PHIL 101.1: Contemporary Moral Problems
Winter Quarter 2007
TR: 3:30p.m.-5:55p.m./CB Rm. 105

Instructor: Dr. Maria Paleologou
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Office Hours: Thursday 1:00p.m.-3:30p.m. OR by appointment

Required Texts:
3. WebCT Handouts

COURSE DESCRIPTION
It is a sad and disturbing fact that ordinary people who simply do their jobs and have no particular hostilities can be persuaded to torture, and even kill, another person at the urging of an authority figure. Studies have shown that when it comes to judging social issues, such as abortion, pornography, and homosexuality, many college students had inconsistent “informational assumptions”; unable to provide a well-thought out rational justification for their position, they would often change positions depending on the questions asked. The cost/effect consequences of such behavior are detrimental: as Adolf Hitler once said: “What good fortune for those in power that people do not think.”

To minimize the predicament Hitler prophesizes for humans, moral philosophy studies the values and guidelines by which we live, as well as the justification of these values and guidelines. Ethicists investigate concepts such as good and bad, right and wrong, praise and blame. They focus on issues of moral obligation, principles of moral conduct, virtue, the justification of behavior and character.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES
Goal 1. Understand the experiences and ideas of others
   Objective: Discuss the similarities and differences of theories and ideas presented by various ethicists on the proposed topics.

Goal 2. Understand one’s own culture and community.
   Objective 1: Discuss the assumptions underlying the theories and their applications on contemporary moral issues.
   Objective 2: Discuss the assumptions underlying your own moral system and principles regarding contemporary moral issues.

Goal 3. Appreciate and critically evaluate diverse value systems.
   Objective 1: Distinguish between normative and descriptive claims.
   Objective 2: Critically evaluate the assumptions and principles specific ethical systems rely on.
   Objective 3: Use the proposed ethical theories to evaluate contemporary moral debates on the proposed moral questions.

Goal 4. Critically analyze original and secondary texts.
   Objective 1: Critically evaluate ethical systems and solutions.
Objective 2: Further the philosophical/ethical debate by offering proposals as to how the project might be undertaken.

Goal 5. Understand changes in the human condition over time.

Objective 1: View the ethical debate and the proposed solutions in light of their historical context.

Objective 2: Evaluate how the historical context affects moral development.

HOW TO APPROACH THE COURSE

- Every 5-unit CSUB course requires about 10 hours of work per week outside of class. Read the assigned material before you come to class. Having read the material before you come to class will help you understand the in-class discussions.
- Understanding the issues is an essential component of this class. Simply having read and memorized the material will not be enough to pass this class. You should also have understood and critically reflected upon the issues.
- Come to class. There is a formal attendance policy (check Course Policies).
- Do well on the course requirements. To successfully finish this class, not only do you need to show up for every class meeting, but also successfully pass the course requirements.
- Class discussion is quite essential to understanding and appreciating the value of philosophical investigation. Although there is no formal class participation policy, you are strongly encouraged to engage in the issues discussed.
- Ask questions. Any time you are in doubt regarding the material or the course mechanics, do not hesitate to ask. Philosophy is an active, intellectual enterprise.
- Care more about what is right than who is right.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS: Grades for this course will be determined by:

- Two Exams worth 70% of the final grade:
  - Exam #1 (30%)
  - Final Exam (40%)
- Reading Quizzes worth 15% of the final grade
- Homework and Reflection Assignments worth 15% of the final grade.

Grade Distribution

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COURSE POLICIES

WebCT

The syllabus, updated reading and writing assignments, handouts, email, grades, and any special event announcements, all will be posted on WebCT. Only the students who are officially enrolled in this class, and have a current CSUB ID will have access to the postings. The postings will be updated every week. I highly recommend that you check WebCT daily for updates.

Exams

The week before each exam you will be given a study guide with items that will help you focus your studying. I highly recommend that you carefully work through the study guide, since the exam questions will come out of that guide. Each exam may consist of True/False statements, multiple choice, short essay questions. At least half an hour before the end of the last class meeting before each exam will be assigned to review. The review will be highly beneficial if you come prepared with questions that you would like me to clarify. And always be aware that...
**Reading Quizzes**

The quizzes will be **announced** the day before and their format will vary (see exam format above). You will know the format beforehand. Their content will consist of material from the day-before lecture/class discussion and the new reading assignment. The quizzes will be given some time during the class meeting. **Note:** If you leave the class meeting after you have taken the quiz unexcused, you will receive a zero grade on it (the rule does not apply if the quiz is given at the end of the meeting). Each quiz is worth 10 points and all of them together are worth 15% of your final grade.

**Homework AND Reflection Assignments**

**Homework Assignment:** The goal of the homework assignment is to give you an opportunity to think in advance of the issues that will be covered in class that day. **Your answers should be typed, double spaced, 12 font, one inch left/right, top/bottom margins, and no more than one page long. Handwritten assignments will not be accepted.** You must turn them in the beginning of the class; otherwise the assignment will be late. **Electronic submissions will be accepted only for documented reasons. Unexcused submissions will not be accepted.** A well-thought-out answer will receive a 10. If there is evidence that you did not think carefully about the answer, you will receive either a 5 or a 0. If you turn in the assignment late or not at all, you will receive a 0. **Your answers should be free of grammatical and syntactical errors.** The **exact content of the HW assignment will be announced on WebCT.**

**Reflection Assignment:** The goal of the reflection papers is to help you see how the material we are discussing in class can be related to your life and the world outside class. In a paragraph or two you can write how a specific issue outside class relates to something we are doing in class. Here is an example of what it is that I am looking for: “Last Saturday my friend and I were watching the movie “Dead Man Walking”. In one scene, ____________, This specific scene reminded me of ___________ in this class, because ________________.” Or, “In my anthropology class, my teacher said that ______________, which made me think of ______________.” Your **answers should be typed, double spaced, 12 font, one inch left/right, top/bottom margins, and no more than one page long. Handwritten assignments will not be accepted.** The assignments are due at the beginning of the class; otherwise the assignment will be late. **Electronic submissions will be accepted only for documented reasons. Unexcused submissions will not be accepted.** Since the reflection assignments are meant to be a safe place for you to write down your own take on the material, I will not be correcting them. However, your answers should be free of grammatical and syntactical errors. A well-thought-out answer, that shows how the material in class relates to the world outside of class, will receive a 10. An answer that shows the relevance of the material discussed in class to the outside world but there is evidence that it was not thought carefully will receive a 5. An irrelevant answer or a late assignment will receive a 0. **All homework and reflection assignments are worth 15% of your final grade.**

**Make-ups**

In general, make-ups will **not** be allowed. However, if you miss an exam, homework and/or reflection assignment, or a quiz for **reasons that are beyond your control** (illness, car accident) you **must** contact me either before class or as soon as possible afterwards. The make-up **may** be granted upon proper documentation, i.e. a doctor’s note, receipt from the mechanic. **Failure to do so will result in a zero grade for the missed assignment.**

**Writing Center**

The Writing Center has assigned an assistant to help philosophy students better their writing skills. Since part of the evaluation of your work depends upon grammar, syntax, and spelling, I **strongly** recommend that you visit with the assistant.
**Academic Misconduct**

“ACADEMIC DISHONESTY (CHEATING) is a broad category of actions that use fraud and deception to improve a grade or obtain course credit. Academic dishonesty (cheating) is not limited to examination situations alone, but arises whenever students attempt to gain an unearned academic advantage. PLAGIARISM is a specific form of academic dishonesty (cheating) which consists of the misuse of published or unpublished works of another by claiming them as one’s own. Plagiarism may consist of handing in someone else’s work, copying or purchasing a composition, using ideas, paragraphs, sentences, phrases or words written by another, or using data and/or statistics compiled by another without given appropriate citation. Another example of academic dishonesty (cheating) is the SUBMISSION OF THE SAME, or essentially the same, PAPER or other assignment for credit in two different courses without receiving prior approval.” (California State University, Bakersfield Catalog, p.57) In such cases as the above, I will rigorously enforce the University’s policies as set forth in the California State University, Bakersfield Catalog.

**Harassment Policy**

Written or spoken statements that can be construed as harassment will not be tolerated and will be reported to the appropriate university office for proper legal investigation and action. This includes, but is not limited to, comments based on race, ethnic origin, gender, disability, or sexual orientation.

**Reasonable Accommodations Policy**

Any student in this course who has a disability that may prevent him or her from fully demonstrating his or her abilities should contact me personally as soon as possible so we can discuss accommodations necessary to ensure full participation and facilitate your educational opportunities.

**Class Etiquette**

Out of self-respect and respect for others I expect that during lectures or class activities you refrain from (1) private conversations, (2) reading newspapers, doing crossword puzzles, etc., (3) receiving cell phone calls, (4) leaving the classroom during the lecture, and (5) starting packing up your belongings before class is over. **Such behavior is very disruptive and students who engage in it will be asked to leave the classroom.** If you need to leave the classroom during the lecture for a serious reason, let me know before the class starts and be seated close to the door.

**TENTATIVE SCHEDULE**

The general plan is that by the end of the winter quarter we will have covered the proposed papers from Rachels’ books. But since engaging in moral investigation and justification is not a matter of quantity but rather of quality, at times we may have to spend more time on a specific paper or issue. **In such cases, we will make the relevant changes in the schedule which will be posted on WebCT.** It is your responsibility to check WebCT for such updates. **SPECIAL NOTE:** I consider each class I teach as the product of a successful collaboration between the teacher and the students. This can happen as early as the construction of this syllabus. For instance, the second part of the schedule regarding the reading assignments, i.e. **Weeks 6-10,** is left open for a specific reason. Part II of Rachels’ book *The Right Thing to Do* contains contemporary literature on specific issues of moral debate. Each paper in this book can be grouped roughly in the following categories:

- **Category A:** Abortion (papers 10 & 11)
- **Category B:** Cloning (paper 12)
- **Category C:** Sexual Morality (paper 13)
- **Category D:** Poverty (papers 14 & 15)
- **Category E:** Euthanasia (papers 17 & 18)
- **Category F:** Animal Rights (papers 19 & 20)
- **Category G:** Environmental Ethics (papers 21 & 22)
- **Category H:** Just Wars (paper 23)
- **Category I:** Death Penalty (papers 24 & 25)
➢ Category J: War on Drugs (paper 26)
➢ Category K: Feminist Ethics (paper 28)
➢ Category L: Racial Discrimination (paper 29-31)

Each paper in the above categories is being introduced by a brief prologue. Your input and first HW assignment consists in reading each prologue and prioritizing each category with respect to interest using numbers. Specifically, number 1 will represent the category you would be mostly interested in reading and discussing first; number 2 will be the next in line with respect to your interest, and number 12 will represent the category you would be the least interested in reading and discussing. Each of your preference should be followed by a brief justification for your choice (no more than 4 lines). Once I collect your preferences, I will assign the reading assignments for the rest of the weeks using the majority rule. The second part of the syllabus will be finalized by the end of the third week of classes. No changes will be allowed after that. Reminder: I highly recommend that you take the assignment seriously. As I understand it, one of the reasons you have decided to enroll in this class is because you are interested in issues of morality and moral debate and one way to show this is by voicing your preferences.

Reminder: Next to each date you will find the assignments that are due for that date. Always check WebCt for the updated version of the assignments for each class meeting.

Week #1: January 1-January 5

January 2: Introduction to class: Syllabus
Class Activity

January 4: Some Basic Points about Arguments (The Right Thing: pp. 20-28)
The Challenge of Cultural Relativism (Elements: pp. 16-34)

Week #2: January 8-January 12

January 9: Subjectivism in Ethics (Elements: pp. 35-51)
Hume: Morality as Based on Sentiment (The Right Thing: pp. 65-69)
Quiz #1
HW #1 (check WebCT)

January 11: Does Morality Depend on Religion? (Elements: pp. 53-67)
Aquinas: Ethics and Natural Law (The Right Thing: pp. 50-51)
Quiz #2
Reflection #1

Week #3: January 15-January 19

January 16: The Ethics of Virtue (Elements: pp. 173-190)
Aristotle: The Virtues (The Right Thing: pp. 43-49)
Quiz #3

January 18: Ethical Egoism (Elements: pp. 68-88)
The Idea of Social Contract (Elements: pp. 141-159)
Hobbes: The Social Contract (The Right Thing: pp. 56-64)
Quiz #4
HW #2 (check WebCT)

Week #4: January 22-January 26

January 23: The Utilitarian Approach (Elements: pp. 89-99)
The Debate over Utilitarianism (Elements: pp. 100-116)
Mill: Utilitarianism (The Right Thing: pp. 70-80)
Quiz #5
January 27: Are There Absolute Moral Values? (Elements: pp. 117-129)  
Kant and Respect for Persons (Elements: pp. 130-140)  
Kant: The Categorical Imperative (The Right Thing: pp. 81-88)  
STUDY GUIDE #1  
Reflection #2  
Quiz #6

Week #5: January 29-February 4  
January 30: Finish up theories of ethics  
IN-CLASS REVIEW SESSION #1  
Reflection #3  
February 3: EXAM #1 tentatively

Week #6: February 5-February 9  
February 6:  
HW #3 (check WebCT)  
February 8:  
Quiz #7

Week #7: February 12-February 16  
February 13:  
Quiz #8  
February 15:  
Reflection #4  
Quiz #9

Week #8: February 19-February 23  
February 20:  
HW #4 (check WebCT)  
Quiz #10  
February 22:  
STUDY GUIDE #2  
Reflection #5

Week #9: February 26-March 2  
February 27:  
March 1:  
HW #5 (check WebCT)

Week #10: March 5-March 9  
March 6:  
March 8: IN-CLASS REVIEW SESSION #2

FINIAL EXAM  
PHIL. 101.1: THURSDAY MARCH 15: 5:00 p.m.-7:30 p.m.