HU 2700 • INTRODUCTION TO PHILOSOPHY  (Spring 2003)

Professor Laurie Anne Whitt
WANC 330  Ph: 487-3250
Office Hours: W 2-4 or by appointment

Syllabus

Jan.
13 Introduction

20 MARTIN LUTHER KING DAY

27 Logic & Argument

Feb.
3 Moral Relativism

10 Happiness and Morality

17 Moral Principles & Moral Themes

24 Application: Euthanasia

March
3 SPRING BREAK

10 Societies & Governments

17 Application: The Death Penalty & International Law

24 Personal Identity

31 Minds & Bodies

Apr.
7 Knowledge and Experience

14 Knowledge and Truth

21 Philosophy and Religion

28 Belief in God

Mar 14 Knowledge and Truth W 396-410 & 410-428

17 Application: The Death Penalty

24 Application: Euthanasia W 251-273, TBA

17 Moral Principles & Moral Themes M 103-125

24 Application: Euthanasia W 251-273, TBA

Required Texts and Readings

W = Philosophical Dilemmas by Phil Wachtman
M = Reflections on Philosophy by Leemon McHenry & Takashi Yagisawa

The (TBA) readings for 24 February and 17 March will be on reserve. Please copy them and bring them to class.

Course Requirements

Attendance

Students are expected to attend all classes. Three absences will lower your grade. Four absences or more will constitute grounds for failure of the course. If your situation merits special consideration, you should discuss this with me.

the "being there" mark (15%) The "being there" mark is a reflection of your physical, mental and verbal "presence" in the course. Regular attendance, the quality and frequency of participation in discussions, as well as other modest indicators (such as staying awake, bringing and doing required readings, coming prepared with questions for discussion, etc.) are all taken into consideration here.

Regular participation in full class and small-group discussion is encouraged and expected. PLEASE NOTE: You cannot actively participate without appropriate materials, i.e. texts, readings on reserve, and written assignments. These are to be brought with you to each class meeting. FAILURE TO DO SO WILL LOWER YOUR GRADE.

Class Files (50%) A class file will be submitted at the last class meeting. It will contain all the written work you have done in the course. In addition to your text, this will include your written homework assignments, in-class entries, recorder notes as well as any out-of-class discussion entries you would like to include. Class notes should NOT be placed in the class file. Class file grades will be based primarily on (1) your written homework assignments and in-class entries (these are required), and (2) any recorder notes and out-of-class discussion entries (these are optional).

You will need to complete 8 of 10 written assignments. (These are to be from 1000-1200 words in length. Single-space, use 12 pt. Times New Roman, avoid caps, bold font and other space-consuming maneuvers.) Their purpose is to ensure that you have given the readings thoughtful and careful consideration before we deal with them in class, and that you are prepared to engage in well-informed, reasoned discussion of them.

The nature of the written assignments is likely to vary, but typically you will be asked to do one or more of the following: 1) provide an exposition, in which you present clearly the central concepts and arguments advanced in the readings; 2) provide a critical evaluation, in which you do some of the following: assess the merits of the arguments in the readings, indicating your reasons for agreeing or disagreeing; raise questions concerning the material; suggest further avenues of inquiry; develop and defend your own position, anticipating possible objections and responding to them, etc.; 3) prepare a response statement to the reading, in which you synthesize the main points made by an author and comment upon them; 4) develop a thoughtful, well-reasoned answer to a question or series of questions posed in class or in the text.

No Late assignments WILL NOT be accepted. A late assignment is a missed assignment. An assignment is late/misssed if it is not submitted with all the other assignments collected that day during class. Specifically, an assignment will not be accepted at the end of class.

In-class entries will also be made on a regular basis, and will often require reference to the readings. This is another reason you will need to have your readings with you. Brief, informal, one or two paragraph homework assignments may also be made from time to time. As with all your written work, these should be made on 9" x 11" notepaper. PLEASE DO NOT USE SPIRAL NOTEPAPER FOR ANYTHING YOU HAND IN.

NOTE: Anyone with any disability that could affect class performance (e.g. hearing, vision, learning disabilities) or which might fall under the Americans With Disabilities Act should see me as soon as possible. I will be happy to accommodate anyone who needs assistance.

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You are urged, but not required, to make unassigned out-of-class discussion entries as well. These will not substitute for any of the required entries, but you can use them to further explore anything which particularly interests you that is relevant to the course. You might, for example, note your response to a class discussion, mentioning the changes it provoked in your own views and/or any new points that came up which you find interesting and worth considering at greater length. Record notes based on discussions, are also optional.

Quizzes (10%)

An indeterminate number of unannounced in-class quizzes will be given. These will be short and relatively simple. If you are conscientiously applying yourself to doing the readings and to following the lectures you should do well on them. They will be given either at the very beginning of class and based on the readings for that day, or at the very end of the class and based on the readings and on the lecture material presented that day, or both. Missed quizzes CANNOT be made up. Depending on the number of quizzes we actually have, one or more of your lowest quiz grades may be dropped.

Some Critical Reasoning Goals

In your work, you should consciously attempt to cultivate the following critical reasoning skills:

1) To identify and critically evaluate the arguments of others, as well as to construct and defend your own arguments
2) To uncover and question implicit assumptions and presuppositions in written and spoken discourse
3) To draw legitimate and appropriate inferences from the claims of others and to realize the implications of your own claims and beliefs
4) To introduce relevant distinctions and qualifications in the interests of achieving consistency, precision and clarity of thought and expression
5) To secure for yourselves autonomy of thought by challenging and testing previously unexamined beliefs and values

A Key To Comments On Written Assignments

Comments frequently made on written assignments are abbreviated below. If you would like to discuss your work in more detail, please come by during office hours.

1) Excellent exposition
2) Excellent critical evaluation
3) Critical evaluation needs development.
4) Exposition needs development.
5) Good work, but you can do even better...
6) Competent, but don't settle for that.
7) Impressive/First-rate
8) Token/Disappointing
9) You're capable of better work. Demand more of yourself.
10) Bring this up in class.
11) I'd like to talk to you about this.
12) Put the material in your own words in your exposition of the reading.
13) Your writing is unclear, due to poor sentence structure, grammar, etc.
14) Don't rely on your spell-checker to do your proofreading. It doesn't catch everything.
15) You need to spend more time and thought developing your position/arguments.
16) Please separate and label the separate parts of the assignment.
17) See me if you have any questions.
18) To improve, try to elaborate your discussion/arguments further.
19) I'm not quite following you here. Can you make your point more clearly?
20) This is unclear, it is difficult to determine exactly what you mean.
21) This is not a valid argument, or this remark does not follow from your other statements.
22) This is factually false.
23) No, this is a misinterpretation of the argument, position or thesis.
24) These indicated passages are contradictory, inconsistent, or in tension.
25) You are begging the question, i.e. assuming what you claim to prove.
26) You have not really answered the question.
27) This is basically irrelevant to your discussion. Your space is limited, use it effectively.
28) This is redundant.
29) This claim should have been given some supporting argumentation.
30) Unrelated position
31) Your discussion is not well-organized.
32) An interesting point. Can you expand on it?
33) A more thoughtful discussion is needed.
34) ENGAGE the material, drill into the issues. Don't just paddle around on the surface.

Policy on Cheating, Plagiarism and Academic Dishonesty:

Cheating and plagiarism are serious breaches of academic honesty. Any form of academic dishonesty will be subject to discipline and referred to the Associate Dean of Students. Disciplinary sanctions will also be invoked, including failing the assignment in question, or the entire course.

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**Introduction**

Ethics & Professionalism

The Role of Professional Societies

Moral Principles

“What are Codes of Ethics For?” Lichtenberg

“The Quest for a Professional Code of Ethics”

Analyzing Moral Problems

Methods for Moral Problem-Solving

“Engineering Ethics & Political Imagination”

“Social & Professional Responsibility of Engineers’ Engineers as Employees

“Whistle-Blowing and Employee Loyalty” Boespflug & The Challenger

Risk, Safety and Liability

“The Role of the Law in Protecting Scientific & Technical Dissent” J 248-62 VISITING SPEAKER

Honesty, Integrity & Reliability

“The Fifty-Nine Story Crisis” Le Messurier and the Citicorp Building

Engineers and the Environment

The Aberdeen Three Case

International Engineering Professionalism

Case 13 - Engineering & Disaster Relief

Cuny’s INTERTECT: Engineering & Humanitarianism

Kansas City Walkway Collapse

GM Side-Saddle Gas Tanks

Ford Pinto

Goodrich Aircraft Brake Scandal

Millstone Nuclear Power Plant

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Regular participation in full class and small-group discussion is encouraged and expected. PLEASE NOTE: You cannot actively participate without appropriate materials, i.e. texts, readings on reserve, and written assignments. These are to be brought with you to each class meeting. FAILURE TO DO SO WILL LOWER YOUR GRADE.

Class Files (45%)

A class file will be submitted at the last class meeting. It will contain all the written work you have done in the course. In addition to your test, this will include your written homework assignments, in-class entries, recorder notes as well as any out-of-class discussion entries you would like to include. Class notes should NOT be placed in the class file. Class file grades will be based primarily on (1) your written homework assignments and in-class entries (these are required), and (2) any recorder notes and out-of-class discussion entries (these are optional). You will need to complete 8 of 10 written assignments. (These are to be from 1000-1200 words in length. Single-space, use 12 pt. Times New Roman, avoid caps, bold font and other space-consuming maneuvers. Also, plan ahead so you do not have to do an assignment on the day you are giving your presentation.) Their purpose is to ensure that you have given the readings thoughtful and careful consideration before we deal with them in class, and that you are prepared to engage in well-informed, reasoned discussion of them.
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In your work, you should consciously attempt to achieve the following critical reasoning skills:

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12. Put the material in your own words in your exposition of the reading.
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14. Don't rely on your spell-checker to do your proof-reading. It doesn't catch everything.
15. You need to spend more time and thought developing your position/arguments.
16. Please separate and label the separate parts of the assignment.
17. See me if you have any questions.
18. To improve, try to develop your discussion/arguments further.
19. I'm not quite following you hear. Can you make your point more clearly?
20. This is unclear. It is difficult to determine exactly what you mean.
21. This is not a valid argument, or this remark does not follow from your other statements.
22. This is factually false.
23. No, this is a misinterpretation of the argument, position or thesis.
24. These indicated passages are contradictory, inconsistent, or in tension.
25. You are begging the question, i.e. assuming what you daim to prove.
26. You have not really answered the question.
27. This is basically irrelevant to your discussion. Your space is limited; use it effectively.
28. This is redundant.
29. This claim should have been given some supporting argumentation.
30. Unreferred pronoun
31. Your discussion is not well-organized.
32. Some of the following: assess the merits of the arguments in the readings, indicating your reasons for agreeing or disagreeing; raise questions concerning the material; suggest further avenues of inquiry; develop and defend your own position, anticipating possible objections and responding to them, etc.
33. Provide a case analysis, modeled on those in the text; or provide (or respond to) one or more points for discussion. The latter may take various forms. Usually a PFD will be presented as a carefully formulated question, or possibly a quotation from the readings, to which you then respond. The material addressed should be something that you found particularly interesting, provocative, objectionable, correct, etc., and which you believe is likely to be of interest to you and the class as a whole. After presenting your PFD, you then initiate your own brief discussion of it. Sometimes you will be asked to create your own PFD; sometimes these will be assigned.
34. This is a repetitive error.
35. You are begging the question, i.e. assuming what you daim to prove.
36. This is redundant.
37. This is basically irrelevant to your discussion. Your space is limited; use it effectively.
38. This is redundant.
39. trek.
40. Your discussion is not well-organized.
41. Some of the following: assess the merits of the arguments in the readings, indicating your reasons for agreeing or disagreeing; raise questions concerning the material; suggest further avenues of inquiry; develop and defend your own position, anticipating possible objections and responding to them, etc.
42. Provide a case analysis, modeled on those in the text; or provide (or respond to) one or more points for discussion. The latter may take various forms. Usually a PFD will be presented as a carefully formulated question, or possibly a quotation from the readings, to which you then respond. The material addressed should be something that you found particularly interesting, provocative, objectionable, correct, etc., and which you believe is likely to be of interest to you and the class as a whole. After presenting your PFD, you then initiate your own brief discussion of it. Sometimes you will be asked to create your own PFD; sometimes these will be assigned.
43. You are begging the question, i.e. assuming what you daim to prove.
44. This is redundant.
45. This is basically irrelevant to your discussion. Your space is limited; use it effectively.
46. This is redundant.
47. trek.
48. You are begging the question, i.e. assuming what you daim to prove.
49. This is redundant.
50. This is basically irrelevant to your discussion. Your space is limited; use it effectively.
51. This is redundant.
52. trek.
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Presentation (15%) Each member of the class will be responsible for a class presentation. These may be team presentations, and should be approximately 45 minutes in length (including class discussion). One-half of the grade will be a group grade, based largely on how carefully and extensively the group uses course materials to address the ethical issues in the case. (NB: It is not enough to just raise ethical issues; you need to analyze them in detail, using the concepts, distinctions and problem-solving approaches discussed in the course readings.) All sources consulted should be acknowledged in the presentation.

Cheating and plagiarism are serious breaches of academic honesty. Any form of academic dishonesty will be subject to discipline and referred to the Associate Dean of Students. Grade sanctions will also be invoked, including failing the assignment in question, or the entire course.