PHIL 210 IS FA16

Contemporary Ethical Issues

Fall 2016

*This investigation is the finest of all: what sort of man one ought to be and what one ought to pursue and how far.*

-Socrates

*He has told you, O man, what is good;*

*And what does the Lord require of you*

*But to do justice, to love kindness,*

*And to walk humbly with your God?*

-Micah 6:8

Co-requisites or Pre-requisites: Second year standing or permission of instructor.

Semester Hours: 3 sem. hrs.

Location: **TBA**

Dates: Fall 2016

Instructor: Tyler Chamberlain, Ph.D. (cand.)

Contact Information: [tyler.chamberlain@twu.ca](mailto:tyler.chamberlain@twu.ca)

Office Hours: By appointment

Course Description:

An examination of some basic ethical theory and a critical focus on some current moral issues like consumerism, technoculture, environmental ethics, responsibility to distant peoples, genetic engineering and cloning, and the promise and peril of nanotechnology. The emphasis is on clarifying the issues, exploring various views on these and relevant supporting arguments, and exposing important underlying assumptions.

**Instructor’s supplemental comments:**

This is a philosophy class. The point of philosophy is to provide reasons for what you believe, and to be open to the possibility that your beliefs may change when presented with contrary reasons or evidence. **If you are to succeed in this class you must always back up everything you say with reasons that might be acceptable to others. For example, disagreeing with a particular author simply because you don’t like what he or she is saying is not enough. Alternatively, agreeing with an article because it confirms what you already believe is also not enough.** You must always seek to give reasons for agreeing or disagreeing with an argument; just saying that you like or agree with a certain view will be discouraged.

Learning Outcomes:

It is hoped that through course readings, assignments, lectures, and interaction with peers, by the end of the course students will be able to:

1. Read and critically understand philosophical writing.
2. Think critically, and use reasoned arguments to analyze complex issues.
3. Thoughtfully discuss the social and moral issues covered in class.
4. Clearly express arguments and ideas in writing.

Required Texts and Materials:

Lafollette, Hugh, ed. (2014). *Ethics in Practice: An Anthology*, 4th edition. Wiley-Blackwell.

Various assorted essays and book chapters will be made available on MyCourses.

Course Activities/Requirements:

1. **Article Comparisons (80% of final grade – 20% per Article Comparison)**

The most important part of making ethical decisions is the ability to adequately understand arguments on all sides of the issue. The purpose of this assignment is to get you expressing contrary points of view with a view to understanding what each position fundamentally claims.

The Article Comparison is a **4-5 page, double-spaced** summary and comparison of the articles listed below. You will begin by summarizing each article. A good summary will do 2 things: (1) identify which ethical position the author is arguing for, and (2) re-state, in your own words, the main reasons he/she gives to support their position.

You will then identify **1 point on which all articles agree, and 1 point on which the articles disagree**. The areas of agreement and disagreement must be about the underlying reasons supporting the contrasting positions. For example, you cannot just tell me that the main area of disagreement between the articles is that one author supports the right to Physician-Assisted Suicide while the other does not. You must try to figure out what relevant moral principles they disagree about.

TIP: When trying to choose the most important disagreement between the authors, ask yourself the following question: “Why exactly do they reach different conclusions?” If you read the articles closely enough you will be able to find important ethical principles that disagreeing authors will differ on.

You must write 4 reading reviews, on any of the following 5 topics (chapters in parentheses):

Legalization of Drugs (ch. 29, 30, 31, 32)

Marriage and Family (ch. 20, 21, 22, 23)

Freedom of Speech (ch. 35, 38, 39)

Economic Justice (ch. 54, 56, 59)

War and Peace (ch. 66, 69, Luttwak article on Mycourses)

Reviews must be emailed to the professor no later than **December 1st**. Of course, you can email them to me at your own pace before then – this is simply the date at which I need all of your assignments. You are encouraged to give me at least 1 review ahead of time in order to receive my feedback and get a better idea of what I’m looking for. You will be graded according to the following criteria: understanding of the readings and issues, grammar/clarity/spelling/etc., and the insightfulness of your evaluation of the key themes. Assignments must be properly formatted: size 12 font, double spaced, 1 inch margins.

**2.** **Take home final exam**

The final exam will be administered via email once the article comparisons have been submitted. It will consist of 2 essay questions. The purpose of the final exam is to judge your ability to discuss the material in the textbook. For this reason you are allowed to use the textbook as much as you want, but **you are not allowed to consult any other sources** (online, other books, etc.).

Evaluation:

The final grade will be determined by the satisfactory completion of all requirements.

Article Comparisons 80%

Final Exam 20%

**Total 100%**

**University Standard Grading System**

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| --- | --- | --- |
| Letter Grade | Percentage | Grade Point |
| A+ | 90-100 | 4.3 |
| A | 85-89 | 4.0 |
| A- | 80-84 | 3.7 |
| B+ | 77-79 | 3.3 |
| B | 73-76 | 3.0 |
| B- | 70-72 | 2.7 |
| C+ | 67-69 | 2.3 |
| C | 63-66 | 2.0 |
| C- | 60-62 | 1.7 |
| D+ | 57-59 | 1.3 |
| D | 53-56 | 1.0 |
| D- | 50-52 | 0.7 |
| F | Below 50 | 0 |

Policies:

**Academic Integrity and Avoiding Plagiarism at TWU**

As Christian scholars pursuing higher education, academic integrity is a core value of the entire TWU community. Students are invited into this scholarly culture and required to abide by the principles of sound academic scholarship at TWU. This includes, but is not limited to, avoiding all forms of plagiarism and cheating in scholarly work. TWU has a strict policy on plagiarism (see academic calendar). Learning what constitutes plagiarism and avoiding it is the student's responsibility. An excellent resource describing plagiarism and how to avoid it has been prepared by TWU Librarian William Badke and is freely available for download (PPT file) or used as flash (self running) tutorials of varying lengths from:  
   
<http://acts.twu.ca/library/plagiarism.ppt>

<http://acts.twu.ca/library/Plagiarism.swf> (14 minute flash tutorial) <http://acts.twu.ca/library/Plagiarism_Short.swf> (8 minute flash tutorial)

**Campus Closure and Class Cancellation Policy**

In the event of extreme weather conditions or other emergency situations, please consider the website the primary source of information, along with the TWU bulletin line 604.513.2147. The University will communicate information regarding the cancellation of classes to the following radio stations: CKNW (980 AM), CKWX (1130 AM), STAR FM (107.1 FM), PRAISE (106.5 FM) and KARI (550 AM). Should there be conflicting reports regarding campus closures, the TWU website and bulletin line are to be considered correct.

The first announcement regarding status of campus is made at 6:30 am and covers the period up to 1:00 p.m. The second announcement will be made at 11 am and will cover afternoon classes. Students and faculty should assume that all night classes will continue to operate. If the emergency continues into the evening, students and faculty may check for a class cancellation notice on the University's weather bulletin line or the website after 3:00 p.m. that day.

If this specific class must be cancelled for any other reason, the instructor will communicate this in advance. In the case of an unexpected cancellation, a sign will be posted on the classroom door.