

Philosophy 162: Contemporary Moral Issues
Winter 2013
Syllabus-REVISED

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Course Description: In this course, we will explore four important moral issues that raise fundamental questions about our obligations concerning life and death, and about what makes life valuable. We will begin with the issue of what sorts of control we ought to have over our future lives—in particular, what sorts of advance directives ought to be respected. In the process of answering this question, we will explore what role autonomy ought to play in our lives, what makes a person the same over time, and what makes life good for a person. In the process, we will lay out a framework that we can bring to bear when considering all sorts of moral questions. We will then turn to a set of issues raised by both the possibility of genetic engineering and the ability to employ a variety of performance “enhancements.” In what ways, if any, can doing these things be different, morally speaking, from taking medicine to prevent or cure diseases? And what are our obligations toward future people, particularly when our choices make a difference to which people will exist? We will then turn to the topic of the ethics of climate change, a very different topic, but one that rests on many of the same moral and metaphysical considerations that we have been exploring. Here, too, our choices affect not only the quality of lives of future people, but also, in many cases, which future people will exist. Finally, we will turn to the question of whether there are limits to what should be for sale, such as human organs, sex, and participation in medical experiments as subjects.

Course Requirements:

Midterm (15%): February 11
Paper (25%): Due March 11
Take-home Final (40%): Due 3/21, 11:30
Weekly Quizzes on readings and lectures (20%)

- Please note that all assignments must be completed to pass the class, and that those taking the class Pass/No Pass must achieve a grade of C- or above in order to pass.

Course Readings: Most course readings are available through our TED website or library reserves. Two books have been ordered for the second part of the course.

Please note that the schedule might change slightly, but all changes will be announced in class. I will sometimes add links to news articles or other material directly relevant to our topics, and I will sometimes make recommendations for further optional readings for those interested in pursuing a topic in more depth.

DATE	TOPIC	READINGS
1/7	Introduction	
1/9	Advance Directives	Dworkin, <i>Life's Dominion</i> (excerpt)
1/11	Advance Directives	Dresser, "Dworkin on Dementia: Elegant Theory, Questionable Policy," Buchanan, "Advance Directives and the Personal Identity Problem"
1/14	Advance Directives	Dresser and Buchanan (continued)
1/16	Advance Directives	Jaworska, "Respecting the Margins of Agency..."
1/18	Advance Directives	McMahan, <i>The Ethics of Killing</i> (excerpt)
1/21	Martin Luther King Day	
1/23	Advance Directives (conclusion) and Genetic Screening, Performance Enhancement, and Perfection (introduction)	Kaplan, "Prenatal Screening and its Impact on Persons with Disabilities"
1/25	Genetic Screening, Performance Enhancement, and Perfection	McMahan, "Preventing the Existence of People With Disabilities"
1/28	Genetic Screening, Performance Enhancement, and Perfection	Glover, "Future People, Disability, and Screening"
1/30	Genetic Screening, Performance Enhancement, and Perfection	McMahan, "Wrongful Life: Paradoxes in the Morality of Causing People to Exist"
2/1	Genetic Screening, Performance Enhancement, and Perfection	Buchanan, Brock, Daniels and Wikler, <i>From Choice to Chance</i> (excerpt)
2/4	Genetic Screening, Performance Enhancement, and	Buchanan, Brock, Daniels and Wikler, <i>From Choice to Chance</i> (excerpt)

	Perfection	
2/6	Genetic Screening, Performance Enhancement, and Perfection	Sandel, "The Case Against Perfection"
2/8	Genetic Screening, Performance Enhancement, and Perfection	No New Reading
2/11	Midterm	
2/13		Broome, <i>Climate Matters</i> , chapters 1-3
2/15		Broome, <i>Climate Matters</i> , chapter 4
2/18	President's Day	
2/20		Broome, <i>Climate Matters</i> , chapter 5 and 6
2/22		Broome, <i>Climate Matters</i> , chapters 7 and 8
2/25		Broome, <i>Climate Matters</i> , chapters 9, 10 and 11
2/27		Reading TBA
3/1		Reading TBA
3/4	Moral Limits of Markets?	Satz, <i>Why Some Things Should Not Be For Sale</i> , Chapter 3
3/6	Moral Limits of Markets?	Chapter 4
3/8	Moral Limits of Markets?	Chapter 6
3/11	Moral Limits of Markets?	Chapter 9 Paper Due
3/13	Moral Limits of Markets?	Lemmons and Elliot, "Guinea Pigs on the Payroll: The Ethics of Paying Research Subjects"
3/15	Putting It All Together	

Notes:

- If accommodations are needed for a disability or for religious reasons, please notify as soon as possible during the first week of class.
- **The Academic Honor Code** must be observed in this course. All violations must be reported to the Academic Integrity Office, and an "F" on the assignment, and possibly for the course, will result.
- Laptops and other electronic devices may not be used in class except to take notes on lectures. **No exceptions.**

- If you find yourself struggling with any aspect of the course, or would simply like to explore some ideas further, please don't hesitate to see me in office hours or make an appointment to talk.