

**PHIL 941: Graduate Seminar on Moral Status**  
**Syllabus, fall 2015**  
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**I. Administrative Information**

Professor: Robert Streiffer

Class Meeting: 5193 Helen C. White, Thursday, 4:00-6:00

Office Hours: By appointment

Philosophy Office: 5101 Helen C. White Hall

Medical Ethics Office: 1411 Medical Sciences Center; 262-7490

E-mail: [rstreiffer@wisc.edu](mailto:rstreiffer@wisc.edu)

**II. Course Description**

This course is a graduate-level in-depth study of the concept of moral status and its implications. We will look at how a selection of normative ethical theories handle the issue of moral status. We will address questions about the conceptual profile of moral status: is it binary or does it admit of degrees; can relational properties influence moral status; is it an essential or accidental property; what work, if any, does moral status do over and above concepts such as interests, harms, and benefits? Finally, we will explore some of the implications these theories have for the harm of death and the wrongness of killing as well as applied ethics issues such as embryo research, abortion, disability rights, and animal ethics.

**III. Required Materials**

The reading packet will be distributed electronically; instructions will be provided in class.

**IV. Class Requirements**

1. Read all of the assignments, read them carefully, and read them critically.
2. Attend all the classes and participate in the discussions. Participation is 10% of your grade.
3. A term paper, 5,400-6,600 words (roughly 18-22 pages) in length, on a topic of your choosing (although I'm happy to help you choose), written in two drafts and worth 60% of your grade. You must submit a paper proposal, 250-350 words (roughly 1 page) in length, at the beginning of class on October 8. You must submit a rough draft, at least 3,000 words (roughly 10 pages) in length, at the beginning of class on November 5-12<sup>th</sup>. The final draft is due at the beginning of class on December 10 (the last class).

4. Two 20-25 minute in-class presentations on some aspect of the reading for that day. Prepare a handout no longer than two pages (single-sided). It is unlikely that you will need or want to summarize the entire reading. Rather, be selective about what particular argument you want to discuss, lay that argument out in logically valid form with a clear set of premises and a conclusion, and only discuss the aspects of the reading relevant to that argument. You are then responsible for leading discussion after your presentation. Bring copies to distribute in class the day of your presentation. Each presentation will be 15% of your grade. People who are presenting on the same day should consult beforehand to avoid redundancy in the presentations.

## V. Reading Schedule

### 1. September 3

Administrative Topics; Course Overview

- (a) Frances Kamm, "Moral Status," in *Intricate Ethics: Rights, Responsibilities, and Permissible Harm* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007): 227-236. (8 pages)

### 2. September 10

Utilitarianism and Moral Status

- (a) Gary Varner, "6. Personhood and Biography," except §6.5 and §6.6, in *Personhood, Ethics, and Animal Cognition: Situating Animals in Hare's Two-Level Utilitarianism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012): 133-148. (16 pages)
- (b) Gary Varner, "7. Moral Significance and Autonoetic Consciousness (AC)," in *Personhood, Ethics, and Animal Cognition: Situating Animals in Hare's Two-Level Utilitarianism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012): 160-181. (22 pages)
- (c) Gary Varner, "9. Replaceability, Population, and Marginal Cases," in *Personhood, Ethics, and Animal Cognition: Situating Animals in Hare's Two-Level Utilitarianism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012): 225-254. (30 pages)

### 3. September 17

Contractualism and Moral Status

- (a) Mark Rowlands, "Contractarianism and Animal Rights," *Journal of Applied Philosophy* Vol. 14, No. 3 (1997): 235-247. (13 pages)
- (b) Thomas Scanlon, "Ch. 4: Wrongness and Reasons, §8. The Scope of Morality," *What We Owe to Each Other* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1998): 177-187. (11 pages)
- (c) Gary Watson, "Contractualism and the Boundaries of Morality: Remarks on Scanlon's *What We Owe to Each Other*" *Social Theory and Practice* Vol. 28, No. 2 (April 2002): 221-241. (21 pages)

**4. September 24**

## Neo-Kantian Perspectives on the Moral Status of Non-Humans

- (a) Christine Korsgaard, "Fellow Creatures: Kantian Ethics and Our Duties to Animals," *The Tanner Lectures on Human Values* (2004): 79-110. (32 pages)
- (b) J. Skidmore, "Duties to Animals: The Failure of Kant's Moral Theory," *The Journal of Value Inquiry* Vol. 35 (2001): 541-559. (19 pages)

**5. October 1**

## Moral Status and the Harm of Death

- (a) Jeff McMahan, "2. Death: §1 Preliminaries," "2. Death: §2 The Problem of Comparison," "2. Death: §3 The Metaphysical Problem," and "2. Death: §4 The Problem of Overdetermination," in *The Ethics of Killing* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002): 95-144. (50 pages)
- (b) Jeff McMahan, "2. Death: §5 Overall Lifelong Fortune," "2. Death: §6 The Deaths of Fetuses and Infants," and "2. Death: §7 A Paradox," in *The Ethics of Killing* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002): 145-188. (44 pages)

**6. October 8**~~Paper Proposals Due~~~~Moral Status and the Wrongness of Killing~~

- (a) Jeff McMahan, "3. Killing: §1 The Wrongness of Killing and the Badness of Death", and "3. Killing: §2 Animals and Severely Cognitively Impaired Human Beings," in *The Ethics of Killing* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002): 189-232. (44 pages)
- (b) Jeff McMahan, "3. Killing: §3 Equality and Respect," in *The Ethics of Killing* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002): 232-265. (34 pages)

**7. October 15**

## Individualism vs. Relationalism and Kind-Based Theories

- (a) James Rachels, "Morality without the Idea that Humans Are Special," Ch. 5 of *Created from Animals: The Moral Implications of Darwinism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990): 173-223. (51 pages)
- (b) Jeff McMahan, "Our Fellow Creatures," *The Journal of Ethics* (2005) 9 (3/4): 353-380. (28 pages)
- (c) Eva Kittay, "At the Margins of Moral Personhood," *Ethics* Vol. 116 (October 2005): 100-131. (32 pages)
- (d) Agnieszka Jaworska and Julie Tannenbaum, "Person-Rearing Relationships as a Key to Higher Moral Status," *Ethics* Vol. 124, No. 2 (January 2014): 242-271. (30 pages)

- (e) David DeGrazia, "On the Moral Status of Infants and the Cognitively Disabled: A Reply to Jaworska and Tannenbaum," *Ethics* Vol. 124, No. 3 (April 2014): 543-556. (14 pages)

**8. October 22: I will be out of town. We will reschedule a replacement meeting.**

**9. October 29**

Moral Status and Enhancement

- (a) Daniel Wikler, "Paternalism in the Age of Cognitive Enhancement: Do Civil Liberties Presuppose Roughly Equal Mental Ability," in *Human Enhancement*, ed. Julian Savulescu and Nick Bostrom (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009): 341-355. (15 pages)
- (b) Allen Buchanan, "Moral Status and Human Enhancement," *Philosophy and Public Affairs* Vol. 37, No. 4 (2009): 346-381. (36 pages)
- (c) David DeGrazia, "Genetic Enhancement, Post-Persons and Moral Status: A Reply to Buchanan," *Journal of Medical Ethics* Vol. 38 (2012): 135-139. (5 pages)

**10. November 5**

~~Rough Draft of Paper Due~~

Moral Status and Artificial Consciousness

- (a) Colin Allen, Gary Varner, and Jason Zinser, "Prolegomena to Any Future Artificial Moral Agent," *Journal of Experimental and theoretical Artificial Intelligence* Vol. 12. (2000): 251-261. (11 pages)
- (b) John Basl, "The Ethics of Creating Artificial Consciousness." *The American Philosophical Association Philosophy and Computers Newsletter* Vol. 13, No. 1 (Fall 2013): 25-30. (6 pages)
- (c) Eric Schwitzgebel and Mara Garza, "A Defense of the Rights of Artificial Intelligences." (38 pages)

**11. November 12**

Rough Draft of Paper Due

Is Moral Status an Essential Property?

- (a) David DeGrazia, "Moral Status, Human Identity, and Early Embryos: A Critique of the President's Approach," *Journal of Law, Medicine, and Ethics*, Vol. 34, No. 1 (Spring 2006): 49-57. (9 pages)
- (b) Alfonso Gómez-Lobo, "Inviolability at Any Age," *Kennedy Institute of Ethics Journal* Vol. 17, No. 4 (2008): 311-320. (10 pages)
- (c) David DeGrazia, "Must We Have Full Moral Status Throughout Our Existence? A Reply to Alfonso Gómez-Lobo," *Kennedy Institute of Ethics Journal* Vol. 14, No. 7 (2008) 297-310. (14 pages)

**12. November 19**

## Moral Status and Degrees of Consideration

- (a) David DeGrazia, "Equal Consideration and Unequal Moral Status," *The Southern Journal of Philosophy* Vol. 31, Issue 1 (1993): 17-31. (15 pages)
- (b) John Rossi, "Is Equal Moral Consideration Really Compatible with Unequal Moral Status?" *Kennedy Institute of Ethics Journal* Vol. 20, No. 3 (September 2010): 251-276. (26 pages)
- (c) Elizabeth Harman, "The Potentiality Problem," *Philosophical Studies* Vol. 114 (2003): 173-198. (26 pages)
- (d) David DeGrazia, "Moral Status as a Matter of Degree?" *The Southern Journal of Philosophy* Vol. XLVI (2008): 181-198. (18 pages)

**November 26: Thanksgiving Break****13. December 3**

## Is the Concept of Moral Status Otiose?

- (a) James Rachels, "Drawing Lines," in *Animal Rights: Current Debates and New Directions*, ed. Cass Sunstein and Martha Nussbaum (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004): 162-174. (13 pages)
- (b) Ben Sachs, "The Status of Moral Status," *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly* Vol. 92 (2011): 87-104. (18 pages)

**14. December 10**

## Final Draft of Paper Due

## Chimeras and Moral Status

- (a) Robert Streiffer, "Human/Nonhuman Chimeras," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, URL = <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2009/entries/chimeras/>. (50 pages)
- (b) Robert Streiffer, "Chimeras, Moral Status, and Public Policy: Implications of the Abortion Debate for Public Policy on Human/nonhuman Chimera Research," *The Journal of Law, Medicine, and Ethics* Summer (2010): 238-250. (13 pages)
- (c) *Project Nim* (2012), BBC Films (100 minutes)