

**INTRODUCTORY HANDOUT      PHILOSOPHY 162      WINTER, 2008**  
**CONTEMPORARY MORAL ISSUES      revised 1/17/2008**

Professor: Richard Arneson.

Further information about the course will be posted at the course webpage

<http://philosophy.ucsd.edu/Courses> (scroll to Winter 2008 then click on Philosophy 162)

You should check this web page regularly for news about the course.

Lecture/discussion MWF 11:00-11:50 a.m. in Sequoyah Hall 148.

The final exam for this course will take place on Monday, March 17, from 11:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. If you enroll in this class, you must be free to take a regular final exam for this course at this time.

This course examines some current ethical controversies. Several of these issues involve the morality of killing. Under what circumstances (if any) is it morally permitted, or morally required, to cut short the life of a person—oneself or another—either deliberately or as a side effect of what one does?

The first topic is just war theory. There are two questions here. One is, under what circumstances is it morally legitimate for one nation (or other political group) to wage war on another nation? The second question is, in waging a just war, what are the moral constraints on what it is permissible to do to enemy combatants and noncombatants? Do these constraints hold absolutely or do they give way in "supreme emergencies" or whenever the benefits of violating them are sufficiently great? Do these just warfare ideas developed many centuries ago make sense in modern times? To explore these questions, we apply just war theory to issues such as terrorism, guerrilla warfare, and reprisals. We look at critics of contemporary just war theory. We also examine the morality of individual self-defense, regarded as analogous to collective self-defense against aggression.

In weeks five through eight we look at the issue of global poverty and what, if anything, the nonpoor are obligated to do towards its relief. If some people are better off and some worse off, and the worse off are below some threshold minimum threshold of decent quality of life, under what circumstances, if any, are the better off required to give aid to the needy? In the assessment of what we owe one another by way of protection against poverty and destitution, to what extent is it permissible, or perhaps even mandatory, to give priority to helping fellow countrymen over distant needy strangers? In this connection we look at the issue of immigration and immigration restriction. We also consider to what extent the ordinary economic operations in developed nations might plausibly be regarded as harming the global poor (in which case, a duty to compensate for harm caused might be the appropriate moral focus, rather than the charitable duty to give aid).

The next topic is suicide, euthanasia or mercy killing, and physician-assisted suicide. Most people think suicide is sometimes morally acceptable, but if so, when? What marks the difference between admirable and immoral suicide? Do we have a duty to stay alive except in exceptional circumstances, or is each person's choice to stay alive or not her own business and nobody else's? Is it sometimes morally acceptable to kill a person for her own good? Is it sometimes morally acceptable to kill a person against her will for her own good? Should medical doctors help people commit suicide or perform euthanasia? In considering these questions we explore both what people morally ought to do and what the law morally ought to be.

In week ten we switch gears again and examine a quite different topic. As we learn more about the genetic basis of personality and conduct, and as we come in the future to acquire greater ability to control and alter the genetic sources of who we are, questions arise about how to draw the line between morally desirable and undesirable genetic manipulations. Questions about what we might owe to one another take on new shapes as we anticipate a future in which we have far greater power than at present to alter native talents and disabilities.

The issues to be discussed in class are ones that are seriously controversial (not only in philosophy classes).

In class we seek principles that explain and justify the responses each of us has to a wide range of cases after critical reflection. We examine readings that take sharply opposed stands on the issues under discussion. (In some cases, the assigned reading takes one position and the associated class lecture suggests alternative perspectives.) The goals of the course are to improve our skills at interpreting philosophical texts and assessing their arguments, to understand a variety of approaches to controversial moral issues, and to gain a more reflective understanding of our own moral values.

COURSE TEXTS: Michael Walzer, *Just and Unjust Wars* (1999 edition); Deen Chatterjee, *The Ethics of Assistance: Morality and the Distant Needy*. Further readings will be downloadable from the course web page.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS: Students are expected to come to class having read the readings for that day and prepared to talk about them. Talking through the issues in your own voice helps deepen your understanding. It's also a good reality check—often when one thinks one understands an issue or problem, trying to explain it in one's own words reveals one's initial confidence was mistaken. Discussion with your participation during the Monday-Wednesday-Friday lectures is encouraged.

Graded assignments: A midterm exam (Wednesday of week 5), a short writing assignment, five to seven pages in length, topics to be assigned in class, and a regular comprehensive final examination. On your exams and the writing assignment you will be graded according to the clarity of your prose, the cogency of your arguments, and the soundness of the understanding of course materials that you exhibit. The final examination will comprehend all course materials including required readings, lectures, and handouts distributed in class. (This means that merely recommended readings will NOT be covered on exams.)

GRADING: If you are taking the course on a PASS/NOT PASS basis, you must get (1) a C- or better on the final examination as well as (2) an overall C- average on all course work in order to achieve a PASS grade, with one exception: If you have an A- or better average on the midterm exam, writing assignment, and adequate participation in class discussion and are enrolled on a PASS/NOT PASS basis, you need not take the final exam in order to earn a PASS grade.

The midterm exam and the writing assignment will each count for 30 percent and the final examination will count for 40 per cent of your overall course grade.

Only medical excuses certified by a note from your physician or a comparable certified excuse will be accepted for late submission of the writing assignment or absence from the midterm exam, or to justify the assignment of an Incomplete course grade.

#### SCHEDULE OF LECTURES, DISCUSSIONS, AND READINGS

Week 1. January 7-13

MON: Introduction. Reading: none.

WED: Walzer on moral skepticism and moral relativism. Reading: Walzer, *Just and Unjust Wars*, chapter 1.

FRI: The just war. Reading: M. Walzer, *Just and Unjust Wars*, chapters 2 and 4.

Week 2. January 14-20

MON: The just war. Reading: Walzer, *Just and Unjust Wars*, chapters 5-6; also D. Luban, "Preventive War," available from course web page. Recommended reading: G. Doppelt, "Walzer's Theory of Morality in International Relations," available from course web page.

WED: Just war theory: some wrinkles. Reading: T. Hurka, "Proportionality in the Morality of War," available from course web page.

FRI: Just warfare and noncombatant immunity. Reading: G. E. M. Anscombe, "War and Murder," available from course web page; also Walzer, *Just and Unjust Wars*, chapters 3, 8 and 9. Recommended reading: L. May, "The Principle of Discrimination or Distinction" (chapter 8 of his *War Crimes and Just War*), available from course web page.

Week 3. January 21-27.

MON: NO CLASS. MARTIN LUTHER KING HOLIDAY.

WED: NO CLASS.

FRI: Sieges, blockades, guerilla war, terrorism, and reprisals. Reading: Walzer, *Just and Unjust Wars*, chapters 10-13.

Week 4. January 28-February 3.

MON: Consequentialism versus a morality of side constraints. Reading: R. Brandt, "Utilitarianism and the Rules of War"; also T. Nagel, "War and Massacre," both available from course web page.

MON: MAKEUP CLASS MONDAY, JANUARY 28, in Philosophy Dept. Library (8025 HSS Bldg, Muir Campus, Northeast corner of 8<sup>th</sup> floor of building), 5-6 p.m. Makeup class notes to be posted at course web page. Topic: Just war theory revisionism. Reading: J. McMahan, "The Ethics of Killing in War"; also R. Arneson, "Just Warfare Theory and Noncombatant Immunity," both available from course web page.

WED: Terrorism and responses to terrorism. Reading: R. Fulinwider, "Terrorism, Innocence, and War"; also D. Luban, "The War on Terrorism and the End of Human Rights"; both available from course web page.

FRI: Supreme emergency. Reading: Walzer, *Just and Unjust Wars*, chapters 14-16. Further recommended reading: Paul Kahn, "The Paradox of Riskless Warfare," available from course web page.

Week 5. February 4-10.

MON: Reading: J. Thomson, "Self-Defense," available from course web site.

WED: MIDTERM EXAM IN CLASS.

FRI: Duties to distant strangers. Reading: P. Singer, "Famine, Affluence, and Morality," available from course web page; also P. Singer, "Outsiders: Our Obligations to Those beyond Our Borders," in Chatterjee, *The Ethics of Assistance*.

Week 6. February 11-17.

MON: Limits on duties to aid. Reading: Garrett Cullity, "Asking Too Much," available from course web page.

WED: More on limits on duties to aid. Reading: L. Murphy, "The Demands of Beneficence," available from course web page; also R. Arneson, "Moral Limits on the Demands of Beneficence?," in Chatterjee, *The Ethics of Assistance*.

FRI: Special Ties. Reading: T. Hurka, "The Justification of National Partiality," available from course web site.

Week 7. February 18-24.

MON: NO CLASS: PRESIDENTS' DAY HOLIDAY.

WED: Priority to Co-Nationals. Reading: R. Miller, "Cosmopolitan Respect and Patriotic Concern," available from course web site; also R. Miller, "Moral Closeness and World Community," in Chatterjee, *The Ethics of Assistance*.

FRI: More on priority to co-nationals. D. Miller, "National Responsibility and International Justice," in Chatterjee, *The Ethics of Assistance*.

Week 8. February 25-March 2.

MON: Moral constraints on intervention. Reading: Martha Nussbaum, "Women and Theories of Global Justice: Our Need for New Paradigms," in Chatterjee, *The Ethics of Assistance*.

WED: The duty not to harm and the global poor. Reading: T. Pogge, "'Assisting' the Global Poor," in Chatterjee, *The Ethics of Assistance*.

FRI: Immigration. Reading: Michael Blake and Mathias Risse, "Is There as Human Right to Free Movement? Immigration and Original Ownership of Earth", available from course web site. Recommended reading: M. Walzer, "Membership" (chapter two of his *Spheres of Justice*), available from the course web page.

Week 9. March 3-9.

MON: WRITING ASSIGNMENT DUE IN CLASS. Suicide, euthanasia, and physician-assisted suicide.

Reading: Leon Kass, "Neither for Love Nor Money: Why Doctors Must Not Kill"; also D. Brock, "Voluntary Active Euthanasia," both available from course web page.

WED: Same topic continued. Reading: D. Velleman, "A Right of Self-Termination?"; also F. Kamm, "Physician-Assisted Suicide, the Doctrine of Double Effect, and the Ground of Value," both available at the course web site.

FRI: Same topic concluded. Paul J. Weithman, "Of Assisted Suicide and 'The Philosophers' Brief'"; also G. Dworkin, "Sex, Suicide, and Doctors," both readings available from the course web page. Recommended reading: E. Ezekiel, "What Is the Great Benefit of Legalizing Euthanasia or Physician-Assisted Suicide?," available from the course web page.

Week 10. March 10-16.

MON: The morality of genetic intervention. Reading: A. Buchanan, D. Brock, N. Daniels, and D. Wikler, "Genetic Intervention and the Morality of Inclusion" (book excerpt), available from course web site.

WED: Genetic enhancement. Reading: Buchanan, Brock, Daniels, and Wikler, "Why Not the Best?" (book excerpt), available from course web site.

FRI: Disability and fairness. Reading: J. McMahan, "Cognitive Disability, Misfortune, and Justice," and D. Brock, "Health Care Resource Prioritization and Discrimination against Persons with Disabilities," both readings available from course web page.

**Arneson's office hours: Tuesdays 2-3 and Thursdays 1-2 in HSS 8057. Office phone 534 6810. Email [rarneson@ucsd.edu](mailto:rarneson@ucsd.edu)**