 54 million legal abortions have been performed in the U.S.*
- The top 10% of earners in the U.S. are responsible for 70% of federal taxes.*
- Worldwide, an average of 22,000 children die each day from starvation and poverty related illnesses.*

If abortion or killing animals for food is wrong, then these statistics indicate that there are many moral atrocities committed every year. If it is wrong to take from the affluent to give to the poor, then the US government is responsible for great injustices against the wealthy in its country. For these reasons, we should take great care when answering the question *what is wrong?* Our answers to this question will determine whether we should abandon or retain many common social practices. In order to figure out what is wrong we must first gain a clear understanding of the positions on these issues, and then assess those positions critically. The primary aim of this course is to improve your abilities to critically think about controversial issues and to honestly assess your own beliefs.

REQUIRED READING

What's Wrong? Applied Ethicists and Their Critics, 2nd ed.,
David Boonin & Graham Oddie, eds., Oxford U. Press 2010.

There will be additional readings that you can find on the course website. The readings that come from *What's Wrong* will be labeled as 'WW' on the course schedule. The readings that come from the course website will be labeled as 'pdf'.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Below is a schedule of the topics that we will cover, along with which reading(s) you should complete for each class meeting. Readings found in our textbook are marked: (WW). Readings not found in the text are marked: (pdf). Please note the two **paper due dates**, three **debate days**, and the two **exam dates**.

Week 1 (1/15—1/17) Introduction

Tues., 1/15: Syllabus (Read it carefully)

Thurs., 1/17: "What's Wrong With Arguing?" section 1, section 3.1, and section 4.1 (WW: 1-12)

Huemer, "[Why Our Politics Is Irrational](#)" Video: Ted Talk

Week 2 (1/22—1/24) Moral Foundations

- Tues., 1/22: Excerpts from Mill's *Utilitarianism* (pdf, chapter 2)
 "Consequentialism" section 5 and 5.1.1 (WW, pp. 24-26)
- Thurs., 1/24: Nozick, "Side Constraints" (pdf)
 Nozick, "The Experience Machine" (pdf)
 "Deontology" section 5.1.2 (WW, pp. 26-27)

Week 3 (1/29—1/31) Ethics of Abortion

- Tues., 1/29: Marquis and his critics (WW, pp. 58-60)
 Marquis, "Why Abortion is Immoral" (WW, pp. 61-69)
 Paske, "Abortion and the Neonatal Right to Life" (WW, pp. 70-76)
- Thurs., 1/31: Norcross, "Killing, Abortion, and Contraception" (WW, pp. 76-82)
 McInerney, "Does a Fetus Already Have a Future-Like-Ours?" (WW, pp. 83-85)

Week 4 (2/5—2/7) Abortion cont'd

- Tues., 2/5: *Thomson and her critics* (WW, pp. 85-88)
 Thomson, "A Defense of Abortion" (WW, pp. 89-98)
- Thurs., 2/7: Boonin and Audi from their "Introduction" (WW, pp. 9-12)
 Brody, "Thomson on Abortion" (WW, pp. 99-101)
 Beckwith, "Arguments from Bodily Rights" (WW, pp. 102-107)

Week 5 (2/12—2/14) Animal Ethics

- Tues., 2/12: Debate Day 1
 Regan and His Critics (WW, pp. 108-110)
 Regan, "The Case for Animal Rights" (WW, pp. 111-118)
 Frey, "Why Animals Lack Beliefs and Desires," and "The Case Against Animal Rights" (WW, pp. 125-129)
 White, "Rights" (WW, pp. 129-130)
- Thurs., 2/14: Norcross, "Puppies, Pigs, and People" (pdf)
 Video: "Glass Walls"

Week 6 (2/19—2/21) Animal Ethics/Euthanasia

- Tues., 2/19: Anderson, "Animal Rights and the Values of Nonhuman Life" (2004)
- Thurs., 2/21: *Rachels and His Critics* (WW, pp. 44-46)
 Rachels, "Active and Passive Euthanasia" (WW, pp. 46-50)
 Nesbitt, "Is Killing No Worse Than Letting Die?" (WW, pp. 50-53)
 Perrett, "Killing, Letting Die, and the Bare Difference Argument" (WW, pp. 54-57)
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Week 7 (2/26—2/28) Review and Midterm Exam

Tues., 2/26: Review for first exam

Thurs., 2/28: **Midterm exam**

Week 8 (3/5—3/7) Famine Relief

Tues., 3/5: *Singer and His Critics* (WW, pp. 131-134)

Singer, "Famine, Affluence, and Morality" (WW, pp. 135-142)

Shah, [Poverty Facts and Statistics](#) (Web)

Optional:

Singer, ["The Singer Solution to World Poverty"](#) (Web)

Thurs., 3/7: Arthur, "World Hunger and Moral Obligation" (WW, pp. 142-145)

Slote, "Famine, Affluence, and Empathy" (WW, pp. 146-154)

Week 9 (3/12—3/14) Famine Relief Cont'd

Tues., 3/12: Debate Day 2

Hardin, "Lifeboat Ethics" (pdf)

Sen, "Population: Delusion, and Reality" (pdf)

First paper due

Thur., 3/14: **Class Cancelled**

Week 10 (3/19—3/21) Cloning

Tues., 3/19: VIDEO: "Genetics: Cloning" (Web)

Bonser and Conger, ["How Human Cloning will Work"](#) (Web)

Council on Bioethics, "Human Cloning and Human Dignity," (WW, pp. 477-491)

Thurs., 3/21: VIDEO HOMEWORK: [Kagan on the Ethics of Human Cloning](#) (Web: Turn in notes on this video.)

Elliot, "Uniqueness, Individuality, and Human Cloning" (WW, pp. 491-493)

Hershenov, "An Argument for Limited Human Cloning" (WW, pp. 493-496)

Week 11 (3/26—3/28) Spring Break

Tues., 3/26: Spring Break

Thurs., 3/28: Spring Break

Week 12 (4/2—4/4) Parental Licensing

Tues., 4/2: *LaFollette and His Critics* (WW, pp. 312-314)

Hugh LaFollette, "Licensing Parents" (WW, pp. 314-322)

Thomson Child and Family Focus, ["Foster Parent Licensing"](#) (Web)

Thurs., 4/4: Frisch, "On Licentious Licensing: A Reply to Hugh LaFollette" (WW, pp. 323-327)

Lemieux, "Parent Licensing" (WW, pp. 327-329)

Week 13 (4/9—4/11) Redistributive Taxation

Tues., 4/9: Debate Day 3

Dupre, “The Difference Principle” (pdf)

Rawls, “Justice as Fairness” (pdf)

Thurs., 4/11: *Nozick and His Critics* (WW, pp. 580-581)

Nozick, “Distributive Justice” (WW, pp. 582-589)

Week 14 (4/16—4/18) Reparations

Tues., 4/16: Boonin, “The Compensation Argument” from *Should Race Matter?* (pdf)

Thurs., 4/18: Parfit, “The Non-identity Problem” (pdf)

Horowitz, “Ten Reasons Why Reparations for Blacks Is a Bad Idea for Blacks—and Racist, Too!” (WW, pp. 364-366)

Week 15 (4/23—4/25) Affirmative Action

Tues., 4/23: *Himma and His Critics* (WW, pp. 374-376)

Himma, “Discrimination and Disidentification” (WW, pp. 376-388)

Thurs., 4/25: VIDEO: [Affirmative Action](#) (Web)

Newton, “A Fair Defense of a False Start: A Reply to Kenneth Himma” (WW, pp. 389-393)

Kelly, Roedder, “Racial Cognition and the Ethics of Implicit Bias” (pdf)

Second paper due

Week 16 (4/30—5/2) The Drug War

Tues., 4/30: Huemer, “America’s Unjust Drug War” (pdf)

Thurs., 5/2: Review for Final Exam
