

## PHIL 237: Contemporary Moral Issues

Prof. S. Stroud, winter 2012

### Preliminary Course Description

Lecture hour: MW 12:35-1:25 (plus a mandatory discussion conference, for which you must register separately on Minerva)

Lecture hall: McIntyre Medical 522

In this course, we will connect various disputed moral issues with moral theory in order to better understand the nature of these disputes. We will begin the course with a very brief introduction to philosophical argumentation and to the philosophical study of moral issues, including what is called *moral (or ethical) theory*. As we shall see, philosophers often approach specific moral issues by making use of some moral theory or other and applying the theory to the problem. (That's why what we will be studying is sometimes called *applied ethics*.) After this introduction we will proceed to consider a number of specific controversial moral issues, such as pornography, hate speech, drugs, euthanasia, terrorism, torture, and world hunger.

As we proceed, not only will we be learning about the philosophical controversies surrounding the above-mentioned issues, we will also be learning about moral theory and about how to mount convincing arguments. There are two main course objectives: (1) to familiarize you with the moral controversies surrounding the topics we will consider, thus helping you come to a reasoned position on these (and related) issues, and (2) to help you sharpen your ability to think clearly and critically about such issues.

Required text (available for purchase at Paragraphe Books [at 2220 McGill College Avenue] and on three-hour reserve at Redpath Library):

*Disputed Moral Issues: A Reader*, **2nd ed.**, Mark Timmons (ed.), Oxford University Press, 2011. Students must obtain the second edition, not the first (which dates from 2007). Note that there is an online study guide for this text at [www.oup.com/us/companion.websites/9780195388725/](http://www.oup.com/us/companion.websites/9780195388725/).

#### Course requirements and method of assessment:

A two-page (double-spaced) argument analysis (worth 12.5% of your course mark)

An in-class midterm exam (worth 20% of your course mark)

A five-page (double-spaced) essay (worth 27.5 % of your course mark)

A formal three-hour final examination during the exam period (worth 40% of your course mark)

#### Policy on the use of technology in the classroom:

Unless the instructor expressly grants you an accommodation for a valid academic or medical reason, *the use of electronic devices is forbidden in lectures and conferences*. These include:

- computers
- cell phones
- headphones or earbuds

Students using or holding such devices in class in violation of course policy may be told to exit the classroom.

Other course policies:

- Discussion is an important part of philosophical endeavour. Students are therefore expected to attend conference each week and to contribute to conference discussions. If your final mark is borderline, your conference attendance and participation may be used as the deciding factor.
- In order to pass the class, you must submit the five-page essay and write the final exam.
- Lateness and extensions: essays turned in late without an extension will be penalized at the rate of 1/3 of a grade (e.g., from a B to a B-) per *calendar* day of lateness. Moreover, no extensions will be given on the essays except for medical reasons. Requests for extensions must be directed to your teaching assistant (Prof. Stroud does not handle such requests) and supported by appropriate medical documentation. The deadline for requesting an extension is one business day before the paper is due.
- Because announcements and course documents such as paper topics will be posted on the course's WebCT page, students are expected to check the WebCT page at least once a week.
- Be advised that essays may be submitted to text-matching software.