Issues in Applied Ethics

Instructor: Chrys Margaritidis, margaritidisc@ceu.edu

Department: Philosophy

Central European University

Course Status: Elective, 2 credits. Winter, 2017-18

Course e-learning site:

Time and location: Fr 9.00-10.40

Office hours: Nador u. 11, room 303. Regular office hours: Th 15.00-17.00, also by appointment

**Course Description**

This course provides a forum for discussion of a selection of topics in applied ethics through mainly contemporary philosophical literature. In examining these topics, we will discuss principles and problems of broader philosophical significance in applied ethics, as these turn out to underlie many disagreements. We will also use our experience of approaching specific problems in applied ethics through the term to address the meta-question of the nature of methodology in applied ethics. Topics discussed will include the ethics of human enhancement, climate change, free speech, and markets in human organs. Principles and problems discussed will include the doctrine of double effect, the harm principle, individual vs. collective responsibility, and aspects of liberal morality. No background in applied ethics is assumed, but a basic familiarity with normative moral theories such as consequentialism and Kantian deontology is a prerequisite.

**Learning outcomes**

By the end of the course, students will be able to:

* demonstrate a clear understanding of debates on some central issues in applied ethics and be able to take part in these debates by critiquing significant arguments
* explain how various positions taken on topics in applied ethics relate to deeper principles and problems in ethics
* distinguish between differing conceptions of the methodology of applied ethics, and reflect on their own experience during the course in order to contribute to this discussion
* analyze and charitably reconstruct philosophical arguments from readings, and summarise them clearly and succinctly
* perform their own evaluation and critique of the validity and soundness of arguments with care and clarity, both orally and in writing

**Requirements**

Regular attendance, carefully completing the assigned readings before class, and active participation in seminar discussions will be expected.

In addition, there will be the following assignments:

1) An in-class presentation. Each student will give a short (15-20 minute) presentation on a selected issue. The presentation should include a brief exposition of the logic of an important argument from, or related to, the readings, and raise questions and potential criticisms for discussion. Students may wish to prepare a handout (2 pages maximum), or slides, to assist their presentation to the class, but will not be required to do so. Advance consultation during office hours on the presentation is welcome, and strongly recommended. In addition, the instructor will regularly pose questions at the e-learning site and ask students for their feedback and views. Participation in the online forum will count towards class participation.

2) A 1000-word opinion paper on a specific topic. The topic for this and for the final paper assignment are to be determined in consultation with the instructor. The midterm and final papers must be in different topic areas (e.g., only one of the mid-term or final paper can be about the ethics of climate change). Due date: Monday, February 20, 17.00

3) A 2000-word (maximum) final paper. Due date:

**Assessment**

30% presentation and seminar participation; 20% mid-term paper; 50% final paper

**Grading criteria for the presentations**

A blank “Presentation Score Sheet” listing the evaluation criteria according to which presentations will be assessed can be downloaded from the course web site. It is most important that in-class presentations do not merely reproduce the readings: to earn at least a B+ grade, they must offer significant clarifications, raise important questions, and/or add the presenter’s own well-grounded opinions and arguments. Presentations will otherwise be assessed primarily according to their clarity, focus, soundness of arguments, and helpfulness in understanding the topic. Excessively long or rushed presentations (exempting time taken for questions or other interruptions) will be marked down 1/3 of a grade. Participation in the rest of the seminar will count equally with the presentation, and will be graded according to attendance, preparation, attention to others, and quality of contributions in class throughout the term.

**Grading criteria for the written assignments**

To earn a B+, the written assignment must clearly and concisely address the agreed question, must be written in good academic English. Insofar as these are relevant, the paper must demonstrate a solid understanding of the arguments from readings in the course as well as in-class presentations and discussions. Important principles and concepts should be clearly explained. The views of others should, where necessary, be charitably, clearly and succinctly reconstructed, and properly cited. The paper must show that you have analyzed and independently organized the material yourself in response to the question, rather than simply following the organization of in-class presentations or parts of the literature. To earn an A-, the assignment must demonstrate all the above plus evidence of genuine progress as a result of your own independent thinking, such as your own substantive evaluation and critique of the validity and soundness of the arguments of others, or your own original positive argument. If there are any problems with the exposition or arguments in the paper, these will be minor. Any obvious objections to your argument will have been anticipated and answered. Papers that earn an A will demonstrate all the above virtues, to the extent that they are nearly flawless in writing style, organization, exposition and soundness of arguments. While remaining entirely relevant to the question, such a paper will be ambitious in scope and will demonstrate an exceptional degree of understanding and insight into the topic.

**Course Schedule and Weekly Readings** The schedule is not set in stone, but is subject to change for pedagogical reasons as the course progresses! The course website always includes the latest information.

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| Week 1 | Jan. 12 | The Nature of Applied Ethics  | Tom L Beauchamp, “The Nature of Applied Ethics,” in A Companion to Applied Ethics, ed. R. G. (Raymond Gillespie) Frey and Christopher Heath Wellman (Oxford: Blackwell, 2003), 1–16.  |   |
| Week 2 | Jan. 19 | Against Human Enhancement | Michael Sandel, “The Case Against Perfection,” The Atlantic Monthly 293, no. 3 (2004): 51–62. |   |
| Week 3 | Jan. 26 | Obligation to Enhance | John Harris, “Enhancements Are a Moral Obligation,” in Human Enhancement, ed. Julian Savulescu and Nick Bostrom (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 131–154 | Skype Q&A with Harris |
| Week 4 | Feb. 2 | Markets in Human Organs | Sarah McGrath, “Organ Procurement, Altruism, and Autonomy,” The Journal of Value Inquiry 40, no. 2–3 (September 2007): 297–309. Debra Satz, “The Moral Limits of Markets: The Case of Human Kidneys,” Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society 108, no. 1 pt3 (2008): 269–288. |  |
| Week 5 | Feb. 9 | Markets in Human Organs | Simon Rippon, "Imposing options on people in poverty: The harm of a live donor organ market", Journal of Medical Ethics 40 (3):145-150 (2014) |  Q&A with Rippon |
| Week 6 | Feb. 16 | Ethics of Climate Change: Individual Responsibility | Walter Sinnott-Armstrong, “It’s Not My Fault: Global Warming and Individual Moral Obligations,” in Perspectives on Climate Change: Science, Economics, Politics, Ethics, ed. Walter Sinnott-Armstrong and Richard B. Howarth, vol. 5, 2005, 285–307. |   |
| Week 7 | Feb. 23 | Ethics of Climate Change: Private and Public Morality | John Broome, Climate Matters: Ethics in a Warming World. (New York, N.Y.: W. W. Norton & co., 2012), Ch. 4 “Justice and Fairness”, Ch.5 “Private morality” |  |
| Week 8 | Mar. 2 | Ethics of Climate Change: Private and Public Morality | John Broome, Climate Matters: Ethics in a Warming World. (New York, N.Y.: W. W. Norton & co., 2012), Ch. 4 “Justice and Fairness”, Ch.5 “Private morality” | Skype Q&A with Broome |
| Week 9 | Mar. 9 | Freedom of Expression | J.S. Mill, On Liberty, (Ontario: Broadview, 1999) Chapters 1 & 2.Tim Scanlon, “A Theory of Freedom of Expression,” Philosophy and Public Affairs, 1(2) (1972): 204–226. |  |
| Week 10 | Mar. 16 | Freedom of Expression | Tim Scanlon, “Freedom of Expression and Categories of Expression”University of Pittsburgh Law Review (40) (1979): 519–550. | Skype Q&A with Scanlon |
| Week 11 | Mar. 23 | Pornography | Rae Langton, “Whose Right? Ronald Dworkin, Women, and Pornographers,” in Philosophy and Public Affairs, 19(4) (1990): 311–359. |  |
| Week 12 | Mar. 30 | Pornography/Methodology of Applied Ethics | Torbjörn Tännsjö, “Applied Ethics. A Defence,” Ethical Theory and Moral Practice (August 2011). | Skype Q&A with Tännsjö |