

**UNIVERSITY of the FRASER VALLEY
COURSE OUTLINE**

Course: Philosophy 110: Morality and Politics

Section No.: AB1 (T 1:00-3:50) & AB2 (W 7:00-9:50)

Term: Spring 2011

Instructor: Wayne I. Henry

Phone: 4684

Office Hours: Wednesday, 5:00-7:00pm

CRN: 11317 & 10436

Room: B101 & A315

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Course Format:

Three hours per week in a mix of lecture and class discussion.

Course Prerequisites:

None.

Course Description & Objectives:

Ethical dilemmas manifest themselves in our lives at both a personal level and a social level. Examples of personal dilemmas include: what is the proper response to receiving too much change? is it ethical to manipulate someone to your own advantage even if you don't think the other person can be harmed or compromised by this? If you find yourself pregnant with an unwanted pregnancy, should you have it aborted? Examples of social dilemmas include: can capital punishment be justified? how should society treat those that abuse animals or the environment? what are the obligations of society to provide for the disadvantaged?

This course will begin with a discussion of the nature of ethical dilemmas and the role of ethical theories in adjudicating these dilemmas. We will subsequently focus our attention on utilitarian and deontological theories in an attempt to see how these alternatives deal with such issues as: relativism vs. realism and subjectivity vs. objectivity in ethics. Armed with this theoretical background, we will turn our attention to some particular ethical dilemmas (e.g., the capital punishment debate, the abortion issue, the issue of equality, etc.) with the goal of seeing how the principles we have learned are applied in practical circumstances. Although we will discover that there is rarely (perhaps never) a 'right' answer to the dilemmas we face, I hope to convince you of the value of learning to think critically and independently about issues that have a significant impact on our lives.

Specific objectives include:

1. To teach students the basic concepts and methods of sound reasoning.
2. To enable students to use these concepts and methods to analyze and evaluate arguments.
3. To develop the abilities of students to construct rational arguments in support of a conclusion.
4. To enable students to express their reasoning lucidly, both orally and in writing.
5. To engage students in reasoned discussion of contemporary public issues.

Text:

Lewis Vaughn (2010) *Contemporary Moral Arguments: Readings in Ethical Issues*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Course Requirements:

- One short essay (3-5 double-spaced pages) worth 10%.
- Attendance at essay-writing seminar worth 5%.
- One longer essay (8-10 double-spaced pages):
 - Essay clinic (attendance and draft required) worth 5%.
 - Essay worth 20%.

Note: I do not accept essays submitted by email; hard copies only.

- An in-class mid-term worth 20%.
- A final exam worth 30% of the final mark.
- Class participation in the discussions will account for 10% of the final mark.

Grading Profile:

- A+ 87-100
- A 84-86
- A- 80-83
- B+ 77-79
- B 74-76
- B- 70-73
- C+ 67-69
- C 64-66
- C- 60-63
- D 50-59
- F 0-49

SYLLABUS:

WEEK 1

- Introduction: overview of the course and its requirements.
- Moral theories: what is a moral theory? And what does it give us?

WEEK 2

- Egoism and moral skepticism.
- Ethical relativism.

WEEK 3

- Short essay due.
- Teleological moral theories and Utilitarianism.

WEEK 4

- Teleological moral theories and Utilitarianism - con't.
- Duty theories and Kantianism.

WEEK 5

- Duty theories and Kantianism – con't.

WEEK 6

- Punishment: Utilitarianism vs. Kantianism.
- Review for mid-term

WEEK 7

- Mid-term

WEEK 8

- The issue of abortion.
- Essay seminar.
- Essay topic distributed.

WEEK 9

- Global warming and consumption.
- Essay clinic #1 – draft of essay due.

WEEK 10

- The moral status of animals.
- Vote for next topic.
- Essay (final version) due.

WEEK 11

- Voted topic.

WEEK 12

- Voted topic.

WEEK 13

- Review for final exam.

- This syllabus is tentative and will be amended as required. It is the student's responsibility to keep abreast of such changes.

NOTE: It is the responsibility of the student to keep abreast of the readings (that is the point of the syllabus) and, if absent, to secure class notes from another student. These materials are not easy to read and, thus, you must leave ample time for the task. The committed student will have read the assigned material (more than once) before the class in which it is to be discussed and will reread

the assigned readings immediately after the class discussion. As well, a committed student will ensure that their essays or other homework assignments are begun well before the due date. A good essay will require, at a minimum, 4-6 hours to produce an outline and first draft, and about an equal amount of time to adequately revise and produce the final version to be submitted. I am happy to read early drafts and outlines, but I am quite a bit less willing to do this the day before the essay is due. Essay topics are distributed well in advance of the due date for just this reason.

POLICIES:

University of the Fraser Valley has policies on Academic Appeals (including appeal of final grades), Student Conduct, Cheating and Plagiarism, Academic Probation and other educational issues. Copies of these and other policies are distributed to all students during the registration process and are also available in the University Calendar and in the Library. Following are some specific items I wish to draw to your attention:

Respect in the Classroom:

I strive to create an environment of mutual respect for all participants in the classroom so they can feel comfortable contributing to the class discussions and so on. The standard rules of courtesy apply here, but this is one I insist upon: **all cell phones are shut off while in the classroom. No exceptions!**

Absenteeism:

Regular attendance is a requirement of this course. All missed classes will require documentation. A student that is absent for more than four classes and, thus, not adequately participating in class will not be permitted to write the final exam, even with documentation. For similar reasons, I will not accept submitted work from those who are absent for more than four classes.

Missed Assignments:

There is no provision for make-up assignments. Thus, students lose the portion of the grade associated with any missed work.

Late Assignments:

Late assignments are not accepted except at the instructor's discretion in cases of illness or bereavement. Documentation will be required.

"I" Grade:

Not normally given.

Class Participation:

The grade for class participation is based on both the frequency and the quality of the student's comments, questions and observations, with the emphasis on quality. The quality is determined by, among other things, the relevance, insight and clarity of remarks.

English Usage:

Proper English usage is essential to the enterprise of presenting and defending one's ideas; if the instructor cannot understand what the student is trying to say, it is impossible to evaluate the student's work. Thus, any submitted work that is seriously grammatically flawed will be returned unmarked, and the student will be required to resubmit the work for evaluation with a penalty of five points. This offer will not apply to final term essays or assignments, which will be given a mark of zero. If it is anticipated that there will be problems meeting this requirement, it is incumbent on the student to seek help from, for example, the Writing Centre on campus.

Plagiarism and Cheating:

Plagiarism is the deliberate presentation or submission of the research, work, ideas, illustrations or diagrams of others as one's own without citation or credit. Cheating includes the use of unauthorized aids, assistance or materials in the preparation of assignments or in examinations. During examinations, it is considered cheating to communicate with others to obtain information, to copy from the work of others, or to deliberately expose or convey information to others. The resubmission of one's own work for which credit has already been granted in another course, without the instructor's permission, is also cheating. Penalties for academic dishonesty may include a grade of zero on the examination or assignment, a failing grade for the course, suspension from the university, or expulsion from the university.

Office Consultation:

My official office hours will be Wednesdays, 5:00-7:00pm. However, you can consider me to be available to help you whenever I am on campus. This means you can feel free to visit me at my office at any time, or approach me at any time and any place. If I am busy or for some reason unable to help you at that moment, we will schedule a time that is convenient for both of us. As a matter of personal preference, I think it's much more civil to have discussions over a cup of coffee and I can often be found in the cafeteria. Should you see me there, please feel free to join me to discuss the course, or anything else for that matter. I am also available by email, but please allow up to two working days for a response.