

University of Waterloo
Department of Philosophy
PHIL 220
Moral Issues
Fall 2016
Tue/Thur 11:30 - 12:50, PAS 1241

Instructor Information

Instructor: Patricia Marino
Office: HH 332
Office Phone: ext. 32779
Office Hours: TBA
Email: pmarino@uwaterloo.ca

Course Description

In this course we'll discuss several controversial moral topics, and we'll study a range of philosophical views on each. Topics include global poverty, euthanasia and assisted suicide, abortion, life and death decisions for infants with disabilities, income inequality, sexism, racism, environmental ethics, and surrogacy. This course does not endorse any particular conclusion about these matters; rather, the idea is for you to both understand what others have had to say, and to develop, possibly change, and learn how to intelligently defend, your own opinions.

You should read the text listed for a given date before class and be ready to discuss it. I will post study questions on LEARN ahead of time for each reading and you should come to class having given some thought to these. Course announcements and information will be on the LEARN page so please check it daily.

If you have questions about the syllabus, the course, the requirements, the assignments, or anything else to do with this course, please do not hesitate to ask at any time!

Course Objectives

As in most branches of philosophy, philosophical thinking about moral issues encompasses a variety of theoretical approaches and perspectives on specific topics. This course aims to acquaint you with some of this variety, and to develop your understanding of the reasoning underlying the various perspectives we consider. It will also invite you to engage these perspectives actively and critically by developing your own analyses and reasoned evaluations of the views discussed. This approach will contribute to the development of your critical thinking skills—skills which are useful not only in philosophy, but in many other walks of life, both academic and non-academic. Our approach will also provide useful preparation for future courses in philosophy, especially higher-level courses in ethics, medical ethics, social philosophy, and political philosophy.

By the end of this course, you should be able to:

- understand and explain various points of view on the moral issues in the course;
- analyze and critically evaluate existing arguments related to moral issues;
- identify reasons why there is so much disagreement about controversial moral issues;
- understand some of the ways ethical theory relates to practical moral problems;
- develop your own ideas and arguments concerning the issues in the course;
- effectively communicate your analyses, evaluations, and ideas in written work.

Readings

All readings will be posted on LEARN as pdfs you can download.

Course Requirements and Assessment

- In-class test, Oct 6, 20%
- Paper, due Oct 20, 25%
- In-class test, Nov 3, 30%
- Take-home final, due Dec 14, 25%

In-class tests and take-home final

The tests and final will be a mix of short answer and short essay.

Paper

The paper should be 900-1200 words and topics will be handed out. For the paper, you have the option of handing in a rewrite based on my comments. If you choose to do this your new paper grade will be an average of the original and the rewrite; your grade will not go down if the new draft is worse, but improved grades require significant changes and not just small edits. The paper assignment will ask you to write about your own ideas about a philosophical problem while engaging the texts and ideas we've encountered in class. The focus is on presenting an original argument. Of course this means the ideas in your papers must be your own; we will talk more in class about how to ensure that the ideas you present as your own really are, and how to cite any outside sources you do use appropriately. If you have any questions at any time about academic honesty and what it requires, do not hesitate to ask. Just raise your hand or approach me after class. For help with writing, check out [The Writing Centre](#).

Course Outline

Topic 1: Introduction

- **Sept 8:** Introduction

Topic 2: Global poverty

- **Sept 13:** Peter Singer, "Famine, Affluence, and Morality," *Philosophy & Public Affairs* (1972): 229-243.

- **Sept 15:** Class cancelled
- **Sept 20:** Onora O’Neill, "Kantian Approaches to Some Famine Problems," (published 1980), reprinted in Russ Shafer-Landau (ed.), *Ethical Theory: An Anthology* (Wiley, 2013), pp. 510-520.
- **Sept 22:** Amartya Sen, "Property and Hunger," *Economics and Philosophy*, 4(01) 57 (2008), 57-68.

Topic 3: Assisted suicide and euthanasia

- **Sept 27:** James Rachels, "Active and Passive Euthanasia," *The New England Journal of Medicine* 292.2 (1975), open-source post-print.
- **Sept 29:** Daniel Callahan, "A Case Against Euthanasia," in Andrew Cohen and Christopher Heath Wellman, eds. *Contemporary Debates in Applied Ethics* (John Wiley & Sons, 2014), pp. 179-190.

Topic 4: Abortion

- **Oct 4:** Mary Anne Warren, "On the Moral and Legal Status of Abortion," *The Monist* 1973 (43-61).
- **Oct 6: First test**
- **Oct 11:** Fall break -- no class
- **Oct 13:** Don Marquis, "Why Abortion is Immoral," *The Journal of Philosophy*, 86(4) (1989), 183–202.
- **Oct 18:** Judith Jarvis Thomson, "A Defense of Abortion," *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 1(1) (1971), 47-66.

Topic 5: Life and death decisions for infants with disabilities

- **Oct 20:** Marsha Saxton, "A Disability Critique: Why Members of the Disability Community Oppose Prenatal Diagnosis and Selective Abortion," in *Prenatal Testing and Disability Rights*, edited by Erik Parens and Adrienne Ash, 2000, Georgetown University Press. **First paper due.**

Topic 6: Income inequality

- **Oct 25:** John Rawls, selection from *A Theory of Justice* (first published 1971), reprinted in Russ Shafer-Landau, *Ethical Theory* (Wiley, 2013) 581-591.
- **Oct 27:** Robert Nozick, "Distributive Justice," *Philosophy & Public Affairs* 3 (1973), 45-126 (read pages 45 to 61 only).
- **Nov 1:** Gerald Cohen, "Robert Nozick and Wilt Chamberlain: How Patterns Preserve Liberty," *Erkenntnis*, 11(1), 5-23.

Nov 3: second test

Topic 7: Sexism and gender oppression

- **Nov 8:** Marilyn Frye, "Sexism," in *The Politics of Reality: Essays in Feminist Theory* (Crossing Press, 1983): 17-40.
- **Nov 10:** Ann Cudd, "Oppression by Choice," *Journal of Social Philosophy*, 25 (1994), 22–44.

Topic 8: **Race and racism**

- **Nov 15:** Jorge Garcia, "The Heart of Racism," *Journal of Social Philosophy* 27.1 (1996): 5-46.
- **Nov 17:** Tommie Shelby, "Is Racism in the 'Heart'?" *Journal of Social Philosophy* 33 (2002): 411-420.

Topic 9: **Environmental Ethics**

- **Nov 22:** Mark Sagoff, "At the Shrine of Our Lady of Fatima, or Why Political Questions Are Not All Economic," *Arizona Law Review* Vol. 23 (1981), pp. 1283-1298.
- **Nov 24:** Ramachandra Guha, "Radical American Environmentalism and Wilderness Perservation," *Environmental Ethics*. 11 (1989): 71-83.

Topic 10: **The limits of markets: surrogacy and sex work**

- **Nov 29:** Elizabeth Anderson, "Is Women's Labor a Commodity?" *Philosophy and Public Affairs* (1990), 71-92.
- **Dec 1:** Deborah Satz, "Markets in Women's Sexual Labor," *Ethics* 106(1) (1995), 63-85.

Late work

If you experience unexpected difficulties like illness or personal difficulties, please let me know as soon as possible. If you expect to miss a deadline or test, it's essential to let me know by email before the deadline or test. If anything arises that gets in the way of you doing your work for this class, do come talk to me: I'm here to help and I'll do what I can.

Information on Plagiarism Detection

No formal or technological plagiarism detection mechanisms will be used in this class.

Electronic Device Policy

There is no formal policy against the use of laptops or tablets in class, but there are two rules: 1) please do not use technology in ways that are distracting to me or to the other students and 2) please be mentally present for what is going on in the classroom. This means no videos, no social networking, no email, and no checking your phone during class. If you must use your phone, please leave the classroom.

Etiquette

Please feel free to call me "Patricia." Or you can call me "Professor Marino" or "Dr. Marino" if you prefer.

Attendance Policy

Though attendance is not part of your assessment, in practice you have to be in class to understand the material. If you have to miss class you are responsible for finding out what content you missed.

Cross-listed course

Please note that a cross-listed course will count in all respective averages no matter under which rubric it has been taken. For example, a PHIL/PSCI cross-list will count in a Philosophy major average, even if the course was taken under the Political Science rubric.

Academic Integrity

Academic Integrity: In order to maintain a culture of academic integrity, members of the University of Waterloo are expected to promote honesty, trust, fairness, respect and responsibility. See the [UWaterloo Academic Integrity webpage](#) and the [Arts Academic Integrity webpage](#) for more information.

Discipline: A student is expected to know what constitutes academic integrity, to avoid committing academic offences, and to take responsibility for his/her actions. A student who is unsure whether an action constitutes an offence, or who needs help in learning how to avoid offences (e.g., plagiarism, cheating) or about “rules” for group work/collaboration should seek guidance from the course professor, academic advisor, or the Undergraduate Associate Dean. When misconduct has been found to have occurred, disciplinary penalties will be imposed under Policy 71 – Student Discipline. For information on categories of offenses and types of penalties, students should refer to [Policy 71 - Student Discipline](#). For typical penalties check [Guidelines for the Assessment of Penalties](#).

Grievance: A student who believes that a decision affecting some aspect of his/her university life has been unfair or unreasonable may have grounds for initiating a grievance. Read [Policy 70 - Student Petitions and Grievances](#), Section 4. When in doubt, please be certain to contact the department’s administrative assistant who will provide further assistance.

Appeals: A decision made or penalty imposed under Policy 70 - Student Petitions and Grievances (other than a petition) or Policy 71 - Student Discipline may be appealed if there is a ground. A student who believes he/she has a ground for an appeal should refer to [Policy 72 - Student Appeals](#).

Accommodation for Students with Disabilities

Note for students with disabilities: The [AccessAbility Services](#) office, located on the first floor of the Needles Hall extension (1401), collaborates with all academic departments to arrange appropriate accommodations for students with disabilities without compromising the academic integrity of the curriculum. If you require academic accommodations to lessen the impact of your disability, please register with the AS office at the beginning of each academic term.