

# **PHIL 1200: PHILOSOPHY AND SOCIETY**

Fall 2011

Instructor: Shane Gronholz

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Office Hours: Monday 3-6, or by appointment, Buchanan's Coffee Pub

Text: Boonin and Oddie (eds.), *What's Wrong?* (2E)

*"The man who has no tincture of philosophy goes through life imprisoned in the prejudices derived from common sense, from the habitual beliefs of his age or his nation, and from convictions which have grown up in his mind without the co-operation or consent of his deliberate reason." – Bertrand Russell*

## **Course Description**

This course is an introduction to some issues in applied ethics. Many (if not all) of these issues are controversial and contentious (e.g., abortion, euthanasia). These are the kinds of issues many people think about and discuss, but in this class, we will approach them with philosophical rigor. In addition to helping you learn about some of these specific issues, my goal will also be to give you a chance to see the way philosophers approach these issues and to do some philosophy yourselves. These issues are both interesting and important. They effect how you should act in your daily life, how you should vote, which political campaigns you should support, and what political outlook you should adopt. In this course, we will assume that there are right answers to the questions being asked, and we will attempt to discover those answers by considering various arguments. I'm excited about this course and you should be, too! It's going to be lively and fun and you will come out of it a better thinker.

## **Course Format**

The format for this course involves a combination of lecture and class discussion. You should be prepared to engage in discussion every day. That means you'll have to do the readings and come to class.

## **Requirements**

These assignments are designed in part to keep you continually engaged throughout the semester. I would rather have you stay on top of your readings and come to class prepared and ready to discuss rather than simply cramming for an exam twice over the course of the semester.

1. *Two Papers* (40% [20% each]): You are required to write two 4-6 page (1,200-1,800 words) papers (see below for due dates). The purpose of each paper is to defend, by means of rational argument, a clearly-stated philosophical thesis, relating to a topic from the course, that you think is true.
2. *Weekly Quizzes* (39%). There will be a quiz every week (except for Week 1), usually on Friday. The quizzes will cover content from the readings and from the lecture. Anything from the readings or anything I've said in lecture is fair game for the quiz. Therefore, you should read everything assigned and come to class. Take notes, especially when I write something on the board. There

will be 14 quizzes, each of which will count toward 3% of your final grade. I will drop your lowest grade ( $3 \times 13 = 39\%$ ). Quizzes cannot be made up unless you have an excused absence you have prearranged with me. If you miss a quiz and your absence is not excused, you should consider that your lowest grade.

3. *Reading Notecards* (10%). Over the course of the semester, you will turn in 10 reading notecards. These will be handwritten on standard 3x5 notecards. Each notecard should have both: (1) a critical comment about the reading. It can be an objection, an implication of the author's thesis, a connection to a previous reading, or any other comment that demonstrates critical engagement with the reading. (2) a question about the reading. It should be a substantive question that shows you have engaged with the reading. Notecards will be accepted only at the beginning of the class. You may only turn in one notecard per week. This means you will have to plan carefully so as not to run out of weeks. They will be evaluated on a credit/no-credit basis. Each card is worth 1% of your grade. If you submit a card that does not meet the requirements or is otherwise lame or unacceptable, you will receive no credit for that card. If you receive a 0 on a card, you will be allowed to submit another card, provided you never turn in more than one card per week. It should be obvious that it is in your interest to get an early start on the reading notecards. There is a chance I will read your card anonymously at some point during class.
4. *Participation* (10%). Since class discussion is an essential element in this course, your participation in class discussions is required. Your treatment of your classmates and the respect you afford them may also impact your grade.

### **Policies, tips, and other stuff:**

*Late work:* Any paper that is at all late will receive an immediate 10% deduction. For each additional day after the due date, an additional 2% will be deducted. Computer crash or theft is not a legitimate excuse. You should be using Dropbox. It's free. Talk to me if you have questions about setting up an account. If something extremely dire happens such that an extension is obviously necessary, documentation is required.

*Technology in the classroom:* Texting during class is prohibited. First-time offenders will be asked to stop. Additional offenses will result in dismissal from class and a loss of participation points. If you use a laptop in class, you may use it only for taking notes. No web-surfing, emailing, IMing, Facebooking, etc. If you use a laptop, disable the wifi.

*Extra credit:* Extra credit will not be offered. Stay on top of things.

*Readings:* Read everything that is assigned. I have intentionally refrained from assigning too much reading. It is very doable to read all of the assigned reading. I have set up the course in such a way that it will be difficult to get a good grade without doing the readings. But also, you will find the reading to be very rewarding. Philosophy is unlike any other discipline and you will likely not encounter this kind of material outside of the

philosophy classroom. It is exciting, engaging, and challenging. You will be glad you read these articles.

*Participate a lot:* Philosophy is a great deal of fun. Be willing to come to class and participate in the discussion. You will get much more out of the class if you do.

*Office Hours:* Come to office hours. I like getting to know students and it's a good chance for you to get clarification on anything you are struggling with.

### **Schedule**

*For each week, have the main article read by Monday and the 'critics' by Wednesday. We won't always read every response from critics. I will announce which ones to read by the Monday of the week you are to read them.*

Week 1: Introduction, how to do applied ethics, relativism

Reading: Introduction to *What's Wrong?*, "Morality is Not Relative" by James Rachels  
August 22, 24, 26

Week 2: Abortion Part I

Marquis and Critics

August 29, 31, September 2

Week 3: Abortion Part II

Thompson and Critics

September 7, 9

(September 5<sup>th</sup> is Labor Day)

Week 4: Euthanasia

Rachels and Critics

September 12, 14, 16

Week 5: Non-Human Animals

Regan and Critics

September 19, 21, 23

Week 6: Famine Relief

Singer and Critics

September 26, 28, 30

Week 7: Antioch's Sexual Offense Policy

Soble and Critics

October 3, 5, 7

Week 8: Prostitution

Ericsson and Critics

October 10, 12, 14

**Paper I due October 14<sup>th</sup> at beginning of class**

Week 9: Same-Sex Marriage  
Jordan and Critics  
October 17, 19, 21

Week 10: Licensing Parents  
LaFollette and Critics  
October 24, 26, 28

Week 11: Overpopulation  
Parfit and Critics  
Halloween, November 2, 4  
(because overpopulation is *scary*)

Week 12: Racial Reparations  
*Reading TBD*  
November 7, 9, 11

Week 13: Class vote: Affirmative Action or Hate Crime Laws  
November 14, 16, 18

**Fall Break: November 21-25**

Week 14: A Ban on Smoking  
Goodin and Critics  
November 28, 30, December 2

Week 15: Legal Punishment  
Barnett and Critics  
December 5, 7, 9

**Paper 2 due December 9<sup>th</sup> at beginning of class**

-No final exam-

**Fine Print:**

1. honor code: All students of the University of Colorado at Boulder are responsible for knowing and adhering to the academic integrity policy of this institution. Violations of this policy may include: cheating, plagiarism, aid of academic dishonesty, fabrication, lying, bribery, and threatening behavior. All incidents of academic misconduct shall be reported to the Honor Code Council ([honor@colorado.edu](mailto:honor@colorado.edu); 303-725-2273). Students who are found to be in violation of the academic integrity policy will be subject to both academic sanctions from the faculty member and non-academic sanctions (including but not limited to university probation, suspension, or expulsion). Other information on the Honor Code can be found at <http://www.colorado.edu/policies/honor.html> and at <http://www.colorado.edu/academics/honorcode/>

2. classroom environment: Students and faculty each have responsibility for maintaining

an appropriate learning environment. Those who fail to adhere to such behavioral standards may be subject to discipline. Professional courtesy and sensitivity are especially important with respect to individuals and topics dealing with differences of race, culture, religion, politics, sexual orientation, gender, gender variance, and nationalities. See policies at <http://www.colorado.edu/policies/classbehavior.html> and at [http://www.colorado.edu/studentaffairs/judicialaffairs/code.html#student\\_code](http://www.colorado.edu/studentaffairs/judicialaffairs/code.html#student_code)

3. disabilities: if you qualify for accommodations because of a disability, please submit to me a letter from Disability Services in a timely manner so that your needs may be addressed. Disability Services determines accommodations based on documented disabilities. Contact: 303-492-8671, Willard 322, and see <http://www.Colorado.EDU/disabilityservices>

4. religious holidays: campus policy regarding religious observances requires that faculty make every effort to reasonably and fairly deal with all students who, because of religious obligations, have conflicts with scheduled exams, assignments or required attendance. If you anticipate any such conflicts this semester, please contact me in a timely manner so that we can make arrangements that will be acceptable to you. For further information see: [http://www.colorado.edu/policies/fac\\_relig.html](http://www.colorado.edu/policies/fac_relig.html)

5. discrimination, harassment, amorous relationships:: The University of Colorado at Boulder policy on Discrimination and Harassment, the University of Colorado policy on Sexual Harassment and the University of Colorado policy on Amorous Relationships apply to all students, staff and faculty. Any student in this class who believes he or she has been the subject of discrimination or harassment based upon race, color, national origin, sex, age, disability, religion, sexual orientation, or veteran status should contact the Office of Discrimination and Harassment (ODH) at 303-492-2127 or the Office of Judicial Affairs at 303-492-5550. Information about the ODH, the above referenced policies and the campus resources available to assist individuals regarding discrimination or harassment can be obtained at <http://www.colorado.edu/odh>