

MORAL CONTROVERSY IN AMERICA

MR. JED SILVERSTEIN

Office: Room 326

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

EDUCATIONAL OBJECTIVES

The goal of Moral Controversy is to cultivate the student's ability to:

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

THE MAJOR TEXT

- *The Right Thing to Do: Basic Readings in Moral Philosophy* (5th edition)

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

Assessment of the student's work will be based on moodle postings, class participation, position papers, debate performance, and reflection papers.

UNIT 1: How do I make a good argument?

UNIT 2: The Morality of Abortion

UNIT 3: The Death Penalty in the U.S.

UNIT 4: Affirmative Action

UNIT 5: Homosexuality

THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE TEACHER

- Be able to relate to students, and be interested in what kind of learners the students are.
- Ask provocative, open-ended questions.
- Be flexible with the day's agenda, but get stuff done.
- Don't play favorites.
- Don't reinforce "brown nosing."
- Come to class prepared.
- Provide clear instructions.
- Be engaging.
- Be appropriately humorous.
- Assign relevant material.
- Have empathy and be sympathetic to students' workload and "bad days."
- Grade fairly.
- Encourage a comfortable environment.
- Be open minded and not biased or dogmatic – a "backup quarterback."

THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE STUDENT

- Emphasize quality instead of quantity in class contributions.
- Pay attention.
- Try your best.
- Ask good questions.
- Be engaged.
- Be responsible for your own work.
- Respects others' ideas and comments.
- Respects the teacher.
- Does not abuse privileges.
- Does their assigned work.
- Be independent: Help yourself!
- Be enthusiastic.
- Don't be afraid to offer unpopular opinions and ideas.
- Try to participate.
- Be fully present.
- Adapt to changing circumstances.
- Don't be judgmental.
- Be supportive and collaborate.

OUR CLASSROOM CONSTITUTION

1. We are expected to bring to every class: The text we are studying, paper to write on, a writing utensil, laptop (optional), and post-it flags (recommended).
2. Tardy arrivals to class should not be disruptive. Speak to the teacher after class if the lateness is excused. The community reserves the right to impose academic penalties 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 are given in advance, and the sooner notice is given, the more lenient the outcome.
4. Students may sit wherever they like in the classroom, provided that they do not prove disruptive. The community reserves the right to assign seating.
5. Class participation is required and will be factored into students' grades. Participation can be achieved through multiple avenues.
6. Food and drink are allowed in the classroom provided that they do not inhibit class participation for any member of the community. Students are expected to clean up after themselves, and to make responsible choices regarding food and drink. Permission to drink and eat in class may be revoked if drinking and eating 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. Busy work will not be assigned.
8. Students who disrupt the learning process will first be politely notified in class. If disruptive behavior continues, students will be asked to leave class, and may only return when they are ready to resume their role as a constructive and cooperative member of the community. The community reserves the right to refer behavioral issues to the appropriate administrator.
9. If we work hard, we play hard: Constructive behavior and good work will be recognized and rewarded on a regular basis, and in a way consistent with our educational objectives.
10. 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.
11. We will cover as many of the following topics as possible in the following order: Abortion, capital punishment, affirmative action, homosexuality, animal rights, terrorism, world hunger, and just war theory.