



Grande Prairie Regional College
Department of Arts and Education

Philosophical Analysis of Contemporary Issues

Philosophy 1600 (UT) Fall 2013

Instructor: Tom Enders, PhD

Office: C303

Phone: 780-539-2996

E-mail: tenders@gprc.ab.ca

Office hours: Mon., Thurs. 3-4:30 p.m. and by appointment

Prerequisite: None. There is no prerequisite for this course.

Required texts/resource materials:

- Lewis Vaughn, editor. Contemporary Moral Arguments: Readings in Ethical Issues, 2nd edition. New York, Oxford University Press, 2013.
- Handouts and selected Moodle and internet readings as indicated on reading list.

College Calendar Course Description:

Philosophical analysis of contemporary problems of social concern. Topics may include abortion, sexual equality, our place in the natural environment, censorship, minority and majority rights, war and violence, medical ethics and cultural preservation.

Course Description Fall 2013:

This course will provide you with an introduction to philosophical analysis of contemporary moral issues. Each issue raises its own set of questions. There are some common questions, however, pertaining to moral judgments about life and death. What gives value to human and nonhuman life? What are our responsibilities related to the creation, preservation, alteration and destruction or non-destruction of life? Which positions on related rights and duties can be best supported by good arguments made by people thinking rationally and clearly? The goal will be to think our way to the best answers possible using relevant evidence and logic, whatever those answers may be.

Course objectives:

By the end of this course you should have a good initial understanding of basic philosophical concepts, theories and approaches and be able to use them in thinking carefully about contemporary moral issues, including those we examine in the course and others that we do not. You will have philosophical insights into specific arguments made about the particular issues selected for consideration. You will be

better equipped to develop well-argued and reasoned positions of your own.

Credit/Contact Hours: This is a three credit course with the equivalent of three hours of instructional time a week for a full term (or 13 three-hour classroom meetings.)

Delivery mode/course format:

Classroom sessions will be used for presentation and discussion of key moral concepts, principles and approaches in general and as they are used in debates about controversial topics. Arguments on different sides of issues will be assessed.

Course requirements:

- First exam..... 20%
- Second exam 25%
- Term paper..... 25%
- Final exam..... 30%

Please be informed that it is not the instructor's policy to allow exams or assignments to be rewritten, or extra work done to increase marks. You are welcome, however, to consult with the instructor prior to exams and assignment due dates.

Conversion table:

A+ 90 - 100	B+ 76 - 79	C+ 67 - 69	D+ 55 - 59
A 85 - 89	B 73 - 75	C 64 - 66	D 50 - 54
A- 80 - 84	B- 70 - 72	C- 60 - 63	F 0 - 49

For conversion of letter grades to the four-point scale see the GPRC calendar.

Transferability: UA, UC, UL, AU, AF (UA Camrose), CU, CUC, KUC

* The grade of D or D+ may not be accepted for transfer to other postsecondary institutions. Students are cautioned that it is their responsibility to contact the receiving institutions to ensure transferability.

Student Responsibilities:

* You are expected to devote time in the classroom to the class itself. Use of cell phones, laptops and other equipment is unacceptable unless approved for class purposes. It is also not acceptable to socialize or do work on other courses during the class.

* You are strongly advised to keep a copy of your own of any work you submit for grading at least until you have your work returned to you.

** Students who miss an excessive number of classes may be denied the opportunity to write the final exam, as stated in the Calendar.

****You are expected to write the final exam when scheduled by the Registrar's Office - with possible exceptions in the case of compelling and urgent circumstances beyond your control. Also note and observe other key dates during the term as provided in the Calendar.**

Statement on Plagiarism and Cheating:

* You are required to reference sources fully and properly for written assignments. You are responsible for familiarizing yourself with College Calendar information pertaining to cheating and plagiarism, for which there are various penalties depending on the severity of the offense. The Calendar information on student conduct and misconduct can be accessed in the print edition on pages 44-6 and on line at: www.gprc.ab.ca/programs/viewcatalog.1.-1.14.html

Provisional Topic List and Schedule

- 11 Sept.: I. Introduction. What is philosophy? Philosophy and science.
Branches of philosophy.
- 18 Sept.: I. Introduction concluded. II. Moral Reasoning. Morality, law and religion. Moral relativism. A little logic.
- 25 Sept.: III. Moral liberalism and conservatism. Libertarianism.
IV. Ethical Theories or Approaches... A concise introduction to basics.
- 2 Oct.: IV. Ethical Approaches concluded
- 9 Oct.: FIRST EXAM.
V. Global Economic Justice. What are the obligations of those better off to those living in countries the least well off?
- 16 Oct.: V. Global Economic Justice concluded.
VI. Abortion. The status of the foetus. Fetal rights. Rights of pregnant women. Infanticide.
- 23 Oct.: VI. Abortion concluded.
- 30 Oct.: VII. Animal Rights and Welfare. Do animals have rights? Equal rights? Is it morally acceptable or required to use animals in medical and non-medical experiments and testing?
- 6 Nov.: SECOND EXAM.
VIII. Euthanasia. Passive and Active. Assisted Suicide
- 13 Nov. VIII. Euthanasia concluded.
- 20 Nov. IX. Genetic Engineering and Cloning. Drawing lines between the acceptable and unacceptable. Maintaining or changing boundaries of what is human.
- 27 Nov.: X. Punishment and Capital Punishment (The Death Penalty)
- 4 Dec.: XI. War and Torture. When if ever are these justified? Roles of medical personnel in torture.

FINAL EXAM – to be scheduled by Registrar's Office.