

PHIL 341: Contemporary Moral Issues, Spring 2004
Revised Syllabus
Robert Streiffer

A. General Course Descriptions

We will examine in detail four areas of contemporary moral controversy: (1) just war theory, (2) exploitation, (3) abortion, and (4) genetic engineering. The course combines large-class lectures three times a week with small group discussions once a week. Lecture format will include straight lectures, PowerPoint presentations, and videos. Active participation will be encouraged. Small group discussions will be a chance for students to actively debate the material with their classmates. Written work for the class is one 3 page paper, one 5 page paper, a mid-term, and a final exam. Attendance is required.

B. Administrative Information

Instructor: Professor Robert Streiffer
 Lectures: M, W, F, 1111 Humanities 1:20 – 2:10
 Philosophy Office: 5123 Helen C. White Hall; 263 – 9479
 Bioethics Office: 1411 Medical Sciences Center; 262 – 7490
 Office Hours: Monday 2:15 – 3:15 in my philosophy office, and by appointment
 E – Mail: rstreiffer@wisc.edu, Home page: <http://philosophy.wisc.edu/streiffer/>

Teaching Assistant: Mark Mitchell
 Office: 5112 Helen C. White; 263-2482
 Office Hours: W: 2:30 – 3:30, Th: 10:30 – 11:30
 E-mail: mgmitchell@wisc.edu

Discussion Sections:

DIS 310	11:00 – 11:50	Friday	7111 Helen C. White
DIS 311	12:05 – 12:55	Friday	228 Education
DIS 312	2:25 – 3:15	Thursday	4281 Helen C. White
DIS 313	1:20 – 2: 10	Thursday	234 Education
DIS 314	12:05 – 12:55	Thursday	2115 Humanities

C. Materials (Available from the UW Bookstore and Bob's Copy Shop in University Square)

1. *Just and Unjust Wars*, by Michael Walzer. New York: Basic Books. 1977.
2. *Exploitation*, by Alan Wertheimer. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996.
3. *Improving Nature: The Science and Ethics of Genetic Engineering*, by Michael J. Reiss and Roger Straughan. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996.
4. There will be a reader available from Bob's Copy Shop in University Square.
5. Recommended: *The Elements of Style*, by William Strunk and E. B. White
6. Recommended: *A Rulebook for Arguments*, by Anthony Weston

D. Learning Objectives

The course has three general goals:

1. To improve your familiarity with the facts, concepts, theories, and arguments from the relevant scientific, ethical, and political literature.
2. To improve your ability to think about and discuss the ethical issues in these area.
3. To improve your ability to take an ethical argument, recast it in valid argument form, and then critically assess it.

By the end of the course, students should be able to achieve the following more specific goals with respect to the views of the philosophers we read in this class on the following topics. Students should also have made progress in developing their own views on these topics.

1. Just War Theory
 - a. Explain and critically evaluate the standard arguments for and against moral realism.
 - b. Explain and critically evaluate just war theory's account of what kinds of wars are permissible.
 - c. Explain and critically evaluate how just war theory understands the doctrine of non-combatant immunity, and how that doctrine has implications for sieges, blockades, terrorism, guerilla warfare, reprisals, and the use of nuclear weapons.
 - d. Explain and critically evaluate how just war theory assigns moral responsibility for acts of aggression and crimes of

war.

2. Exploitation

- a. Explain the kinds of considerations relevant to determining whether a transaction is exploitative.
- b. Explain and critically evaluate the controversies surrounding possible exploitation resulting from unfair contracts, student athletics, commercial surrogate motherhood, and research on human subjects.
- c. Explain the kinds of considerations relevant to determining the moral implications of the fact that a transaction is exploitative.

3. Abortion

- a. Explain and critically evaluate the main views regarding the moral status of the fetus.
- b. Explain and critically evaluate the argument that many abortions are permissible even if the fetus has a right to life.

4. Biotechnology

- a. Explain and critically evaluate the unnaturalness argument against genetic engineering.
- b. Explain and critically evaluate the doomsday argument against genetic engineering.
- c. Explain and critically evaluate the environmental and socio-economic concerns raised by genetically engineered crops.
- d. Explain and critically evaluate the animal welfare and animal rights concerns raised by genetically engineering animals.
- e. Explain and critically evaluate the main ethical criticisms of genetically engineering human beings.
- f. Explain and critically evaluate the main ethical criticisms of human embryonic stem cell research and of so-called therapeutic cloning.
- g. Explain and critically evaluate the main ethical criticism of so-called reproductive cloning.

E. Requirements:

1. Read all of the assignments. Since the readings form the basis of the intellectual content of this course, read them carefully and read them critically. Most of the assignments are short, but they are very dense. Many of them will require that you read them more than once in order to fully understand the argument. Current scholarship on study skills suggests that most students should spend three hours outside of class studying for every hour of class, and that students who do well spend even more time.
2. Read the news articles passed out in class. These will give you opportunities to reflect on the relevance of the readings and the lectures to recent or current events. They will also provide additional topics for discussion during the discussion sections.
3. Attend all of the lectures.
4. Attend and participate in all the discussion sections.
5. Write one shorter paper, 850 – 950 words (3 pages) in length.
6. Write one longer paper, 1450 – 1550 word (5 pages) in length.
7. There will be a midterm exam.
8. There will be an i final exam.

F. Grading Plan:

I use the following grading scale, with your final grade rounded to the nearest letter grade:

Letter Grade	Numerical Equivalent
A	4
AB	3.5
B	3
BC	2.5
C	2
D	1
F	0

The breakdown for grades is as follows:

Lecture attendance	10%
Discussion section attendance	7.5%
Discussion section participation	7.5%
Paper 1	10%
Paper 2	20%
Mid-Term	20%
Final Exam	25%

1. Lecture attendance: My lecture style includes many opportunities for students to respond to the arguments under discussion, and

you will find that being an active listener and participant will greatly increase the amount you learn from this class. Current scholarship on study skills strongly suggests that students who actively listen and respond to lectures learn much more from them. Although it is impractical to require and keep track of participation in the lectures, I will be using a seating chart to take attendance, so be sure to sit in your designated seat every class period. You are entitled to 2 unexcused absences without any penalty. Any excused absence for reasons other than religious observance or an emergency must be cleared by me in advance of the class missed. For all excused absences, you must send me an e-mail stating the date and the reason so that I will have a record of it when it comes time to calculate your final grade. Any unexcused absences over the 2 to which you are entitled will affect your lecture attendance grade as follows:

1 absence	A
2 absences	AB
3 absences	B
4 absences	BC
5 absences	C
6 absences	D
7 absences	F
8 or more absences	Fail the class

2. Discussion section attendance and participation. The TA will be taking attendance for the discussion sections. The policy for absences is the same as for lectures, except that you are only entitled to 1 unexcused absence without any penalty, and any unexcused absences over the 1 to which you are entitled will affect your discussion attendance grade as follows:

1 absence	B
2 absences	C
3 absences	D
4 absences	F
5 absences	Fail the class

3. Discussion section participation: The TA will grade your participation both in terms of quality and quantity:

Excellent participation	A
Good participation	B
Poor participation	C
No participation	F

4. Papers: You must hand in two complete papers in order to pass this course. You may not elect to opt out of a paper and receive an F on it. Papers are due at the beginning of class on the due date. Papers handed in after the beginning of class will be bumped to the next letter grade or half-letter grade down (e.g., from an A to an AB, from a C to a D.) After that, the penalty is one full letter grade per 24 hours. 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>. The UW Writing Center also has helpful guidelines at <http://www.wisc.edu/students/Plagiarism.pdf>. Ignorance of what counts as plagiarism is not an acceptable defense. Other penalties may also be used, if appropriate.

In a philosophy class, your grade is determined not by the details of the substantive view you defend (i.e., you won't get penalized for disagreeing with the professor or with the author's studies); rather, you will be graded on how well you articulate and defend your view and how well you relate relevant parts of the readings and lectures to the paper topic.

5. Exams: You must take both exams in order to pass this course. You may not elect to opt out of an exam and receive an F on it. The exams are closed-book. They will be comprehensive, and will consist of some combination of definitions, true/false, multiple choice, short answer, and essay questions.

G. Important Dates:

	Friday, Jan 23	Last day to add class without late fee
	Wed, Jan 28	Last day to drop without notation on your transcript
	Friday, Jan 30	Last day to add class
	Friday, Feb 13	First paper topic assigned
	Monday, Feb 23	First paper topic due
	Wed, March 24	Mid-Term Exam

	Friday, March 26	Last day to drop class
	Friday April 2	Second paper topic assigned
	Monday, April 19	Second paper topic due
	Tuesday, May 11	Final Exam (7:25 PM)

H. Additional Class Policies

Academic misconduct: Please note that the imposition of any penalty for any kind of academic misconduct (e.g., plagiarism, trying to get credit for a class you didn't attend, cheating on an exam, etc.) results in a permanent note that goes into your academic file, and that UW will disclose the fact that you were penalized for academic misconduct to interested parties who request that information.

Exceptions to the rules: I will not grant anyone an exception to the rules outlined in this syllabus unless that exception is granted to everyone. This means, for example, that since I can't allow everyone the option of rewriting their paper (since doing so would require my TA to work more hours than required by his contract), I can't allow anyone the option of rewriting their paper.

Classroom Etiquette: You are expected to behave in ways that are appropriate and respectful to both the professor and the other students. This includes, but is not limited to

1. Arriving on time. Students who walk into the classroom late distract the students and the professor.
2. Refraining from private conversations with classmates during lecture or discussion.
3. Being patient and courteous to other students when they ask a question or make a comment.
4. Responding to students' comments in a respectful manner. (Note, of course, that this doesn't mean agreeing with them.)
5. Removing sunglasses and hats.
6. Staying awake. Students who fall asleep will be asked to leave class and will not receive credit for attendance for that day.
7. Refraining from reading any non-course-related material.
8. Refraining from packing up until class is completely over.
9. Turn any beepers or cell phones off when entering class. Merely turning them to vibrate is not sufficient.

I. Outside Resources for Help

The Writing Center has several classes and numerous handouts on academic writing. They will also do provide individual writing instruction. Appointments can be made by stopping in at 6171 Helen C. White or calling 263-1992. Their web site is www.wisc.edu/writing. They can be much more effective if you approach them early in the writing process.

Study Skills: UW, as well as many other universities, have on-line materials available on how to improve your study skills as an undergraduate, and I encourage you to take a look at them and try to benefit from them. Some of ours are available at

<http://guts.studentorg.wisc.edu/SS/sshome.htm>

Stanford University's are available at:

http://www.stanford.edu/dept/undergrad/uac/resources/study_skills.html.

J. Tentative Revised Reading Schedule

Date	Topic	Reading
21-Jan	Introduction	Introduction to the Course
23-Jan	I. Just War Theory	I. The Moral Reality of War: 1. Against Realism
26-Jan	14 Meetings	II. The Theory of Aggression: 2. The Crime of War; 3. The Rules of War
28-Jan	Just and Unjust Wars	II. The Theory of Aggression: 4. Law and Order in International Society
30-Jan	by Walzer	II. The Theory of Aggression: 5. Anticipations; 6. Interventions
2-Feb		III. The War Convention: 8. War's Means ...; 9. Noncombatant Immunity ...
4-Feb		III. The War Convention: 10. War Against Civilians. Sieges and Blockades
6-Feb		Overflow
9-Feb		III. The War Convention: 11. Guerrilla War
11-Feb		III. The War Convention: 12. Terrorism + Andrew Valls, "Can Terrorism Be Justified?"
13-Feb		Interlude: Intro to Human Cloning and Human Embryonic Stem Cell Research First paper topic assigned
16-Feb		IV. Dilemmas of War: 14. Winning & Fighting Well; 15. Aggression & Neutrality
18-Feb		IV. Dilemmas of War: 16. Supreme Emergency; 17. Nuclear Deterrence + Jeff McMahan, "Deterrence and Deontology"

20-Feb		V. The Question of Responsibility: 19: War Crimes: Soldiers and their Officers Film: "Obedience"
23-Feb		Review First paper topic due
25-Feb	II. Exploitation	1. Overview
27-Feb	9 Meetings	2. Unconscionable Contracts
1-March	Exploitation	3. The Exploitation of Student Athletes
3-March	by Wertheimer	4. Commercial Surrogacy + Elizabeth Anderson, "Is Woman's Labor a Commodity?"
5-March		7. Unfair Transactions
8-March		8. Consent
10-March		9. Moral Weight and Moral Force
12-March		Film: "Deadly Deception: The Tuskegee Syphilis Study"
22-March		Review
24-March		Mid-Term Exam
26-March	III. Abortion	John Noonan, "An Almost Absolute Value in History"
29-March	5 Meetings	Judith Thomson, "A Defense of Abortion"
31-March	Reader at Bob's in	Mary Anne Warren, "On the Moral and Legal Status of Abortion"
2-April	University Square	Francis Beckwith, "Arguments from Bodily Rights" Second Paper Topic Assigned
5-April		Review
7-April	IV. Genetic Engineering	1. Introduction; 2. The Practicalities of GE
9-April	14 Meetings	3. Moral and Ethical Concerns
12-April	Improving Nature	Overview 5. The GE of Microorganisms
14-April	by Reiss and Straughan	6. The GE of Plants
16-April		Labeling GM Foods
19-April		World Hunger and GM Crops Second paper topic due
21-April		7. The GE of Animals
23-April		The GE of Animals
26-April		8. The GE of Humans
28-April		Human Embryonic Stem Cell Research
30-April		Human Embryonic Stem Cell Research
3-May		Cloning
5-May		Cloning
7-May		Review