

**PHIL 341: Contemporary Moral Issues**  
**Fall 2002**  
**Syllabus**  
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**A. Administrative Information**

Instructor: Professor Robert Streiffer  
Lectures: M, W, F, 1111 Humanities 2:25 – 3:15  
Philosophy Office: 5123 Helen C. White Hall; 263 – 9479  
Bioethics Office: 1411 Medical Sciences Center; 262 – 7490  
Office Hours: Friday 3:30 – 4:30 in my Philosophy Office, and by appointment  
E – Mail: [rstreiffer@wisc.edu](mailto:rstreiffer@wisc.edu), Home page: <http://philosophy.wisc.edu/streiffer/>

Teaching Assistant: Mo Abed  
Office: 5112 Helen C. White, 263-2482  
Office Hours: W, F: 1:00 – 2:00  
E-mail: [mkabed@students.wisc.edu](mailto:mkabed@students.wisc.edu)

Discussion Sections:

DIS 331:	11:00 – 11:50	Tuesday	4725 White
DIS 332:	12:05 – 1:00	Tuesday	4725 White
DIS 333:	9:55 – 10:45	Wednesday	249 Education
DIS 334:	11:00 – 11:55	Wednesday	249 Education
DIS 335 H:	9:55 – 10:45	Wednesday	5181 White

**B. Materials (Available from the UW Bookstore)**

- *Just and Unjust Wars*, by Michael Walzer. New York: Basic Books. 1977.
- *Exploitation*, by Alan Wertheimer. Princeton: Princeton University press, 1996.
- *Improving Nature: The Science and Ethics of Genetic Engineering*, by Michael J. Reiss and Roger Straughan. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996.
- *The Elements of Style*, by William Strunk and E. B. White (Recommended)
- *A Rulebook for Arguments*, by Anthony Weston (Recommended)

**C. Course Descriptions**

This course will examine four areas of contemporary moral controversy. (1) Just war theory: When, if ever, it is just to engage in a war? Is war merely "politics by another means," is pacifism correct in thinking that lethal violence is never justified, or is the truth somewhere in between? Once at war, what kind of behavior is permissible? How should we think about blockades, economic sanctions, nuclear weapons, and the use of terrorism? (2) Exploitation: People object to many kinds of commercial surrogate motherhood, student athletics, and using poor people as subjects in human experimentation in developing countries on the grounds that they are exploitative. But what exactly does it mean to say that something is exploitative? Is it possible for there to be mutually beneficial exploitation, and if so, what should our moral reaction be? (3) Biotechnology: Does the use of recombinant DNA techniques to modify microorganisms, plants, animals, or humans, violate fundamental constraints on how we should respect nature? Are genetically engineered foods safe to eat? Are they safe for the environment? Should animals be genetically engineered to be used as disease models for human benefit? What about just to make them tastier to eat? Is it ever permissible to genetically engineer human beings, and if so, what moral principles should guide such engineering? (4) A topic to be decided upon by the students: 3 class periods are set aside at the end of the semester for a topic of your collective choosing.

**D. Objectives**

There are two overall goals of the course:

1. To improve your familiarity with the arguments and theories prominent in the literature on these areas.
2. To improve your ability to think analytically and critically about the ethical issues in these areas.

**E. Requirements:**

1. Read all of the assignments. Read them carefully and read them critically. Most of the assignments are short, but they very dense. Many of them will require that you read them more than once in order to understand the argument.
2. Attend all the lectures. I won't take attendance, but you will be expected to show familiarity with the lecture material in your papers.
3. Attend and participate in the discussion sections (worth 10%).
4. Write three 1500 word (5 pages) papers (each worth 30% of your grade). No joint papers will be accepted. Paper topics will be handed out in class. Papers handed in after the first 5 minutes of class on the due date will be docked 1/3 of a letter grade (e.g., from a B+ to a B). After that, the penalty is one letter grade per day. Any non-emergency extensions must be requested prior to the due date, and will be granted only in rare circumstances. I will fail any papers not in compliance with the UW rules governing plagiarism, which you can find at <http://www.wisc.edu/students/conduct.htm>. Other penalties may also be used, if appropriate.

**F. Paper Dates:**

	<b>Assigned</b>	<b>Due</b>
1	Monday, Oct 7	Monday, Oct 21
2	Friday, Nov 1	Friday, Nov 15
3	Monday, Dec 2	Friday, Dec 13