

COURSE SYLLABUS

Honors 410: Contemporary Moral Issues

Spring Semester, 2016

Professor XXXXXX XXXXX

I. TEXTS

Contemporary Moral Arguments: Readings in Ethical Issues, 2nd Edition edited by Lewis Vaughn. Note that this is the 2nd Edition, which is the edition you should get. This text should be available at the University Bookstore (on campus). However, many of the reading for this course will be available on the Webcampus site. Other reading assignments are located on the Webcampus site for this course. It is probably wise to download all these essays as soon as possible, print them out, and make a folder or binder so that they are readily available when you need them. The Powerpoint slides for the course are also posted here, and assignments will also be posted.

II. EVALUATION

There will be a **MIDTERM EXAM** on **Monday, March 14** and a cumulative **FINAL EXAM** on **Monday, May 9, at 1:00 pm**. In addition, you will have two writing assignments during the course of the semester. The first paper will be shorter (about 3-4 pages), the latter paper will be somewhat longer (around 6-7 pages). For both papers you will have different possible topics to select from. The first paper will be due Feb. 29, the second paper will be due April 27. Topics for the longer paper will be suggested throughout the semester, and students may also develop their own topic as long as it is cleared in advance. Since no late papers will be accepted without official, university-approved justification, plan your schedules accordingly. (Students should know that one-on-one or small group assistance with writing is available free of charge to UNLV students at the Writing Center, located at CDC-301). Finally, there will also be the occasional quiz on the readings to make sure everyone is keeping up. In calculating your final grade, things will be broken down roughly as follows:

Quizzes and Participation: 10%

Midterm: 15%

Short Paper: 15%

Longer Paper: 30%

Final: 30%

III. OFFICE HOURS

My office is in the **Central Desert Complex # 4, rm. 411 # 895-2931**. Official hours will be **Mondays and Wednesdays: 11:30-12:30**, and by appointment. However, students are welcome to drop by whenever they wish or arrange alternative meeting times if the official hours are inconvenient. Also, correspondence is possible via e-mail at xxxxxx.xxxxx@unlv.edu, or, in case of emergency, cell at Xxx-Xxx-Xxxx.

IV. COURSE OBJECTIVES AND FORMAT

There are 2 main Course Objectives:

1. To provide students with an in-depth understanding of several significant moral problems, including abortion, torture, terrorism, capital punishment, physician-assisted suicide and extreme poverty. Students will learn about major philosophical positions, arguments, counter-arguments, and analyses of these contemporary moral problems
2. To teach students how to develop and defend their own views on these topics in an intellectually responsible manner. Students will develop critical thinking skills that will enable them to critique, construct and justify different positions and arguments.

V. FORMAT

Though a part of class may consist of lectures, this will primarily be a discussion-oriented seminar. All students are expected to participate in the seminar discussions. If you aren't speaking up, don't be surprised if you get called upon. At all times, students should feel free to ask questions, offer insights, raise objections, and so on. Students should come to class on time and stay throughout – repeating violators will be penalized.

VI. ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT

Academic integrity is a legitimate concern for every member of the campus community; all share in upholding the fundamental values of honesty, trust, respect, fairness, responsibility and professionalism. By choosing to join the UNLV community, students accept the expectations of the Academic Misconduct Policy and are encouraged when faced with choices to always take the ethical path. Students enrolling in UNLV assume the obligation to conduct themselves in a manner compatible with UNLV's function as an educational institution. All students must read the Guidelines Regarding Plagiarism included in the "Course Material" on Webcampus. You should also look at the "Student Academic Misconduct Policy" (approved December 9, 2005) located at: <http://studentlife.unlv.edu/judicial/misconductPolicy.html>. You are also encouraged to read the University's policy on copyright and fair use laws located at: <http://www.unlv.edu/committees/copyright/>.

VII. TOPICS AND READINGS (A ROUGH GUIDE)

As noted above, this course is designed to provide a philosophical analysis of various contemporary moral problems and debates. In most cases, we will look at arguments from opposing sides of the issue. Sometimes we will examine an argument for a particular position, and then criticisms of that argument; other times we might look at independent arguments for and against a given position. Because some of the articles are difficult and will require more than one reading, a strong effort has been made to minimize the quantity of material (though some weeks will still be demanding). A good strategy would be to read all of the material for an upcoming week once during the preceding weekend, and then carefully once again during the week we are discussing it. Because I want the seminar discussion to dictate the amount of time we spend on each topic, and not the other way around, no dates have been provided – we will begin by moving down the list as the semester proceeds. However, because we will not be able to make it through the entire list, students should be thinking about which of the latter topics they prefer. Later in the semester we will vote to determine which remaining topics we will study.

Weeks 1 & 2

A. Moral Reasoning and Moral Theories

Readings ('CMA' = Contemporary Moral Arguments; 'WC' = Webcampus):

WC:

Course Material

CMA:

Moral Reasoning, pp. 1-23

Against Moral Relativism (Pojman), pp. 31-43

Ethics and Rationality (Rachels): pp. 55-60

Moral Theories, pp. 62-73

B. Beginning of Life Issues

Abortion

Arguments Based Upon Personhood

CMA: pp. 118-124

On the Moral and Legal Status of Abortion (Warren): pp. 124-130

The Being in the Womb Is a Person (Schwartz): pp. 130-139

Abortion: A Defense of the Personhood Argument (Pojman): pp. 140-147

An Almost Absolute Value in History (Noonan): pp. 157-162

The Argument For A Fetus's Right to a Future

CMA:

Why Abortion is Immoral (Marquis): pp. 148-155

WC:

Abortion and the Neo-Natal Right to Life (Paske)

Does a Fetus Already Have a Future-Like-Ours? (McInerney)

The Argument For A Women's Right to Bodily Autonomy

CMA:

A Defense of Abortion (Thomson): pp. 182-193

Arguments from Bodily Rights (Beckwith): pp. 193-201

WC:

Boonin Rebuttals (Boonin)

Cloning

CMA: pp. 318-321

Cloning Human Beings (Brock): pp. 335-343

A life in the Shadows ((Holm): pp. 344-347

C. End of Life Issues

Euthanasia

CMA: pp. 264-270

The Autonomy Argument

When Self-Determination Runs Amok (Callahan): pp. 278-283

When Abstract Moral Reasoning Runs Amok (Lachs): pp. 283-287

Killing vs. Letting Die

Active and Passive Euthanasia (Rachels): pp. 287-292

Is Killing No Worse Than Letting Die? (Nesbitt): pp. 292-296

Death Penalty

CMA: pp. 348-352

The Retributivist Argument

A Life for a Life (Primoratz): pp 356-362

An Eye for an Eye? (Nathanson): pp. 362-367

The Deterrence Argument

Capital Punishment and Social Defense (Bedau): pp. 388-394

Terrorism and Torture

CMA: pp. 398-404

Terrorism

The Morality of Terrorism (Khatchadourian): pp. 429-439

Can Terrorism Be Justified? (Valls): pp. 446-456

Torture

WC: Torture: Stanford Encyclopedia Entry

CMA:

The case for Torturing the Ticking Bomb Terrorist (Dershowitz): pp. 456-468

D. Controversial Sexual Behavior

WC: Feminist Perspectives on Sex Markets: Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy Entry

Pornography

CMA: 469-472

Pornography, Civil Rights, and Speech (Mackinnon): 511-522

Women and Pornography (Dworkin): 522-530

WC:

Frustrations of a Feminist Porn Star (Hartley)

Clashing at Barnard's Gates: Understanding the Origins of the Pornography Problem in the Modern America's Women Movement (Bronstein)

Prostitution

WC:

Charges Against Prostitution (Ericsson)

Defending Prostitution: Charges Against Ericsson (Pateman)

E. Controversial Social Issues (TBD)

Famine Relief

CMA:682-683

Famine, Affluence, and Morality (Singer): 683-690

World Hunger and Population (Pojman): 690-700

WC:

The Life You Can Save (Singer)

Drug Policy

CMA:216-224

Against the Legalization of Drugs (Wilson): 224-233

A Moral Right to Use Drugs (Husak): 233-240

WR:

America's Unjust Drug War (Huemer)

Religious Bigotry, Tolerance and Islamic Extremism

Bigotry and Religious Belief (Ramsey)

Islam and the Future of Tolerance: A Dialogue (Harris and Nawaz)

Health Care

CMA: 538-548

Is There a Right to Health Care, and If So, What Does it Encompass? (Daniels): pp. 548-556

The Right to a Decent Minimum of Health Care (Buchanan): pp. 557-558

Affirmative Action

WC:

Preferential Hiring (Thomson)

Preferential Hiring: A Reply to Thomson (Simon)

Animal Rights

CMA:572-578

All Animals are Equal (Singer) pp. 578-588

The Case for the Use of Animals in Biomedical Research (Cohen): pp. 588-594

The Moral Argument for Vegetarianism (Rachels): pp. 616-622

Moral Vegetarianism and the Argument from Pain and Suffering (Frey): 622-627

Gambling

WC:

Is Gambling Immoral? A Virtue Ethics Approach (Collins)

Gambling and Character (Fletcher)

Additional Information:

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An example of academic misconduct is plagiarism. Plagiarism is using the words or ideas of another, from the Internet or any source, without proper citation of the sources. See the *Student Academic Misconduct Policy* (approved December 9, 2005) located at:

<https://www.unlv.edu/studentconduct/student-conduct>.

Copyright – The University requires all members of the University Community to familiarize themselves **with** and to follow copyright and fair use requirements. **You are individually and solely responsible for violations of copyright and fair use laws. The university will neither protect nor defend you nor assume any responsibility for employee or student violations of**

fair use laws. Violations of copyright laws could subject you to federal and state civil penalties and criminal liability, as well as disciplinary action under University policies. Additional information can be found at:

<http://www.unlv.edu/provost/copyright>.

Disability Resource Center (DRC) – The UNLV Disability Resource Center (SSC-A 143, <http://drc.unlv.edu/>, 702-895-0866) provides resources for students with disabilities. If you feel that you have a disability, please make an appointment with a Disabilities Specialist at the DRC to discuss what options may be available to you.

If you are registered with the UNLV Disability Resource Center, bring your Academic Accommodation Plan from the DRC to the instructor during office hours so that you may work together to develop strategies for implementing the accommodations to meet both your needs and the requirements of the course. Any information you provide is private and will be treated as such. To maintain the confidentiality of your request, please do not approach the instructor in front of others to discuss your accommodation needs.

Religious Holidays Policy – Any student missing class quizzes, examinations, or any other class or lab work because of observance of religious holidays shall be given an opportunity during that semester to make up missed work. The make-up will apply to the religious holiday absence only. It shall be the responsibility of the student to notify the instructor no later than the end of the first two weeks of classes, **January 29, 2016**, of his or her intention to participate in religious holidays which do not fall on state holidays or periods of class recess. For additional information, please visit: <http://catalog.unlv.edu/content.php?catoid=6&navoid=531>.

Incomplete Grades - The grade of I – Incomplete – can be granted when a student has satisfactorily completed three-fourths of course work for that semester/session but for reason(s) beyond the student’s control, and acceptable to the instructor, cannot complete the last part of the course, and the instructor believes that the student can finish the course without repeating it. The incomplete work must be made up before the end of the following regular semester for undergraduate courses. Graduate students receiving “I” grades in 500-, 600-, or 700-level courses have up to one calendar year to complete the work, at the discretion of the instructor. If course requirements are not completed within the time indicated, a grade of F will be recorded and the GPA will be adjusted accordingly. Students who are fulfilling an Incomplete do not register for the course but make individual arrangements with the instructor who assigned the I grade.

Tutoring – The Academic Success Center (ASC) provides tutoring and academic assistance for all UNLV students taking UNLV courses. Students are encouraged to stop by the ASC to learn more about subjects offered, tutoring times and other academic resources. The ASC is located across from the Student Services Complex (SSC). Students may learn more about tutoring services by calling 702-895-3177 or visiting the tutoring web site at:

<http://academicsuccess.unlv.edu/tutoring/>.

UNLV Writing Center – One-on-one or small group assistance with writing is available free of charge to UNLV students at the Writing Center, located in CDC-3-301. Although walk-in consultations are sometimes available, students with

appointments will receive priority assistance. Appointments may be made in person or by calling 702-895-3908. The student's Rebel ID Card, a copy of the assignment (if possible), and two copies of any writing to be reviewed are requested for the consultation. More information can be found at: <http://writingcenter.unlv.edu/>

Rebelmail – By policy, faculty and staff should e-mail students' Rebelmail accounts only. Rebelmail is UNLV's official e-mail system for students. It is one of the primary ways students receive official university communication such as information about deadlines, major campus events, and announcements. All UNLV students receive a Rebelmail account after they have been admitted to the university. Students' e-mail prefixes are listed on class rosters. The suffix is always @unlv.nevada.edu. **Emailing within WebCampus is acceptable.**

Final Examinations – The University requires that final exams given at the end of a course occur at the time and on the day specified in the final exam schedule. See the schedule at: <http://www.unlv.edu/registrar/calendars>.