PHILOSOPHY 1318 (6) - CONTEMPORARY MORAL PROBLEMS

Spring 2013 MWF 1:00, Hyer Hall 110
Professor Jean Kazez (jkazez@smu.edu)
Office hours: MW 2-3 and by appointment
Class blog: cmpsmu.blogspot.com

COURSE DESCRIPTION  This course will explore current moral and political controversies, including affirmative action, same-sex marriage, abortion, the war on terror, and the status of animals, using the tools of ethics and political philosophy.

COURSE GOALS
1. Philosophy 1318 is a Philosophical and Religious Inquiry and Ethics Pillar (level I) within SMU’s University Curriculum. As a result of taking this course, students will be able to describe and explain some of the general features and principal theoretical methods of ethics, as a field of philosophy.
2. In addition, this course will help students hone skills in the area of critical thinking, argumentative writing, and oral debate.
3. Students will build a foundation for future reflection about the pressing moral and political controversies of our time.

REQUIREMENTS
Exam I (25%), Exam II (25%), Exam III (25%) = 75%
Rebuttal I (5%), Rebuttal II (5%), Rebuttal III (5%) = 15%
Quizzes = 5%
Citizenship = 5%

EXAMS  All exams will be essay format (long or short answer).

REBUTTALS  These are 2-page responses to arguments in the readings. Instructions will be available later in the semester.

QUIZZES
1. To encourage you to come to class ready to discuss each day’s reading (or movie) assignments, we will have quizzes on these assignments (around 8 in total).
2. To do well on the quizzes, your best bet is to (a) complete the reading in a timely fashion (don’t just skim right before class!) (b) read slowly and carefully, and (c) create an outline of the main claims and arguments.
3. When the assignment is a movie, give some thought to (a) what ethical questions are raised by the movie, (b) what answers the movie offers (if any), (c) what answers relevant authors would give, and (d) what answers you would give.
4. You can skip two quizzes without penalty. Your lowest quiz grade will be dropped.
5. There will be no make-up quizzes.

CITIZENSHIP  Positives are: being attentive, bringing texts to class, making a high-quality contribution to class discussion, etc. Negatives are: missing class (see attendance rules below), coming to class late, reading newspapers, escapist use of laptops, texting during class, etc.

ATTENDANCE
1. Aim to come to every single class. Your contribution to discussion is essential and you’ll do better on exams, papers, etc.
2. After 6 absences, your citizenship grade will be lowered by 25 points (out of 100) for each additional absence.
3. Think of the 6 absences as a “budget”: it must cover both necessary absences for illness and other absences as well, so “spend” it carefully.
4. In case of unusual extenuating circumstances (such as a documented chronic illness) the attendance policy may be modified; discuss with me as soon as such circumstances arise.

MAKE-UP EXAMS  Make-up exams will be given only to students who have an outstandingly good reason for missing a class, such as being ill, needing to attend a funeral, or participating in an official SMU extracurricular event. Be prepared to present documentation. If you are physically able, ask for permission before missing an exam. Don't make any travel plans before looking at the schedule.

DISABILITY ACCOMMODATIONS Students needing academic accommodations for a disability must first contact DASS (214-768-1470 or www.smu.edu/alec/dass.asp) to verify the disability and establish eligibility for accommodations. You should then communicate with me to make appropriate arrangements. (University Policy No. 2.4.)

EXTRA-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES If you participate in an official, scheduled, SMU extracurricular activity, you will be given the opportunity to make up exams and assignments missed as a result of your participation. It is your responsibility to make arrangements with me prior to any missed examination or assignment. Please discuss your schedule with me at the beginning of the semester.

RELIGIOUS OBSERVANCE “Religiously observant students wishing to be absent on holidays that require missing class should notify their professors in writing at the beginning of the semester, and should discuss with them, in advance, acceptable ways of making up any work missed because of the absence.”
(University Policy No. 1.9.)

GRADE INTERPRETATION Every item will be graded on a 100 point scale. 100-93=A; 92-90=A-, 89-87=B+, 86-83=B, etc.

A-range (90-100)--Very accurate, very insightful. Only a few minor flaws.
B-range (80s)--Some very good work, but also some significant errors and gaps.
C-range (70s)--You've learned something, but there are many significant errors and gaps.
D-range (60s)--Very little mastery of any of the material.
F-range (50s)--No significant mastery.
Zero--Assignment not turned in, quiz or exam not taken, etc.

HONOR CODE Violation of SMU's honor code will not be tolerated. Every piece of work you turn in must be entirely your own. Writing a paper means both expressing your own thoughts, and expressing them in your own words. You may not copy passages from our texts, from any other texts, or from the internet, even if the passages are brief. No one else may write a paper for you, whether in whole or in part. The penalty for academic dishonesty will be a zero on the paper or exam in question and possibly also in the course. On top of this grade penalty, the case may be presented to the honor council, which may decide to take further disciplinary action, such as suspension or dismissal.
The readings and assignments for a date should be completed by that date.

The books you’ll need are White, Contemporary Moral Problems, 10th ed. (CMP) and Sandel, Justice. They’re both available at the SMU bookstore. Additional readings are online; most are at blackboard and the class blog (cmpsmu.blogspot.com). A few reading assignments are designated as “optional”--they won’t be covered on quizzes.

This schedule may be altered over the course of the semester. Assignment changes will be at the class blog.

### Morality and Justice

- **F Jan 18** Introduction
- **M Jan 21** MLK Day (no classes)
- **W Jan 23** Utilitarianism Sandel, Justice ch. 1 (pp. 3-10 and 19-21) and ch. 2 (all)
- **T Jan 25** Is torture ever justified? White, Introduction to ch. 10 (CMP 461-3); Dershowitz, “The case for torturing the ticking bomb terrorist” (CMP 466-477); See the movie Zero Dark Thirty
- **M Jan 28** Is torture ever justified? Luban, “Liberalism, torture, and the ticking bomb” (CMP 477-84)
- **W Jan 30** Gun control McMan, “Why gun ‘control’ is not enough” (blog/blackboard)

### Markets and Morals

- **F Feb 1** Libertarianism Sandel, Justice ch. 3
- **M Feb 4** Should everything be for sale? Sandel, Justice ch. 4
- **W Feb 6** Surrogacy Anderson, “Is woman’s labor a commodity?” (blackboard only)
- **F Feb 8** Surrogacy Therestrom, “Meet the twibblings” (blog/blackboard)
  - Rebuttal 1 is due

### Ethical Theory Interlude

- **M Feb 11** Morality and religion Arthur, “Religion, morality, and conscience” (CMP 19-27)
- **W Feb 13** Moral skepticism Midgley, “Trying out one’s new sword” (CMP 34-7); Rachels, “Egoism and moral skepticism” (CMP 12-19)

### Euthanasia and Assisted Suicide

- **F Feb 15** Kantian ethics Sandel, Justice ch. 5
- **M Feb 18** Euthanasia Rachels, “Active and passive euthanasia” (CMP 154-158); Steinbock, “The intentional termination of life” (CMP 158-164)
- **W Feb 20** Suicide Brock, “Voluntary active euthanasia” (CMP 164-178)
- **F Feb 22** Exam 1

### Affirmative Action

- **M Feb 25** Rawls and the social contract tradition Sandel, Justice ch. 6
- **W Feb 27** Affirmative action Sandel, Justice ch. 7
- **F Mar 1** UT Supreme Court case Denniston, “College admissions case” (blackboard/blog)

### Same-Sex Marriage

- **M Mar 4** Same sex marriage: Supreme Court case White, Introduction to ch. 5 (CMP 233-36); Howe, “Court to consider same-sex marriage cases” (blackboard/blog)
- **W Mar 6** Same sex marriage, for and against Jordan, “Is it wrong to discriminate on the basis of homosexuality?” (CMP 236-45)
F Mar 8  Same sex marriage, for and against  Boonin, “Same sex marriage and the argument from public disagreement” (CMP 246-52)

Mar 11, 13, 15 Spring Break

M Mar 18  The value of marriage  Rauch, “Who needs marriage?” (CMP 253-61); Gallagher, “What marriage is for” (CMP 261-66)  Rebuttal 2 is due

POVERTY AND IMMIGRATION

W Mar 20  Poverty  Pogge, “World poverty and hunger” (CMP 315-21); Singer, “Famine, affluence, and morality” (CMP 331-38)

F Mar 22  Poverty  Hardin, “Living on a lifeboat” (CMP 339-51)

W Mar 27  Immigration  Benhabib, “The morality of migration” (blackboard/blog)

F Mar 29  Supreme Court hearings on same-sex marriage  Assignment to be announced

M Apr 1  Exam 2

ETHICAL THEORY INTERLUDE

W Apr 3  Aristotle on Virtue  Sandel, Justice ch. 8

F Apr 5  Feminist ethics  Lindemann, “What is feminist ethics?” (CMP 67-73)

ABORTION

M Apr 8  Facts and law; the argument against  Supreme Court, “Excerpts from Roe v. Wade” (CMP 87-96); Noonan, “An almost absolute value in history” (CMP 97-101)

W Apr 10  Defending abortion  Thomson, “A defense of abortion” (CMP 102-11)

F Apr 12  Defending abortion  Thomson continued

M Apr 15  Another defense  Warren, “On the moral and legal status of abortion” (CMP 111-22)

W Apr 17  Against abortion  Marquis, “An argument that abortion is wrong” (CMP 122-33)

F Apr 19  Reply to Marquis  Mills, “The egg and I” (CMP 133-40); Hampikian, “Men, who needs them?” (blackboard/blog)

M Apr 22  Is it virtuous to choose life?  See the movie Juno; Rebuttal 3 is due

ANIMALS AND VEGETARIANISM

W Apr 24  Kant on animals  Kant, “Our duties to animals” (CMP 275-76)

F Apr 26  Equality for animals?  Singer, “All animals are equal” (CMP 277-85)

M Apr 29  No equality for animals  Steinbock, “Speciesism and the ideal of equality” (CMP 285-92)

W May 1  Is it wrong to eat meat?  Norcross, “Puppies, pigs, and people” (CMP 292-304)

F May 3  Is it wrong to eat meat?  Norcross continued

MAY 6  Sandel on morality and justice  Sandel, Justice ch. 10

M May 13  Final Exam