

Reasoning About Moral Problems

Spring 2007
650:050

Office Hours: Tuesday and Thursday 12-1,
and by appt.

(Feel free to either stop by or phone during office hours.)

email: margaret.holland@uni.edu

(Please use your UNI e-mail and include the
course title in the subject line.)

Billy Suppes (bsuppes@uni.edu) is the
Teaching Assistant for this course.

Professor Margaret Holland

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Dept. of Philosophy & Religion

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Course Description:

This course will introduce students to basic skills of critical thinking as applied to moral problems found in the social/political sphere. Following an introduction to critical thinking, we will examine social issues of current concern. Topics to be discussed will include economic justice, anti-Semitism, and just war theory. A significant component of this course involves instruction in writing an argumentative essay.

The last time this course was offered, the topics covered were covered in the following order and this was about how much time was spent on each topic:

deductive and inductive arguments: two weeks

argumentative essay writing: three weeks distributed throughout the semester

animal rights: half a week

abortion: one week

violence: half a week

sex: one week

drugs: half a week

censorship: half a week

economic justice: three weeks

anti-Semitism: four weeks

Required Texts:

Anthony Weston [A Rulebook for Arguments](#)

Colin McGinn [Moral Literacy](#)

Jean-Paul Sartre [Anti-Semite and Jew](#)

There are additional readings to be purchased at Copyworks, as well as readings distributed through e-mail.

You can find helpful links on my web pages: www.library.uni.edu/instruction/holland and www.uni.edu/holland .

Requirements:

1. Students are expected to attend and participate in all class meetings, as well as read all assignments. **If you miss a class it is your responsibility to contact another student and get the assignments and class notes. You need to make-up missed work before the next class.**

2. There will be two tests during the term and a final exam. **There will be no make-up tests** unless appropriate documentation of a legitimate reason for missing the test is provided. Legitimate reasons for missing a test are limited to things such as: jury duty, accident, or illness. All non-emergency requests for make-up tests must be given to the instructor in writing at least two weeks prior to the test date. Emergency requests for make-up tests must be made (either on the phone or through e-mail) no later than the morning of the test. If these requirements are met, the instructor **may** consider providing a make-up test.

3. There will be an argumentative essay assignment. In preparation for writing the argumentative essay, each student will be required to prepare an outline, as well as drafts of the outline and drafts of the essay. There are five required writing assignments: a Research Report, a draft of the Outline, the Outline, a draft of the Argumentative Essay, and the Argumentative Essay. The Research Report, Outline and Essay are graded. The drafts are not graded, but they are required.

** The use of personal electronic devices is prohibited in this class, with the exception of individuals who use them for handicapped purposes or students who have my permission. Please shut off all such devices before coming into the classroom.

** Please familiarize yourself with UNI's Academic Ethics Policies. These policies are in the student handbook, and they can be found on-line. Search "academic ethics" on UNI's home page and you will be directed to a number of sites that explain your responsibilities on this matter. UNI's policy states that cheating and plagiarism are unacceptable and that an instructor may take further disciplinary action against any student who violates academic ethics. **In accordance with this policy, students who cheat or plagiarize will receive a grade of "F" for the entire course.**

** We will be discussing controversial issues in this class. Inevitably, someone will express views with which you disagree. One purpose of the class is to help students learn how to participate in arguments by using their capacity to reason. It is a requirement of this course that you be respectful to everyone in the classroom. Students who speak out of turn in a disruptive or rude manner (e.g. while others are speaking) will be asked to leave the class.

** We will spend two class periods in the Library. On January 25 I have arranged a session on fact checking. On January 30 I have arranged a session to help you with your research. We will meet at the Circulation Desk in the Library on both days.

Test Schedule, Grades and Writing Assignments:

Tests:

1st test	Feb. 22	=12% of the grade
2nd test	April 19	=16% of the grade
Final exam		= 24% of the grade

Argumentative Essay writing assignments:

Research Report	Feb. 15	=10% of the grade
Outline	March 6 (draft due March 1)	=10% of the grade Outlines must be used to draft the papers.
Argumentative Essay	April 24 (draft due March 27)	=20% of the grade

Other written work:

Written Homework		=4% of grade (All assignments must be handed-in the day they are due in order to receive credit.)
Fact checking		=4% of grade

Calendar:

Jan. 25 Library
Jan. 30 Library
Feb. 15 Research Report due (2 copies)
Feb. 22: 1st test
March 1: draft of Outline due (2 copies)
March 6: Outline due (2 copies)
March 27: draft of Essay due (2 copies)
April 19: 2nd test
April 24: Essay due (2 copies)
Final exam week: exam

Points will be deducted if any part of your Argumentative Essay writing assignment is late. One point per day will be deducted for each part of the written assignment which is handed-in late. Also, Research Reports must be handed-in in order to receive credit for Outlines and Essays, and Outlines must be handed-in in order to receive credit for Essays. Written assignments which are more than one week late will receive no credit. The next stage of the assignment will not receive a grade if the previous assignment has not been received. For example, Outlines will not receive a grade if the draft of the Outline was not brought to class on March 1. Essays will not receive a grade if the draft of the Essay was not brought to class on March 27.

Argumentative essays should be on topics which are appropriate to the subject we are covering. I strongly encourage you to pick a topic concerned either with economic justice or just war theory. All topics require my approval.

Research Report:

The Research Report should be typed, double-spaced, and include your name and the course title.

The first section of your Research Report should include a 200 word description of your topic. The description should include the names of philosophers you will use, and a description of the issues on which you will focus. Also, include information about questions you have concerning your research.

The second section of your Research Report should include the following information: a list of encyclopedias and indexes you have used in your research, a list of the terms you have used in your research, and a report (including volume and page numbers) about what you found in each source. [For example: *Encyclopedia of Ethics*, Becker, ed.; searched poverty and justice; found the following entries which look useful and had good bibliographies... I have put in ILL requests for.... I have copied... I have signed out of the library...] I will be sending you a chart to use for the second section of your report. Hand-in two copies of your Research Report.

Each student must use all of the following reference works and must include them in the Research Report. Additional reference works may be used and may be included in the report.

Encyclopedia of Ethics, Lawrence C. Becker, ed., Charlotte B. Becker, co-editor
Ref. BJ63.E45, second edition

A Companion to Ethics, Peter Singer, ed.
Ref. BJ1012.C62 1991

The Encyclopedia of Philosophy, Paul Edwards, ed.
Ref. B51.E58

Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy, Edward Craig, ed.
Ref. B51. R68 1998

Philosopher's Index [electronic resource]

Attendance: Although attendance is not mandatory, in order to do well you must attend class.
If I make changes to this syllabus, I will notify you.

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990 provides protection from illegal discrimination for qualified individuals with disabilities. Students requesting instructional accommodation due to disabilities must arrange for such accommodation through the Office of Disability Services (ODS). The ODS is located in 103 Student Health Center and the phone number is 273.2676 (Voice) or 273.3011 (TTY).