

Omar Fakhri

Applied Ethics

Course Description

This is a topical course on issues in applied ethics. We begin by considering important issues that might hinder even attempting to answer some of the questions we will discuss in this course. These include issues about moral relativism, and psychological and ethical egoism. After we clear away these roadblocks, we will turn to discussing issues about applied ethics. We will look at topics such as: abortion, death penalty, animal rights, famine, immigration, pornography, affirmative action, gun control, and just war theory. As you will see, some of these issues are interestingly connected. For example, your stance on what makes someone part of our moral community will impact your views in the abortion and animal right debates. Certain stances in the gun control debate will impact your views on immigration and affirmative action. An important part of this course is to keep an eye out for these types of connections. In fact, your final paper for this course will ask you to discuss some of these connections. The aim of this course is to help you come to appreciate critical thinking and philosophical investigation.

Learning Goals:

- Be able to clearly and concisely exposit arguments.
- Be able to critically assess arguments by either objecting directly or indirectly to a specific claim, or by exposing a logical mistake.
- Be able to understand, state, and describe the main philosophical problems and positions discussed in the reading and in lecture.
- Be able to write a well-developed philosophy paper that explains the key moves in a given argument and critically evaluate it.
- Be able to articulate and provide reasons for one's own position or lack thereof.

Course Requirements:

1. Attendance and Participation 10% - Attendance and participation is mandatory. Come to sections and class having done all the assigned reading.
2. Ten Reading Outlines 15% - You are required to write 10 reading outlines. A reading outline summarizes the *structure* of a given text. Aim at summarizing the main arguments and the author's train of thought. You must summarize all the main content in the reading that you decide to write an outline on. At the end of each outline, you must include one philosophically critical question that deals heavily with the main points of the text. The entire outline should not be shorter than $\frac{3}{4}$ of a page or longer than 1.25 pages, *single*-spaced (font 12). You get to pick *any* 10 readings you would like to write an outline on (with the exception of the logic reading assignment). You are not allowed to write an outline on a reading we already covered. That is, when you write an outline, you must write it on the reading that is due the day you wish to turn the outline in.

3. Précis 20% - A précis is a concise and clear summary of the main claims and arguments of a given text. Being able to identify the main moves and arguments in a difficult text and putting them in your own words is an important skill to have. *The précis should not be shorter than 590 words and no longer than 610 words*, double-spaced. The word limit range is important because it will force you to make difficult choices about what to include or exclude in the précis. It will also force you to write concisely and to avoid being verbose. You are also not allowed to quote verbatim from the text. It is important that you put things into your own words.
4. Shorter Critical Paper 25% - This paper should have two clearly identifiable sections: an expository and critical section. The prompt will ask you to exposit an argument or a view and to critically evaluate it. The paper will be about 3 double-spaced pages, with 12pt font and regular margins.
5. Longer Critical Paper 30% - This is the final paper, and it will function as your final for this class. Like the shorter paper, this paper should also contain two clearly identifiable sections: an expository and critical section. The prompt will ask you to deal with the views or arguments of two or more of the readings. The paper will be about 5-6 double-spaced pages, and it will be due the day your final exam is scheduled.

Required Text:

There is no required text for this course. I will upload handouts for the reading on the course website.

Course Schedule

Week 1: Ethical Relativism

Ruth Benedict: A Defense of Ethical Relativism
 Louis Pojman: A Critique of Ethical Relativism

Week 2: Moral Disagreement

George Sher: But I Could be Wrong
 Renford Bambrough: Proof

Week 3: Egoism

Ayn Rand: The Virtue of Selfishness
 James Rachels: Egoism and Moral Skepticism

Week 4: Abortion

Judith Thomson: A Defense of Abortion
 Mary Warren: On the Moral and Legal Status of Abortion

Week 5: Abortion continued

Don Marquis: Why Abortion Is Immoral
 Lee and George: The Wrong of Abortion

Week 6: Death penalty

Burton Leiser: The Death Penalty Is Permissible
 Hugo Adam Bedau: No, the Death Penalty Is Not Morally Permissible (pp. 693-702)

Week 7: Animal rights

Peter Singer: The Case for Animal Liberation

Carl Cohen: The Case Against Animal Rights

Week 8: Famine

Peter Singer: Famine, Affluence and Morality

John Arthur: Famine Relief and the Ideal Moral Code

Week 9: Immigration

Christopher Wellman: Immigration and Freedom to Association

Chandran Kukathas: The Case for Open Immigration

Week 10: Pornography

Andrew Altman: The Right to Get Turned On: Pornography, Autonomy, Equality

Susan Brison: The Price We Pay? Pornography and Harm

Week 11: Affirmative Action

Albert Mosley: A Defense of Affirmative Action

Celia Wolf-Devine: Preferential Policies Have Become Toxic

Week 12: Gun Control

Jeff McMahan: Why Gun 'Control' Is Not Enough

Michael Huemer: Gun Rights as Deontic Constraints (manuscript)

Week 13: Just War Theory

Douglas Lackey: Just War Theory

Jeff McMahan: The Ethics of Killing in War

Week 14: Extra Time