

Huron University College
Fall 2018
Philosophy 1250F Section 550 – Right and Wrong
M 6:30 PM-9:30 PM – HC-W 12
Course Outline

Instructor: Dr. D. Conter

Office: V 131

Office Hours: 8:30 AM-9:30 AM MTW in the Huron Food Court (Students who require strict confidentiality can arrange to meet me in my office – V131.)

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Description

An introductory course about moral philosophy, presupposing no prior knowledge of either morals or philosophy. A variety of issues will be raised, including the following: the meaning of life, human nature, the existence of altruism, the importance of happiness, the relation between morality and religion in the contemporary world and in the past; moral relativism (the view that different groups have different moral opinions and there is no choosing among these opinions); the idea that our actions ought to be governed by strictly universal rules; the notion that our actions are to be chosen because they produce the best or most pleasurable consequences; the relations between morality and law; and, finally, some reflections on race and gender.

Students will read 33 very short essays by distinguished philosophers that were originally published as newspaper articles in the New York Times,

Objectives

Students will learn to assess the seriousness of the philosophical problems that arise in connection with these issues. In addition, they will develop the skills to make comparative assessments of various treatments to these problems offered by a variety of philosophers working in the Western tradition. By doing so, students should gain a basic knowledge of many of the central themes that have emerged in specialized and informed thinking about ethical issues. They will also learn to apply ethical ideals and principles to specific fact scenarios.

Course Method

Lecture; with professor/student and student/professor question/answer exchanges.

Text

Peter Catapano and Simon Critchley, *Modern Ethics in the 77 Arguments* (New York: WW Norton, 2017).

Assessment:

Students' grades will be determined based in part on **three very short essays** – 3-3 ½ pages in length, and **each worth 22 %** – for a total of **66 %**.

There will also be a **two-hour cumulative final examination** worth **34 %**.

1. **The due dates for the essays are Tuesday, October 2; Tuesday, October 30; Tuesday, November 20.**

2. The essays **MUST** be submitted electronically on **OWL** by 3:30 PM on the relevant due dates. In addition, hardcopies **MUST** be submitted by the same time in the Huron University College essay drop-box. For each essay, the topic will appear on **OWL** at approximately 10 AM on the day immediately preceding the due date. The topic will not be handed out in class. **Note that you have less than 29 hours in which to complete each assignment. Obviously, you need to arrange your work schedule appropriately. Late essays will not be graded, except on the recommendation of the Academic Counselor. Extensions will not be granted for any reason, except upon the recommendation of the Academic Counselor.**

3. The **final exam** will be written during the final exam period at a place and time scheduled by the University. **DO NOT MAKE TRAVEL ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE CHRISTMAS BREAK UNTIL YOU KNOW THE EXACT DATE OF YOUR FINAL EXAM. THE PRIVILEGE OF WRITING A SPECIAL FINAL EXAM WILL NOT BE GRANTED ON THE BASIS OF A STUDENT'S TRAVEL ARRANGEMENTS.**

Syllabus

(All titles are chapter titles in Catapano and Critchley. We'll read the chapters sequentially; but, given the large number of chapters in the book, we'll leave many out.)

Week 1 September 10

No assigned reading

Week 2 September 17

"The Meaningfulness of Lives", "There Is No Theory of Everything". "Against Invulnerability".

Week 3 September 24

"A Life Beyond 'Do What You Love'", "Evolution and Our Inner Conflict", "Learning How to Die in the Anthropocene".

Week 4 October 1

"Is Pure Altruism Possible?", "Moral Camouflage or Moral Monkeys?", "How Should We Respond to 'Evil'?"

Week 5 October 8

Thanksgiving break – no class, no readings

Week 6 October 15

"The Moral Logic of Survivor Guilt", "How to Live Without Irony", "Deluded Individualism".

Week 7 October 22

"The Dangers of Happiness", "Are We Ready for a 'Morality Pill'?", "Why Our Children Don't Think There Are Moral Facts".

Week 8 October 29

"Morals Without God", "The Dangers of Certainty: A Lesson from Auschwitz", "Confessions of an Ex-Moralist".

Week 9 November 5

"The Maze of Moral Relativism". "Can Moral Disputes Be Resolved?", "Moral Dispute or Cultural Difference?".

Week 10 November 12

"Navigating Past Nihilism", "Does It Matter Whether God Exists?", "Good Minus God".

Week 11 November 19

"Pascal's Wager 2.0", "Why God's Moral Issue", "What's Wrong with Blasphemy?"

Week 12 November 26

"Questions for Free-Market Moralists", "Spinoza's Vision of Freedom, and Ours", "If War Can Have Ethics, Wall Street Can, Too".

Week 13 December 3

"Is Real Inclusiveness Possible?", "When Prostitution Is Nobody's Business", "On Abortion and Defining a Person".



The Appendix to Course Outlines is posted on the OWL course site.