



Contemporary Moral Problems 2016-2017

Dr. Jed Silverstein

Office: Room 204

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Emails sent after 8 PM may not be read before next class

educational objectives

The goal of this course is to cultivate the student's ability to:

- *Read closely and actively*
- *Write clearly and persuasively*
- *Speak and argue respectfully and eloquently*

essential questions

- What's the difference between a good and a bad argument?
- What are the benefits and drawbacks of the major moral theories, i.e. deontological ethics and consequentialism?
- Is the death penalty morally permissible?
- Should schools punish and prohibit certain kinds of speech?
- What does morality require regarding the distribution of wealth in society?

the major text

The Right Thing to Do: Basic Readings in Moral Philosophy (7th edition) available on reserve and circulation in the library.

Additional readings will be available on Schoology.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

Assessment of the student's work will be based on homework postings, class contributions, debate briefs, debate preparation, and reflection papers.

THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE TEACHER

As the teacher I will strive to:

- Respect different opinions and perspectives
- Challenge my students to think deeply and from different perspectives, and help them challenge each other
- Be enthusiastic, energetic, and friendly
- Be patient and understand that my students learn at different paces and in different ways
- Make class personal and relevant to my students' lives
- Be fair and unbiased towards my students
- Be sympathetic of the challenges involved in being a first semester senior
- Make myself available for extra help and discussion
- Give my students opportunities to work in diverse groupings

THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE STUDENT

As a student I will strive to:

- Be respectful of different opinions and perspectives
- Come to class prepared and ready to participate
- Push myself to consider new points of view with empathy and curiosity
- Be generous and charitable to each other
- Make my learning personal, but not so personal that I can't see other points of view
- Be critical and mindful of my own perspective and background
- Make class a safe space so we can all say what we think and feel
- Ask for clarification before I criticize
- Not interrupt other people

THE CLASSROOM CONSTITUTION

1. You are expected to bring to every class: The text we are studying, paper to write on, a writing utensil, and post-it flags (recommended). Laptops may only be used with my permission.
2. Tardy arrivals to class should not be disruptive. Speak to me after class if the lateness is excused. Academic penalties may be imposed on students who come late to class too often.
3. Late assignments will be penalized one-third grade for every day they are late, e.g. A+ becomes an A. Extensions may be given in advance, and the sooner notice is given the better for you.
4. I will assign seating.
5. Class participation in all discussions and activities is required, and will be factored into your performance. Participation can be achieved through multiple avenues.
6. Drinks and small snacks are allowed in the classroom provided that they do not inhibit class participation. Students are expected to clean up after themselves, and to make responsible choices regarding food and drink. Permission to eat and drink in class will be revoked if it interferes in any way with the activities of learning.
7. Homework is limited to no more than 45 minutes a weekday night. Homework assignments will be posted as far in advance as possible, so that students may plan accordingly.
8. Students who disrupt our learning will first be notified in class. If disruptive behavior continues, students will be asked to leave class, and may only return when they are ready to resume a constructive role in the classroom. I reserve the right to refer behavioral issues to the appropriate administrator.
9. We will periodically administer class evaluations to assess the extent to which we are living up to our own ideals and expectations as both teachers and learners.