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Office Hrs MTWTHF 10:00-10:50, 2:00-2:50, and other times by appointment.

CATALOGUE COURSE DESCRIPTION: PHL 263 Contemporary Moral Issues. [PHIL 2306] A study of major moral issues in contemporary society, Includes topics such as abortion, euthanasia, censorship, capital punishment, and other issues that confront today's society. Credit 3.

OBJECTIVES: (1) To provide students with background information relating to several contemporary moral issues, (2) to examine the diversity of views on the issues, (3) to provide an acquaintance with several different theories of ethics that affect people's views, and (4) to give students an opportunity to develop and express their own personal views on the issues.

PREFACE: I want to give you an idea of how I view this course. First, no one is an expert on all of the problems and issues we'll be discussing. They are too complicated and too diverse for that. Of course, some people are better informed, more thoughtful, or more sensitive than others in relation to a given issue, and it is my hope that all of us will become such persons as a result of this class. Second, I believe that an atmosphere of mutual respect in the classroom is absolutely essential. It is essential because we need to share our disagreements on these issues as honestly and fully as possible. We need to cultivate the ability to empathize with people and views that may repulse us at first hearing. We need this ability not only to understand more accurately others' views, but also to understand better our own.

My aim is not to convert anyone to my views about the issues. Instead, I will do my dead level best to give the various sides a fair chance to speak their piece and to make their case. I expect everyone in the class to make the same effort.

REQUIRED TEXTS:

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| (1) <i>The Elements of Moral Philosophy</i> 5 th ed. | by James and Stuart Rachels |
| (2) <i>Taking Sides: Moral Issues</i> 11 th ed. | by Stephen Satris |
| (3) <i>Taking Sides: Bioethical Issues</i> 12 th ed. | by Carol Levine |
| (4) Occasional Items that may be placed on electronic reserve | |

GRADING:

(1) Tests: There will be two major exams and a final exam, each worth 100 points, for a total of 300 points. Each test is announced in advance, and ordinarily there will be at least one class period for review before the exam. For each exam the student will be given a set of study questions, and the test will be a selection from those questions. The total points from the exams, plus a possible 21 points from the Question Zero assignments described below, plus a few points for class participation, determine the student's overall point total which can be more than 300 points. The overall point total is divided by 3 to get the final average. The grading scale is 90-100= A, 80-89= B, 70-79= C, 60-69= D, and below 60= F.

(2) Question Zero; For each Unit there will be a "Question Zero" that will be due the class period after the exam, with the exception of the final exam when it will be due on the day of the exam. Question Zero will be an opinion question that will require the student (a) to state his/her view on a particular issue and to explain the reasons that make his/her view seem more likely to be correct than other views, (b) to explain the strongest reasoning supporting an opposing view, and (c) to construct the strongest argument to negate the reasoning in (b). This question will be worth up to 7 extra points on the exam grade for that unit, and 7 points will be subtracted from the exam grade if the question is not done or not done acceptably. To be done acceptably the question must be typed, comply with standard grammar and spelling, and be on time.

(3) Extra credit for class participation: there will also be occasional credit of 1 to 3 points for class participation which gives evidence of noticeably informed and thoughtful consideration of the issues,

ABSENCES: In accordance with University regulations, I will take roll every period. I make no use of the absence record in determining grades. However, if you do not attend class, you must drop the course; otherwise you will receive an F. NOTE: the last day to drop without a Q is Friday, July 11.

Q-DROPS: A Q-drop is a drop made after the last date for tuition refunds (12th class day for fall/spring; 4th class day for summer) but before the date for which a drop would result in the grade of 'F' as published in the

Academic Calendar. **Students will be allowed no more than five Q-drops during their academic career at Sam Houston State University.** Classes that are dropped prior to the Q-drop date will not count toward the limit. Students who have used their limit of five Q-drops will need to petition their respective dean to drop a class. If the dean refuses to grant permission to drop a class, a student will be required to remain in the class. This limit took effect with the start of the fall 2004 semester. Any drops accumulated prior to the fall 2004 semester will not be included in the five Q-drop limit, nor will Q-drops from other universities.

MAKE-UPS: I *hate* to give make-up tests. They are ordinarily longer and harder than the regular test. You must have a good reason for missing a test; having another test the same day, for example, does not count as a good reason. If you must miss a test, please see me as soon as possible to let me know your reason for missing it. **YOUR EXCUSE MUST BE WRITTEN AND APPROPRIATELY DOCUMENTED. AN EXCUSE THAT CANNOT BE VERIFIED WILL RESULT IN A GRADE OF ZERO FOR THAT EXAM.** Of course, if you have a valid excuse, then we will arrange for you to take a make-up as soon as possible.

STANDARD POLICIES: Each of these standard policies is stated in full on the Blackboard website for this course under Course Documents. I have extracted from the full statement a key element as a reminder of the policy in its entirety, but the student must download the posting on Blackboard to have the full policy statement. Here are the six standard policy matters: (1) **NOTICE TO PERSONS WITH A DISABILITY:** No accommodation can be made until you register with the Counseling Center. There will be no retroactive accommodations. (2) **ACADEMIC DISHONESTY:** Any student found guilty of dishonesty in any phase of academic work will be subject to disciplinary action. (3) **CLASSROOM RULES OF CONDUCT:** Students are expected to assist in maintaining a classroom environment that is conducive to learning. (4) **VISITORS IN THE CLASSROOM:** It is at the instructor's discretion whether or not he/she will be allowed to remain. (5) **ABSENCE ON RELIGIOUS HOLY DAYS:** A student desiring to absent himself/herself from a scheduled class in order to observe (a) religious holy day(s) shall present in advance to each instructor involved a written statement concerning the religious holy day(s). (6) **COURSE EVALUATIONS:** In accordance with University policy, students will have an opportunity near the end of the semester on a set day and time to complete a course evaluation.

TENTATIVE SCHEDULE PHL 263W.02 Contemporary Moral Issues SSII 2008 12:00-1:50
July CID 8437 AB4 302

Unit I Four Influential Theories of Morality and the Abortion Issue

Tue 08 Theories of Morality: An Overview. Reading: Rachels Chap. 1 What is Morality? A handout of Notes on Moral Theories

Wed 09 Hour 1: Rachels Chap. 2 The Challenge of Cultural Relativism and Satris Issue 1 Is Moral Relativism Correct?
 Hour 2: Levine Issue 2 Should Truth Telling Depend on a Patient's Culture?

Thu 10 Hour 1: Rachels Chap 3. Subjectivism in Ethics
 Hour 2: Rachels Chap. 4 Does Morality Depend on Religion? and Satris Issue 2 Does Morality Need Religion?

Fri 11 **Classes DO MEET.** Hour 1: Rachels Chap. 5 Ethical Egoism and Satris Issue 3 Ayn Rand
 Hour 2: Notes on Classical Natural Law theory and a handout on the Line Drawing issue

Mon 14 Hour 1: Levine Issue 8 Is Abortion Immoral?
 Hour 2: Satris Issue 4 Is Abortion Immoral?

Tue 15 Hour 1: Review for the First Exam
 Hour 2: Start **Unit II Utilitarianism and Issues of Autonomy and Responsibility.** Read Rachels Chap. 6 The Utilitarian Approach

Wed 16 Hour 1: **First Exam—100 points—1/3 of final grade**
 Hour 2: A handout on John Stuart Mill and the Harm Principle

Thu 17 Hour 1: Introduction to the Issue of Euthanasia from a handout on Basic Concepts and Distinctions
 Hour 2: Levine Issue 6 Physician Assisted Suicide **Unit I Question Zero due.**

Fri 18 **Classes do meet.** Hour 1: Satris Issue 16 Physician Assisted Suicide

Hour 2: Satris Issue 10 Should Drugs Be Legalized?

Mon 21 Hour 1: Satris Issue 6 Should Same Sex Marriage Be Allowed?
Hour 2: A reading on reserve from Peter Singer on Famine and the Obligation to Assist

Tue 22 Hour 1: Rachels Chap. 7 The Debate Over Utilitarianism.
Hour 2: Rachels Chap. 10 The Idea of a Social Contract and a handout on Bernard Gert's Social Contract theory of morality

Wed 23 Hour 1: A reading on reserve from Peter Singer on Equality for Animals
Hour 2: Levine Issue 14 Should Animal Experimentation Be Permitted?

Thu 24 Hour 1: Review for the Second Exam
Hour 2: **Start Unit III Respect for Persons and the Demands of Justice.** Read a handout on John Rawls's Theory of Justice

Fri 25 **Classes do NOT meet.**

Mon 28 Hour 1: **Second Exam—100 points—1/3 of final grade Last Day to Drop the Class**
Hour 2: Rachels Chap. 9 Kant and Respect for Persons

Tue 29 Hour 1: Introduction to the Debate about the Death Penalty **Unit II Question Zero due**
Hour 2: Satris Issue 14 Should the Death Penalty Be Abolished?

Wed 30 Hour 1: Levine Issue 11 Do Parents Harm Their Children When They Refuse Medical Treatment on Religious Grounds?
Hour 2: Rachels Chap. 8 Are There Absolute Moral Rules?

Thu 31 Hour 1: A handout on The Just War Theory
Hour 2: Satris Issue 15 Is Torture Ever Justified?

August

Fri 01 **Classes do NOT meet.**

Mon 04 Hour 1: Satris Issue 9 Buying and Selling Human Organs
Hour 2: Levine Issue 12 Stem Cell Research Ban

Tue 05 Hour 1: Levine Issue 13 Genetic Enhancement
Hour 2: Rachels Chap. 12 The Ethics of Virtue

Wed 06 Hour 1: Rachels Chap. 13 What Would a Satisfactory Moral Theory Be Like?
Hour 2: Review for Final Exam. Last day of class.

Thu 07 2:00-4:00 **Final Exam—100 points—1/3 of final grade Unit III--Question Zero due.**

DEADLY FAULTS OF GRAMMAR, SPELLING, AND USAGE

1. Apostrophes--please do not write "it's" unless you mean the contraction for "it is." You would not write "hi's" or "her's," so do not write "it's" when you mean the possessive "its." But **do** use the apostrophe to show possession for nouns as in "the first doctor's opinion."
2. The Latin phrase "et cetera" is abbreviated "**etc.**"--**Not** "ect." which does not even pronounce correctly.
3. Proper spelling of "receive" and its relatives is helped if you remember "i before e except after c..."
4. Surely it is not **too** much to expect that you remember that there are two o's in **too**.
5. In speech "could have" and "should have" are contracted to form "could 've" and "should 've." Only the ignorant write the non-English "could of" and "should of."
6. How about trying to get straight "except" and "accept"? Perhaps mnemonics will help: "Everyone except Edward elected Elvira empress." vs. "Anthony accepted adversity admirably."
7. In the same vein, "The Einstein effect ended everything" vs. "Anteaters affect ants adversely." If it helps, try to remember that "effect" is usually a noun, and "affect" is almost always a verb.
8. Notice the "try to" in the preceding. Delete the nonsense phrase "to try and" from your speech repertoire.
9. If you mean "they are" when writing a contraction, then write "they're." Then all you have to do is to keep straight the possessive term "their" and the pointer word "there" (the opposite of "here").
10. How about remembering "If you **lie**, I won't believe you" so that you can spell "believe" correctly?
11. Do not use the words "criterion" and "criteria" unless you can remember that you can have **only one** criterion, but **criteria** are many.
12. When you "**recite**" a poem you are "**citing**" it again. That is not the same as locating the building **site** where you first caught **sight** of the poem inscribed over a doorway.
13. Does it occur to you that if you omit one of the two R's in "occurred" you would wind up with something that rhymes with "cured"? And if there are two R's in "occurred," then how many should there be in "occurrence"?
14. Subject and verb should agree in number, so no "he don't" or "they doesn't."
15. There is no "ate" in "definitely," just as there not an "ate" in "finite" or "definite."