

Phil 103: Moral and Social Problems Instructor: Harold Gamble

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Textbook: *Disputed Moral Issues*, by Mark Timmons

Course Description from CSU Catalog: Contemporary ethical issues in the United States such as abortion, euthanasia and genetic engineering.

Course Objectives: By the end of the semester, students will be able: 1) to identify whether a philosopher uses utilitarian, Kantian, Aristotelian or some other moral theory to analyze a problem; 2) to list one advantage and one disadvantage of each moral theory; 3) to construct a good moral argument; 4) to identify common, fallacious moral arguments; 5) to write thesis-driven argumentative papers.

Writing: There are two papers for this class, each of which will be a two-page argumentative paper written to support a thesis and to demonstrate understanding of course content. There are also required, written posts to the class discussion board. Both CSU and I believe that writing is an important skill to learn in college; papers and posts to the class discussion board develop this skill. You will review more information about how to write philosophy papers (written guidelines, a video and an example paper) before your first paper is due. Be aware that all your papers may undergo an Internet scan for plagiarism. See the CSU catalog for [a definition of plagiarism](#).

RamCT & Online Etiquette: We will be using RamCT, software that allows me to send web pages, e-mail, grades, study questions for exams and class announcements to your computer. You will also be taking exams online with RamCT. My PowerPoint class slides and notes about every article we read are also posted on RamCT. The notes emphasize key arguments and assumptions the philosopher makes in presenting a position.

Whenever you communicate online, it is important to be constructive and encouraging with fellow class members and me. We may find ourselves disagreeing with one another but we can do so respectfully. Strive for a tone of polite and relaxed formality. Write in complete sentences, remember that everyone can read your postings, so think before you click the "post" button for a discussion board. Express disagreements in a helpful manner; do not personally attack another student. Discuss the comments and arguments of another, not the person presenting them.

Do not use the discussion board in RamCT to criticize another student in a personal way. For example, if you think another student is making sexist comments or is doing something that disturbs you, send me an email and I will deal with your issue. Do not publicly post a personal criticism. If you have any doubts about whether what you wish to say on the discussion board is appropriate, check with me before you post.

Posting to Class Electronic Discussion Board: Most weeks you are required to make two posts to the discussion board in RamCT. One post will be in response to a question from me and the other post will usually be a detailed response to another student. A poor quality post would be a response such as, "I agree with you John." Such a response shows little thought and is not helpful to other students. Rather you might say, "I agree with you John that utilitarianism is a questionable moral theory because it does allow us to mistreat an individual provided we still maximize the sum of utility for a group. Moreover,"

You may make more than two posts a week to the class board. I will be monitoring the board and making a minimum of two posts a week myself. I'll post more often during the opening weeks to provide you with examples of appropriate posts. I will read all your posts at the end of the semester and assign a grade of 0 - 40 points, much as I grade a paper on content, grammar, evidence of critical thinking, etc. In the event that you make more than two posts a week, you may designate which two posts count toward your grade for that week. If you do not designate these two posts, your professor will make this choice.

Each week, your first discussion post must be completed by midnight on Wednesday. This allows time for

everybody to read each other's posts before the second post, which must be completed by midnight on Sunday. You may not make both of your required posts on the same day. You may make multiple posts during a day, but only one of them will count for the required post.

Course Requirements and Grading: Taking an online class requires you to be motivated, to follow assignment and reading dates in your schedule and not to fall behind. Online classes require as much effort as a campus-based class.

This is not self-paced learning. Exams, the quiz, discussion-board posts and papers have specific due dates. All assignments, except your first discussion post each week, will be due at midnight on Sundays. Schedule and mark the specific dates on a calendar you look at daily. I do not accept late assignments unless there are extraordinary, documented circumstances.

In addition to the 2 papers and class discussions mentioned above, you will take 3 exams on the course material; your lowest exam score will be dropped. There is also a quiz at the end of the first week to make sure you understand the course syllabus and can use RamCT.

Your final grade will be based on:
3 exams, 50 pts each (drop lowest score):
2 papers, 50 pts each:
6 Online Discussions, 5 - 7 pts each:
Syllabus Quiz: 10 pts (4% of final grade)___
Total: 250 pts

Your final grade is the percentage of points you earn out of 250 points. Students will be graded by the same standards as my campus classes at CSU.

I will assign a letter grade based on the following scale:

A+ = 97-100% A = 93-96% A- = 90-92% B+ = 87-89% B = 83-86% B- = 80-82% C+ = 77-79%
C D F
= 70-76% = 60-69% = Below 60%
3
100 pts (40% of final grade) 100 pts (40% of final grade) 40 pts (16% of final grade)

You may make up exams provided you are sick or have other extraordinary, documented circumstances.

Do not wait for the last minute to take exams. Computer and Internet problems are not excuses for missing an exam. Use a reliable Internet connection.

Note: this class is taught entirely online using RamCT software. The course content is the same as would be delivered in a classroom on the campus of Colorado State University.

Conferences: I will be available to answer questions by email. I will answer all mail within 36 hours or less. I want to hear about any problems while we can still do something about them. For example, a low exam grade is a flag to mail me. Not understanding readings is a problem. Feeling uncomfortable about some classroom issues is also a good reason to mail me right away.

Electronic Reserve: I use [Electronic Reserve at the CSU library](#) to present articles that are not in your text. You need to be familiar with accessing electronic reserve from the CSU library website.

Academic Honesty: See the [Student Code of Conduct](#). I expect you to do your own work. You may not cut and paste or copy work from another into discussion posts, papers or other assignments without giving appropriate reference. For more information, visit [Practicing Academic Integrity at CSU](#).

Disabilities, Special Needs: If you have special learning needs, please contact [Resources for Disabled Students](#) and contact me as soon as possible to discuss your needs.

Help Services [RamCT tutorials and help](#): this is a helpful resource that I use when I forget how to do something on RamCT. Strongly recommended.

[Electronic Reserve at the CSU library](#): Contacts for help with e-reserve are provided. Computer support is also available by calling Computer Training and Support Services (CTSS) at Colorado State University at 970-491-7276 or www.ctss.colostate.edu. These are helpful people when something is not working.

Course Outline

This is a general guide. Readings may change and you need to stay tuned using RamCT and class announcements. Check the class site at least every other day for outline changes and announcements. All page numbers refer to our class text, *Disputed Moral Issues*.

I have organized assignments using a weekly schedule but, obviously, you may work at your own pace as long as exams, discussion posts and the quiz are turned in within the required time. Do not send material before the week that it is due.

Week 1

No readings. Syllabus Discussion. RamCT demo. Justiceharvard.org demo. Electronic Reserve demo

In class video: justiceharvard.org, Episode one, part 1; Read Timmons pp. 1-11 on moral theories and utilitarianism. Read “The Queen vs. Dudley and Stephens” Go to justiceharvard.org, click on tab on top of page titled, “Readings” and you will see a link for “The Queen vs. Dudley and Stephens.”

Week 2

In class video: justiceharvard.org, Episode one, part 2; Read Bentham, “The Principles of Morals and Legislation,” at readings on justiceharvard.org.

In class video: justiceharvard.org, Episode two, part 1; Read “The Ford Pinto Memo,” on electronic reserve in CSU library

In class video: justiceharvard.org Episode two, part 2; Read Mill, “Utilitarianism,” on electronic reserve in CSU library

Week 3

Apply utilitarianism to euthanasia: Read Rachels, “The Morality of Euthanasia,” electronic reserve; Rachels, “Active and Passive Euthanasia,” Timmons, p. 243

Gay-Williams, “The Wrongfulness of Euthanasia,” electronic reserve
Study Questions for Exam #1 available on RamCT

Read Tracy Latimer case study available on electronic reserve. In class analysis of Tracy Latimer’s case using utilitarianism.

Week 4

Applying utilitarianism to moral problem of famine and hunger: Read Singer, “Famine Affluence and Morality,” Timmons, p. 452

Exam 1 worth 50 points

Week 5

Arthur, "World Hunger and Moral Obligation," Timmons p. 458

Applying utilitarianism to animals: Read Singer, "All Animals are Equal," Timmons, p. 477; Google, "Factory Farm Animals" and look at two or three articles to see how factory farms treat chickens, pigs and cattle. In class video, Watch first 20 minutes of Singer interview with Charlie Rose

<http://video.google.com/videosearch?q=peter+singer+interview&hl=en&emb=0&aq=1&oq=Peter+Singer-q=peter+singer+interview+charlie+rose&hl=en&emb=0>

Writing Discussion; Paper Guidelines; Examples of Student Papers, Paper Topics on RamCT

Week 6

Read Cohen, "In Defense of Speciesism," Timmons, p. 485

Read Curnutt, "A New Argument for Vegetarianism," Timmons, p. 498.

Kant's ethics: In class video: justiceharvard.org, Episode 6, part one; Read Kant, "Groundwork." electronic reserve; Read Timmons, p. 15-20

Week 7

Paper #1 due. Kant's ethics: In class video: justiceharvard.org, Episode 6, part two; Read Kant, "Suicide as a Violation of One's Duty to Oneself," Timmons p. 241

Kant's ethics: In class video: justiceharvard.org, Episode 7, part one; Read Kant, "Our Duties to Animals," electronic reserve

Applying Kant to moral problem of famine: Read O'Neill "A Kantian Approach to World Hunger," Timmons, p. 467

Week 8

Pope John Paul II, "The Unspeakable Crime of Abortion," Timmons, p. 275; "Vatican Declaration on Some Questions of Sexual Ethics," Timmons, p. 41

Warren, "On the Moral and Legal Status of Abortion," Timmons, p. 277

Marquis, "Why Abortion is Immoral," Timmons, p. 292

Week 9

Cloning: Timmons, "Cloning and Genetic Enhancement," Timmons p. 315; Kass, "Preventing Brave New World," Timmons, p. 328. Study Questions, Exam #2, on RamCT.

Pence, "Will Cloning Harm People?" Timmons, p. 336

Week 10

Exam #2

Steroid debate, in class video at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t8_7C9GA-2w Read Fost, "Ethical and Social Issues in Antidoping Strategies in Sports," electronic reserve

Aristotle's ethics: In class video: justiceharvard.org, Episode 9, part two starting at about 41 minutes 40 seconds. Read, "PGA Tour Inc. v. Casey Martin," electronic reserve

Week 11

Aristotle's ethics. In class video: justiceharvard.org, Episode 10, part one. Read Ryan, "Sorry, Free Rides Not Right," electronic reserve; Kite, "Keep the PGA on Foot," on RamCT folder, Readings, course home page

Aristotle's ethics. In class video: justiceharvard.org, Episode 10, part two. Pressley, "A Safety Blitz: Texas Cheerleader Loses Status," electronic reserve

Paper Discussion #2: How to write a better argumentative paper. Paper Topics available on RamCT

Week 12

Sandel, "Honor and Resentment," electronic reserve

Applying Aristotle's ethics: "The Environment," Timmons pp. 509-513; Cafaro, "Thoreau, Leopold, and Carson: Toward an Environmental Virtue Ethics," electronic reserve

Rolston, "Naturalizing Values: Organisms and Species," electronic reserve

Week 13

Paper #2 due. Baxter, "People or Penguins." Timmons, p. 513

Leopold, "The Land Ethic," Timmons, p. 517

Thompson, "A Refutation of Environmental Ethics," Timmons, p. 533

Week 14

Topic: What is the Good life? Segal, "Two Ways of Thinking About Money," author unknown, "A Tiny Mexican Village," both on electronic reserve

Steve Jobs, "Graduation Address at Stanford," video at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UF8uR6Z6KLc>; Gamble, "Thoreau on the value of anything," Campbell, "Follow your Bliss" both on electronic reserve

Understand how philosophers use the concept of the good life. In class video: justiceharvard.org, Episode 12, part one. Read, "Hillary Goodrich & Others vs. Department of Public Health," on RamCT folder, Readings, course home page

Week 15

In class video: justiceharvard.org, Episode 12, part two. Kinsley, "Let's Really Get Government Out of Our Bedrooms," on RamCT folder, Readings, course home page

Sandel, "Democracy's Discontent," electronic reserve