

SEMESTER AT SEA COURSE SYLLABUS

Voyage: Fall 2013

Discipline: Philosophy

PHIL 2510: Global Ethics

Division: Lower Division

Faculty Name: Brian R. Clack

Pre-requisites: One lower division philosophy course.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This upper division class will explore some major elements in moral philosophy, with a focus upon moral and cultural diversity. The class will consider and evaluate the relativist and subjectivist conclusions often drawn from the facts of moral diversity, and will explore different religious systems of morality (Christianity, Islam, Buddhism) as well as the differences between religious and secular approaches to ethics. After these theoretical matters have been addressed we will turn our attention to issues of practical moral concern. Such issues will include perennial matters of life and death (abortion, euthanasia, the killing of animals) and global issues arising from our increasingly interconnected global situation (world poverty, environmental ethics, war, torture and terrorism).

COURSE OBJECTIVES

By the end of the course students should be able:

- (i) To describe the main tenets of the major ethical theories (e.g. Utilitarianism, Kantianism) in essay form.
- (ii) To identify specific moral problems and apply these ethical theories to them.
- (iii) To appreciate the diversity of moral perspectives and explain how each perspective makes judgments about specific moral problems.
- (iv) To understand the specific range of global moral problems arising from an increasingly inter-related world.

REQUIRED TEXTBOOKS

AUTHOR: James Rachels

TITLE: *The Right Thing to Do: Basic Readings in Moral Philosophy*

PUBLISHER: McGraw Hill

ISBN #: 978-0078038235

DATE/EDITION: 2011, Sixth Edition

AUTHOR: Heather Widdows

TITLE: *Global Ethics: An Introduction*

PUBLISHER: Acumen

ISBN #: 978-1-84465-282-2

DATE/EDITION: 2011

TOPICAL OUTLINE OF COURSE

A1- August 27: First responses to moral diversity: Relativism

READING: Widdows, pp. 30-42.

A2-August 29: First responses to moral diversity: Subjectivism and Emotivism

READING: Rachels, chapter 6 ('The Subjectivity of Values', by J. L. Mackie)

August 30-September 1: St. Petersburg

A3- September 3: Moral Theories: (I) Kantianism

READING: Widdows, pp. 53-58; Rachels, chapter 7 ('The Categorical Imperative', by Immanuel Kant)

September 4-7: Hamburg

A4- September 9: Moral Theories: (II) Utilitarianism

READING: Widdows, pp. 44-52; Rachels, chapters 3-5 (selections from Mill, Williams, and Nozick)

ASSIGNMENT DUE: 500 word reflection-piece on Schopenhauer, sympathy and the Dialogue in the Dark field lab.

September 10-12: Antwerp

September 13-15: Le Havre

A5- September 17: Moral Theories: (III) Virtue Ethics

READING: Widdows, pp. 59-65; Rachels, chapter 8 ('The Virtues', by Aristotle)

September 18: Arrive & Depart Galway

September 19: In Transit

September 20-21: Dublin

A6- September 23: Morality and Religion: Some Preliminary Issues

READING: Rachels, pp. 5-7.

September 25-27: Lisbon

September 28-30: Cadiz

A7- October 1: Religious Approaches: (I) Biblical Ethics

READING: The Gospel of St Matthew, chapters 5-7 (in electronic course material folder)

October 3-6: Casablanca

A8- October 7: Religious Approaches: (II) Islamic Ethics

READING: Azim Nanji, 'Islamic Ethics' (in electronic course material folder)

A9- October 9: Religious Ethics: (III) Buddhist Ethics

READING: The Buddha, 'The First Sermon and the Synopsis of Truth' (in electronic course material folder)

A10- October 12: In-class **midterm test**

October 13-16: Tema

A11- October 18: Life and Death: Abortion

READING: Rachels, chapters 11-13 (essays by Marquis, Thomson and Warren)

A12- October 21: Life and Death: Euthanasia

READING: Rachels, chapters 34 & 35 (essays by Rachels and Gay-Williams)

October 23-27: Cape Town

A13- October 28: Life and Death: The Death Penalty

READING: Rachels, chapters 18 & 19 (essays by Pojman and Bright)

A14- October 31: Life and Death: Animals

READING: Rachels, chapters 14-16 (essays by Singer, Norcross and Machan)

A15- November 2: Sexual Ethics

READING: Rachels, chapters 26-29 (essays by Russell, McMurtry, Sullivan and Boonin)

A16- November 5: Drugs

READING: Rachels, chapter 25 ('America's Unjust Drug War', by Michael Huemer)

ASSIGNMENT DUE: 1500 word paper

November 7-9: Buenos Aires

November 10-12: Montevideo

A17- November 13: The Concept of Global Ethics

READING: Widdows, chapters 1, 2, & 4.

A18- November 15: Global Human Rights

READING: Widdows, chapter 5.

November 16-18: Rio de Janeiro

A19- November 20: World Poverty

READING: Widdows, chapter 7; Rachels, chapter 17 ('The Singer Solution to World Poverty', by Peter Singer)

A20- November 22: War

READING: Widdows, chapter 8; Rachels, chapters 20-22 (essays by Gawande, Lackey and Rawls)

A21- November 25: (enter Amazon) Terrorism and Torture

READING: Widdows, chapter 8; Rachels, chapters 23 & 24 (essays by Nagel and Luban)

November 27-29: Manaus

A22- December 1: (exit Amazon) Global Bioethics

READING: Widdows, chapter 9; Rachels, chapters 38 & 39 (essays by Burrows and Childress)

A23- December 3: Environmental and Climate Ethics

READING: Widdows, chapter 10

A24- December 10: A Day Finals; Journal also due this day.

FIELD WORK

FIELD LAB (*At least 20 percent of the contact hours for each course, to be led by the instructor.*) **Attendance and participation in the Field Lab is MANDATORY.**

First Choice: Hamburg: The theme of this field lab will be *empathy* and there will be two specific activities: a visit to the *Dialog im Dunklen* [Dialogue in the Dark], a 90 minute experience during which participants are led through various activities and challenges in total darkness by legally blind guides. The second activity is a visit to the Kunsthalle, an art museum in which we will explore the role of empathic understanding in art. These activities are linked to the sections of the class focused on compassion and empathy in moral theory (principally, the philosophy of Schopenhauer).

Second Choice: Casablanca: We would spend the day at the White Mosque and the field lab would be related to themes in Islamic ethics.

FIELD ASSIGNMENTS

- After completion of the field lab in Hamburg, students will complete an essay on Arthur Schopenhauer and the role of sympathy and empathy in morality.
- In addition to the specific field lab assignment, students will keep a voyage journal. Here, students will respond to class- and port-specific philosophical prompts that will be generated organically during the voyage and assigned before debarkation at each port.
- The journal and the field lab assignment will be graded separately. A detailed breakdown of percentages can be found below.

METHODS OF EVALUATION / GRADING RUBRIC

Grades will be based upon five assessed pieces of work:

- (1) Field lab essay on Schopenhauer and sympathy (10%)
- (2) A mid-term test on theoretical issues in ethics (20%)
- (3) A five-page paper on an issue in practical ethics (30%)
- (4) A journal relating to field assignments (10%)
- (5) The final examination (30%)

Class participation may also figure in the determination of grades.

RESERVE LIBRARY LIST

AUTHOR: John Stuart Mill
TITLE: *On Liberty and Other Essays*
PUBLISHER: Oxford University Press
ISBN #: 978-0-199535736
DATE/EDITION: 2008

AUTHOR: Aristotle
TITLE: *Nicomachean Ethics*
PUBLISHER: Hackett
ISBN #: 978-0872204645
DATE/EDITION: 1999

AUTHOR: Hugh LaFollette
TITLE: *Ethics in Practice*
PUBLISHER: Blackwell
ISBN #: 978-1405129459
DATE/EDITION: 2006 / Third Edition

AUTHOR: Peter Singer
TITLE: *Practical Ethics*
PUBLISHER: Cambridge University Press
ISBN #: 978-0521707688
DATE/EDITION: 2011 / Third Edition

ELECTRONIC COURSE MATERIALS

BOOK: The Bible
SECTION: Gospel of St Matthew chapters 5-7.

AUTHOR: Azim Nanji
ARTICLE/CHAPTER TITLE: 'Islamic Ethics'
BOOK TITLE: *A Companion to Ethics*, edited by Peter Singer
PUBLISHER: Blackwell
DATE: 1993
PAGES: Pp. 106-119.

AUTHOR: The Buddha
CHAPTER TITLE: 'The First Sermon and the Synopsis of Truth'
BOOK TITLE: *World Ethics*, by Wanda Torres-Gregory and Donna Giancola
PUBLISHER: Wadsworth

DATE: 2002
PAGES: Pp. 181-186.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

None required

HONOR CODE

Semester at Sea students enroll in an academic program administered by the University of Virginia, and thus bind themselves to the University's honor code. The code prohibits all acts of lying, cheating, and stealing. Please consult the Voyager's Handbook for further explanation of what constitutes an honor offense.

Each written assignment for this course must be pledged by the student as follows: "On my honor as a student, I pledge that I have neither given nor received aid on this assignment." The pledge must be signed, or, in the case of an electronic file, signed "[signed]."