

Seminar in Ethics — PHI 6605.602
Spring 2010 2:00 – 4:50 T

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Course Aims

- read carefully, fairly, and critically
- write clearly, honestly, and effectively
- distinguish reason from rhetoric
- understand and refine moral reasoning
- understand and appreciate competing moral views
- discern what is morally relevant
- identify what you should know to make moral decisions
- critically evaluate your views, attitudes, and behavior
- develop and defend your own ethical views

Texts

The Warriors, J. Glenn Gray [W] **Required**

Unspeakable Acts, Ordinary People, J. Conroy [UA] **Required**

The Myth of Ownership, Murphy and Nagel [MO] **Required**

Assorted online readings (available from the syllabus)

Style: Basics of Clarity and Grace, J. Williams. **Recommended, but not required**

We will focus on pairs of overlapping issues: (a) violence both domestic and international (Capital Punishment, War, and Terrorism) and b) Economic Justice, both domestic and international. After doing so, we should be in a position to think more abstractly about an array of philosophical issues, including the moral relevance of national boundaries and of history, national and personal responsibility, Doing/allowing distinction, and the Doctrine of Double Effect.

Requirements (Details follow)

Participation is expected, but not graded

One short critical on a day's reading (1750 words) [25 points]

Short paper on some outside philosophical or empirical work [25 points]

Long critical (4000 words) [50 points]

Participation. Read assignments carefully before class. Read them until you understand them and are prepared to discuss them. Make your comments clear, relevant, and concise. Defend your claims.

Several times during the term I plan to meet with just the grad students after our regular class period.

Short critical paper. You will submit a 1750 word essay focused on one day's required reading. Within the first two weeks of the term, let me know on which essay you want to base your paper; if you do not choose by that time, I will assign one. The paper should indicate a deep understanding of the reading; then you should critically evaluate a significant idea in that reading. [Email](#) your paper to me by the *start* of class on the day we are scheduled to discuss the reading. [Here](#) is a "handout" on writing a paper.

Short paper on outside work, either philosophical or empirical. During the first two weeks of class, familiarize yourself with the course readings/topics. Then send me an email specifying (a) on which topic you want to do some philosophical or empirical work on a topic related to our readings.

One of the short papers above must be submitted by the start of spring break.

Critical paper. Write a 4000 word essay defending your view on an important moral issue. Due by 5 pm, May 2. I will offer comments on a draft of this essay if you send it to me no later than 5 pm April 24.

I will consider having you write a single long paper (6000 words) for the class. However, if you wish to pursue that option, we should discuss it by the end of the third week of classes.

Class Policies and Information

Written Assignments

- Give your written assignments a title and include your name.
- Underline your thesis (the central claim you defend).
- Electronically submit all written work. **Attach** it to an email; do not put it in the body of an email. Save your papers in docx, doc, rtf, or wpd format. **If you do not follow these guidelines, I will not receive your paper.**
 - Place the course number and term (e.g. IDH 3600 or PHI 6605) in the **subject line** of the email.
 - Name your **file** (the attached paper) using the following convention: **lastname, firstname assignmentname** (e.g., Jones, Judy Critical Paper). If you are unsure how to do this, please check [the online resources](#).
- Use a consistent reference system. I have examples of the most common ones on Blackboard.
- I make my comments electronically. To see the comments within Word, click “View,” then “Markup.” You can print the comments, either separately, or to the side of the paper. There are similar options within most word processors. If yours has no such option, let me know and I will convert your paper (with comments) to a PDF file.
- I deduct one step in grade for each day (or **part** of a day) an assignment is late. With one exception. You have a two day extension you can use any time this term. But do not squander this. Once it is gone, then barring an **extreme** emergency, you will lose points.
- The class Blackboard site includes technical instructions on these requirements as well as other valuable resources. Familiarize yourself with that site!

Plagiarism

If you use someone else's words, you must include them in quotation marks and give an appropriate citation. If you use someone else's ideas, even if you do not use their exact words, you must give an appropriate citation. [For more information, see the [explanation](#) on pp. 7-8 of the syllabus.]

General Information and Classroom Behavior

- You should attend class.
- This is a time-consuming class. You should spend at least two hours out of class for every hour in class. If you do not, you will not do well. Do not be surprised.
- I use a standard grading scale; I give pluses and minuses.
- I take the grading scale seriously: a ‘B’ means your work is above average; an ‘A’ means your work is exceptional.
- You may take notes or tape lectures if you wish; you cannot sell them.
- Arrive on time, unless unavoidable. Do not leave during class unless unavoidable.
- Be civil and respectful to other members of the class.

Readings

Jan 12	Introduction	
Jan 19	War – Just War Theory	Shue , McMahan ,
Jan 26	Civilian Immunity and Pacifism	Hawk ; Primoratz
Feb 2	Forgetfulness, Appeals, Images	Chapters 1, 2, 5 (W)
Feb 9	history of torture, examples	Chapter 1-3
Feb 16	victims and bystanders; Conroy visit	Chapters 4-6
Feb 23	America, Torture, and Human Rights Are some actions always immoral?	read several essays on torture
Mar 2	World Hunger – 4 basic approaches	Singer , Arthur , Hardin , Watson
Mar 9	no class; Spring break	
Mar 16	Causes of Hunger Obligation in the Real World	Sen ; check online (3 rd section) for empirical evidence
Mar 23	Responsibility	Miller ; Pogge
Mar 30	Guilt; Future of War	Chapter 6 and conclusion (W)
Apr 6	Tax Equity and Economic Justice	pp. 3-75 (MO)
Apr 13	Redistribution, Tax Base, Progressivity	pp. 76-141 (MO); Nozick
Apr 20	Inheritance, Tax Discrimination, and Conclusion	pp. 142-190 (MO)
Apr 27	capital punishment	Pojman ; Reiman

Skills for Course

Following are skills you should develop and refine in this class. They are divided into three broad categories.

Writing Proficiency (W)

- **Vocabulary (V).** Have a sufficiently rich vocabulary so that you can comprehend the writings and speech of educated persons and can communicate your ideas to them.
- **Grammar (G).** Understand the basic rules of grammar so that you can comprehend the writings and speech of educated people and communicate your ideas to them.
- **Precision (P).** Avoid ambiguous, vague, rambling, or imprecise prose.
- **Organization (O).** Construct coherent sentences and paragraphs. Arrange them to communicate clearly.

Understanding (U)

- **Knowledge (K).** Know what an argument is. Be able to identify them.
- **Sense (S).** Have a general sense of the author's or speaker's view.
- **Thesis (T).** Identify the author's or speaker's thesis—the central claim the author or speaker is advocating.
- **Premises (P).** Identify the author's or speaker's premises—the reasons she gives in support of her thesis.
- **Distinction (D).** Distinguish the view that the author or speaker advocates from those she discusses.
- **Redescription (R).** Reconstruct the author's or speaker's arguments using your own words.
- **Fairness (F).** Accurately describe those arguments in a way that is fair to the speaker or author—avoid the straw man fallacy (misdescribing the speaker's or author's view so that it is an easy target).

Argument (A)

- **Importance (I).** Know the importance of arguments—why we need evidence for our beliefs.
- **When (N).** Know when a claim needs to be supported.
- **What (T).** Have a sense of what you need to know to resolve the issue.

- **Criteria (C).** Know the best ways to read, understand, and critique arguments.
- **Relevance (L).** Spot premises that are irrelevant to a conclusion. Explain why a premise is or is not relevant.
- **Sufficiency (S).** Spot premises that are insufficient to support a conclusion. Know what additional facts or considerations might, in combination with those premises, be sufficient to support a conclusion.
- **Truth (T).** Spot false or debatable premises. Know what you need to know to determine the truth or plausibility of premises.
- **Objections (O).** Know the objections to the view you advocate. Understand and appreciate their strength.
- **Response (R).** Have plausible and relevant response to those objections.
- **Positive (P).** Have a positive argument for your own thesis.

Each skill will be evaluated according to the following scale:

Inadequate (I) Weak (W) Average (A) Proficient (P) Exceptional (E)

Grades Based on Skills

The following table indicates which skills—and at which levels—you need for each grade. To earn any grade you must satisfy all the skills at and below the identified level. Obviously what these scales mean for graduate students is much higher than what they mean for undergraduates.

Grade	Skills					
	Writing	Level	Understanding	Level	Argument	Level
A	ALL	P	ALL	P	ALL	P
	at least 2	E	K, S, T, P, R	E	first 7	E
B	at least 2	P	K, S, T, P, F	P	I, N, T, C	P
			D, R, P	A	L, S, T, O, R, P	A
C	P, O	A	ALL	A	I, N, T, C	A
					L, S, T, O	W
D	V, G	A	K	A	I	W
	P, O	W	S, F	W		

Plagiarism

Although plagiarism is widely accepted in high schools, it is explicitly against USF's policies. And so it should be. Perhaps, though, some students do not understand exactly what plagiarism is or why it is so important. So let me explain.

Types of Plagiarism

(1) **Word-for-word.** Many people assume they can copy a sentence from a writer without including the author's words in quotation marks or giving a citation. **Wrong!** Exactly replicating another's words—even if it is only a sentence or a long phrase—is plagiarism. Of course someone might stumble on the same sentence by chance; therefore, it is difficult to prove that someone has plagiarized if she copied only one sentence. However, once someone has copied several consecutive sentences, *the case is closed*.

(2) **Rephrasing.** “Aha,” someone might say, “if plagiarism is copying whole sentences word for word, I do not plagiarize if I rephrase the author.” **Wrong!** Merely changing a few words is still plagiarism. Consider the following:

Original	“Revised”
<p>The problem, in its most general form, is this. As moral agents, we cannot play favorites--at least, not according to the conception of morality as impartiality. But as parents, we do play favorites. Parental love is partial through and through. And we think there is nothing wrong with this; in fact, we normally think there is something wrong with the parent who is <u>not</u> deeply partial where his own children are concerned. Therefore, it would seem, one or the other of these conceptions has to be modified or abandoned.</p>	<p>The general problem is that moral agents cannot play favorites, at least according to the principle of impartiality. Nonetheless, we parents do play favorites. Parental love is completely partial. We think this is morally acceptable. In fact, we think there is something objectionable about the parent who is not partial toward his own children. Therefore, it seems one of these conceptions must be modified or rejected</p>

This revised version is still plagiarism. Of course if the student had acknowledged that she was paraphrasing the author, **and** had given an appropriate citation (see below), then that would not be plagiarism.

(3) **Using someone's ideas, even if not their words.** If you use someone else's ideas—even if not their words—and you do not give an appropriate citation, then you have plagiarized. Give credit where credit is due.

Why Shouldn't I Plagiarize?

(1) **It undercuts the aims of education.** If you plagiarize you will not learn the skills you should learn in university. You didn't have to attend university to learn how to copy someone else's words and ideas. At university you should learn to think carefully and critically. You should learn to think for yourself.

(2) **It is theft.** Theft is wrong whether you steal an object, words, or ideas. It is plagiarism when you act as if someone else's words or ideas are yours.

(3) **You harm other students.** Education flourishes when professors trust their students. They stop trusting students when plagiarism becomes commonplace. That undermines education. Among other things, professors become preoccupied with setting plagiarism-proof assignments than assignments which are educationally sound.

(4) **You will get caught.** I am very good at spotting plagiarism, and tenacious at gathering evidence to establish that a student plagiarized. Think about it a minute: if you plagiarize from a good source—one that is likely to help your grade—the prof will likely know it or can easily find it. Moreover, if your writing style changes significantly from sentence to sentence or from exam to paper, then even a casual observer will see the difference. To plagiarize well—in a way likely to land you a decent grade and minimize your chance of getting caught—is extremely difficult. You would have to know the material very well. However, once you know the material that well, it would be easier—and more educationally beneficial—to write the essay yourself.

Citations

If you use someone else's words or ideas, give an appropriate citation. That is, you should give: (a) title of the article or book, (b) if an article, the title of book or journal in which it appears, (c) date of publication, (d) if a book, the publisher and place of publication, and (e) the page number on which the quotation or idea appears. If it is a web source, you also need a proper (and workable) URL. Use any standard citation format, e.g., MLA.

Penalty

If you plagiarize, you fail the course. If the plagiarism is egregious, I will also turn you in to the dean's office for academic misconduct. **No excuses. No exceptions.**