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**Syllabus for PHI 115**  
**ETHICS AND CONTEMPORARY ISSUES**  
**Spring 2017**

**OBJECTIVES OF THE COURSE:** Ethics is a branch of philosophy which attempts to achieve a systematic understanding of the nature of morality. In this course, we will examine and critically evaluate various moral issues in light of fundamental theories of morality and basic moral principles. The theories and principles will provide different frameworks within which we can judge particular moral issues.

This course is part of the general education program and satisfies the Public Issues component of the “Public Affairs” area of the general education requirement. It aims to fulfill the following general goals and student learning outcomes within Missouri State’s general education curriculum:

*General Goal (14): Students will be able to articulate their value systems, understand the ethical implications of their actions based on those values, and develop skills consistent with having a positive impact on individuals, groups, or communities.*

*SLO14.2 - Understand the foundations for ethical thought and action.*

This SLO will be addressed in the Moral Theories section of the course, through readings, class discussion, and homework assignments, and later in the course through the midterm and the two writing assignments.

*SLO14.3 - Identify areas of difficulty in responding to situations demanding ethical inquiry.*

This SLO will be addressed through class discussion and the term paper.

*SLO14.4 - Analyze complex ethical dilemmas facing the world.*

This SLO will be addressed through class discussion and the two writing assignments.

*SLO14.5 - Understand and evaluate the causes of societal problems and potential solutions.*

This SLO will be addressed through class discussion and the two writing assignments.

*General Goal (2): Students will be able to develop new ideas, products, or solutions and explore novel perspectives and approaches.*

*SLO2.1 - Develop creative and novel solutions to personally and socially relevant problems.*

*SLO2.2 - Take account of novel, alternative, contradictory, and even radical viewpoints in creating new ideas, products, or solutions appropriate to the domain or subject matter.*

These SLOs will be addressed through class discussion and the two writing assignments.

*General Goal (1): Students will be able to develop the disposition and skills to gather, organize, refine, analyze, and evaluate critically information and ideas.*

*SLO1.1 - Identify and follow through on personally and socially relevant problems and reasonable solutions to those problems.*

This SLO will be addressed through class discussion and the two writing assignments.

*SLO1.2 - Identify relevant information sources, make reasoned choices among those sources, and open-mindedly follow where those sources lead.*

This SLO will be addressed in the Logic section of the course, in our examination of the fallacy Inappropriate Appeal to Authority.

*SLO1.3 - Justify conclusions reached in the analysis of information.*

This SLO will be addressed through class discussion and the two writing assignments.

*SLO1.4 - Analyze evidence, statements, alternative viewpoints, graphics, and other forms of information.*

This SLO will be addressed through class discussion and the term paper.

**WHAT YOU HAVE TO BUY:** There is **one textbook** you need to buy for the course: **Johnson, Andrew, ed. *Ethics and Contemporary Issues*. McGraw-Hill Create, 2016.** It is essentially a course pack I've created using materials in publisher McGraw-Hill's catalog. It is available either in a printed version, which you can get new or used from the Missouri State bookstore, or as an electronic book directly from the publisher (which is the most economical option). You'll find a link to purchase the e-book from the publisher's Web site if you log on to the course's Blackboard site and select the content area "Course Information."

Also, if you don't already have one, you'll need to purchase a **Turning Technologies "clicker"** from the bookstore (or from a student looking to sell his or her used clicker). These student-response devices will be used for taking attendance, practice exercises, and for polling students for their opinions during class discussions.

**COURSE AGENDA:** Since logical arguments and moral principles figure in every ethics article we will read, and will be demanded in the written assignments you'll be asked to complete, we will begin the course with a brief survey of logic and some of the most influential moral principles and theories in the history of ethics. The bulk of the course will then be given over to the exploration of particular moral issues. (I use 'moral' and 'ethical' interchangeably.) The list of readings/assignments below is subject to change *with* notice.

## I. Logic

1. James Rachels, "Some Basic Points about Arguments" (in textbook)
2. Gregory Bassham et al., "Recognizing Arguments" (in textbook), pp. 30-41 (original pagination)  
Practice exercises: 2.1, I, 1-16; 2.1, II, 1-9, 11, 12; 2.2, I, 1-10
3. (a) Gregory Bassham et al., "Logical Fallacies—I" (begin with section "Fallacies of Relevance") (in textbook)  
Practice exercises: 5.2, I, 4, 6, 7, 10, 11, 13, 16, 17, 19, 22, 24, 25, 29, 30, 33, 35-37  
(b) "Fallacy: Appeal to Tradition" (on Blackboard)  
(c) "Appeal to Nature" (on Blackboard)
4. Gregory Bassham et al., "Logical Fallacies—II" (in textbook)  
Practice exercises: 6.1: 1, 4, 6, 8, 9, 10, 11, 13, 14, 16, 17, 18, 19, 21, 23, 24, 25
5. (a) Brooke Moore and Richard Parker, "More Fallacies" (on Blackboard)  
(b) Brooke Moore and Richard Parker, "Begging the Question" (on Blackboard)  
(c) Max Shulman, "Love Is a Fallacy" (on Blackboard)
6. Gregory Bassham et al., "Finding Missing Premises and Conclusions" (on Blackboard)
7. Logic Test

"Another aim basic to every college is to enhance the ability of students to think clearly and critically. The importance of this goal is so widely acknowledged that nationwide polls have found that more than 90 percent of faculty members in the United States consider it the most important purpose of undergraduate education."—Derek Bok, *Our Underachieving Colleges: A Candid Look at How Much Students Learn and Why They Should Be Learning More*

## II. Moral Principles/Theories (with Illustrative Applications)

8. Michael DePaul, "Reflective Equilibrium" (on Blackboard)
9. Hugh LaFollette, "Licensing Parents" (on Blackboard)
10. James Rachels, "The Challenge of Cultural Relativism" (in textbook)
11. (a) James Rachels, "Does Morality Depend on Religion?" (in textbook)  
(b) G. W. Leibniz, Discourse on Metaphysics, Section 2 (on Blackboard)
12. Sam Harris, "The Myth of Secular Moral Chaos"  
(on Blackboard)
  
13. James Rachels, "Ethical Egoism" (on Blackboard)
14. (a) James Rachels, "The Utilitarian Approach" (in textbook)  
(b) Jeremy Bentham, "Of the Principle of Utility"  
(on Blackboard)
15. John Harris, "The Survival Lottery" (on Blackboard)
16. (a) Robert Nozick, "The Experience Machine" (in textbook)  
(b) James Rachels, "Kant and Respect for Persons" (in textbook; Section 10.1)  
(c) Immanuel Kant, Excerpt #1 from *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals* (on Blackboard)
17. Immanuel Kant, Excerpt #2 from *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals* (on Blackboard)
18. Denis Arnold and Norman Bowie, "Sweatshops and Respect for Persons" (on Blackboard; you may omit §§VII and VIII)
19. Midterm Exam (over Readings 8–18)

## III. Capital Punishment

20. (a) James Rachels, "Kant and Respect for Persons" (in textbook; Section 10.2)  
(b) Jeremy Bentham, "Of the Proportion between Punishments and Offences" (on Blackboard)
21. (a) James Rachels, "Kant and Respect for Persons" (in textbook; Section 10.3)  
(b) Immanuel Kant, "The Right of Punishing" (on Blackboard)
22. Death Penalty Information Center, "Facts about the Death Penalty" (on Blackboard)
23. Ernest van den Haag, "The Ultimate Punishment: A Defense of Capital Punishment" (on Blackboard)
24. Stephen Nathanson, "An Eye for an Eye?" (on Blackboard)

## IV. Animal Treatment

25. Peter Singer, "All Animals Are Equal" (in textbook)
26. (a) Immanuel Kant, "Duties towards Animals" (on Blackboard)  
(b) Tom Regan, "The Case for Animal Rights" (in textbook)

27. Carl Cohen, "The Case for the Use of Animals in Biomedical Research" (in textbook)
28. Alastair Norcross, "Puppies, Pigs and People: Eating Meat and Marginal Cases," §§1-2 (on Blackboard)
29. Alastair Norcross, "Puppies, Pigs and People: Eating Meat and Marginal Cases," §§3-6 (on Blackboard)

## V. Abortion

30. (a) Pope John Paul II, "The Unspeakable Crime of Abortion" (in textbook)  
(b) Mary Anne Warren, "On the Moral and Legal Status of Abortion" (in textbook)
31. Don Marquis, "Why Abortion Is Immoral" (in textbook)
32. Judith Jarvis Thomson, "A Defense of Abortion" (in textbook), pp. 27-31 (original pagination)
33. Judith Jarvis Thomson, "A Defense of Abortion" (in textbook) pp. 32-38 (original pagination)
34. Student chosen topic(s), time-permitting
35. Final Exam (over Readings 20-34) on May 15th from 1:15 to 3:15 PM

**GRADING:** Your grade for the course will be calculated as follows:

logic test (multiple choice)		10%
7 pop quizzes (multiple choice, on ethics readings)	@ 3%	21%
midterm exam		12%
final exam		12%
topic argument, 1-2 pages		5%
term paper, 5-7 pages		25%
attendance/participation		15%
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>100%</b>

The grading scale (along with the grade explanations provided by Missouri State at [http://www.missouristate.edu/policy/Op3\\_04\\_31\\_CreditPointSystem.htm](http://www.missouristate.edu/policy/Op3_04_31_CreditPointSystem.htm)) is as follows:

- A = 93-100 ("outstanding work")
- A- = 90-92 ("excellent work")
- B+ = 87-89 ("near excellent work")
- B = 83-86 ("very good work")
- B- = 80-82 ("good work")
- C+ = 77-79 ("slightly above satisfactory work")
- C = 73-76 ("satisfactory work")
- C- = 70-72 ("slightly below satisfactory work")
- D+ = 67-69 ("passing work")
- D = 60-66 ("minimum passing work")
- F = 0-59 ("failed—no credit")

The **logic test** will cover the material in the "Logic" section of the course. The **midterm exam** and the **final exam** will cover the remaining readings, on moral theories and particular moral issues. Almost all of the questions on the midterm and final exams will be based on the study questions for the readings.

In preparing for the multiple-choice **pop quizzes**, you should answer the study questions (provided on Blackboard) for the respective readings, since the quiz questions are taken from the study questions. You may write your answers out and refer to them during the quizzes. (*It is strongly*

*recommended that you do so!)* You are allowed one letter-sized page (front and back, typewritten or handwritten) of notes per quiz. A total of 8 pop quizzes will be administered in the course of the semester, and the lowest quiz grades for each student will be dropped.

You may avail yourself of the following **optional insurance policy** for the quizzes. If, as soon as a quiz is over, you hand in typewritten answers to the study questions, then I will award you a quiz grade not lower than the percentage of your correct answers to the study questions multiplied by 1.5. Thus, for example, if you scored 20% on the in-class quiz, but you hand in typewritten answers to the study questions and 60% of your answers are correct, I will award you a quiz grade of 90% ( $60\% \times 1.5 = 90\%$ ). (If the score based on your answers to the study questions is lower than your original quiz score, I will count your original quiz score.)

What I term a “**topic argument**” is a short argument in paragraph form followed by the (core elements of the) same argument in standardized form (in which you label your premises and conclusions). General guidelines for a good topic argument will be provided. The topic argument is intended, in part, to help prepare you to write the term paper.

Detailed guidelines for the **term paper** will be posted on Blackboard. It should be 5–7 pages long, double-spaced. You will have at least two topics to choose from, and the topics will be closely related to material covered in the course.

Your **attendance/participation** grade will be based in part on attendance (a kind of passive participation) and in part on what you say in class or contribute to the class’s online discussion forum on Blackboard. Perfect attendance without any participation in class discussion (and otherwise model behavior) will earn you a class-participation grade of 60. To lift your participation grade above this, you will need to ask good questions, give correct answers to questions posed by the instructor, and make insightful observations. Unexcused absences, coming to class late, behaving disruptively, sleeping or using your cell phone in class, or otherwise not paying attention will adversely affect your participation grade. Every student is allowed three “free” absences—that is, absences that will be excused no matter the reason for them. Otherwise, absences will be excused only for documented reasons involving (1) participation in university-sanctioned activities and programs, (2) personal illness or medical appointments, or (3) family and/or other compelling circumstances. I must be notified in a timely fashion of the reason for your absence, and if at all possible before it occurs.

**Make-ups** with no late penalty will be allowed only for tests, which will be given as soon as possible after the date of the original test, missed owing to excused absences. For students who miss a test (or exam) owing to an *unexcused* absence, a make-up as soon as possible after the missed test will be allowed, but there will be a substantial late penalty. There are no make-up quizzes for the pop quizzes, as the make-up quizzes would have no “pop.” Instead, when a student misses a pop quiz owing to an excused absence, his or her next quiz grade will be counted twice.

There is a **late penalty** for a late topic argument or term paper. One percentage point (out of a possible score of 100%) is deducted if the assignment is late at all; an additional point is deducted for each hour the assignment is late.

**ACADEMIC INTEGRITY POLICY:** Missouri State University is a community of scholars committed to developing educated persons who accept the responsibility to practice personal and academic integrity. You are responsible for knowing and following the University’s academic integrity policy plus additional more-specific policies for each class. The University policy, formally known as the “Student Academic Integrity Policies and Procedures” is available online at [http://www.missouristate.edu/policy/Op3\\_or\\_AcademicIntegrityStudents.htm](http://www.missouristate.edu/policy/Op3_or_AcademicIntegrityStudents.htm) and also at the Reserves Desk in Meyer Library. Any student participating in any form of academic dishonesty will be subject to sanctions as described in this policy. The minimum penalty (the actual penalty may be more severe, up to and including an XF grade for the course) imposed for cases of academic dishonesty (such as

cheating on a quiz or plagiarizing in a paper) is a deduction of five points from what would otherwise be the student's grade for the course.

**CELL PHONES AND OTHER COMMUNICATION DEVICES:** As a member of the learning community, each student has a responsibility to other students who are members of the community. When cell phones or pagers ring and students respond in class or leave class to respond, it disrupts the class. Therefore, the Office of the Provost prohibits the use by students of cell phones, pagers, PDAs, or similar communication devices during scheduled classes. All such devices must be turned off or put in a silent (vibrate) mode and ordinarily should not be taken out during class. Given the fact that these same communication devices are an integral part of the University's emergency notification system, an exception to this policy would occur when numerous devices activate simultaneously. When this occurs, students may consult their devices to determine if a university emergency exists. If that is not the case, the devices should be immediately returned to silent mode and put away. In testing situations, use of cell phones or similar communication devices, or any other electronic or data storage device, may lead also to a charge of academic dishonesty and additional sanctions under the Student Academic Integrity Policies and Procedures.

**COMPUTER POLICY:** The use of computers or any other electronic device that can access the Internet (with the exception of smart phones during a university emergency) is prohibited while class is in session. (Exceptions will be made for students who have a medical reason for using a computer—for example, visually impaired students.)

**NONDISCRIMINATION POLICY:** Missouri State University is an equal opportunity/affirmative action institution, and maintains a grievance procedure available to any person who believes he or she has been discriminated against. At all times, it is your right to address inquiries or concerns about possible discrimination to the Office for Institutional Equity and Compliance, Park Central Office Building, 117 Park Central Square, Suite 111, 417-836-4252. Other types of concerns (i.e., concerns of an academic nature) should be discussed directly with your instructor and can also be brought to the attention of your instructor's Department Head. Please visit the OED website at [www.missouristate.edu/equity/](http://www.missouristate.edu/equity/).

**POLICY ON DISABILITY ACCOMMODATION:** To request academic accommodations for a disability, contact the Director of the Disability Resource Center, Meyer Library, Suite 111, 417-836-4192 or 417-836-6792 (TTY), [www.missouristate.edu/disability/contact.htm](http://www.missouristate.edu/disability/contact.htm). Students are required to provide documentation of disability to the Disability Resource Center prior to receiving accommodations. The Disability Resource Center refers some types of accommodation requests to the Learning Diagnostic Clinic, which also provides diagnostic testing for learning and psychological disabilities. For information about testing, contact the Director of the Learning Diagnostic Clinic, 417-836-4787, <http://psychology.missouristate.edu/ldc>.