

Philosophy 162: Contemporary Moral Issues

Winter 2019, MWF 12:00p-12:50p, Warren Lecture Hall 2115

Prof. Saba Bazargan-Forward

sbazargan@ucsd.edu

Office: HSS 8061

Course Description

The purpose of this course is to carefully explore arguments and issues in contemporary moral ethics pertaining to the use of violence. Such issues include: the moral permissibility of the resort to personal self-defense, to war, to civil disobedience, to terrorism, and to torture. In each case, we will begin with an analysis of the concept followed by moral argumentation. (Students should be warned that some of the readings will be graphic). Some questions will be addressing include:

Self-Defense

- What are the conditions of liability to preventive attack?
- Is it permissible to defend against non-culpable aggressors?
- What are the duties of care to culpable aggressors?

War & Warfare

- Can wars be morally just?
- What are the conditions under which it is permissible to resort to war?
- Are combatants fighting in a war morally responsible for doing so?

Torture

- Is it ever morally permissible to commit acts of torture?
- If torture is sometimes morally permissible, should it be legal?

Civil Disobedience

- Can an appeal to conscience justify violating the law?
- Under what conditions, if any, is civil disobedience justified?
- Should the law 'make room' for certain forms of civil disobedience? If so, how?

Terrorism

- What makes terrorism a distinctive form of violence?
- What counts as an act of terrorism?

Grading

| | GRADING SCALE |
|---|---------------|
| <i>Exams</i> - There are three take-home exams. Each will consist of short-answer questions. The first is worth 10% of your total grade. The second and third are worth 30% each. They will be turned in via Turnitin on the course's TritonEd page. Each exam will only cover material presented after the previous exam. The third test will be due during finals week. The second and third tests will be the same length and will cover roughly the same amount of material. The first test will be shorter. You will be docked a total of five points on each test for major grammar errors. ESL speakers should speak to me for special accommodations. | 97-100 A+ |
| | 93-96.9 A |
| | 90-92.9 A- |
| | 87-89.9 B+ |
| | 83-86.9 B |
| | 80-82.9 B- |
| | 77-79.9 C+ |
| | 73-76.9 C |
| | 70-72.9 C- |
| <i>Excuses</i> - I will grant extensions to an exam's due date for serious emergencies provided suitable evidence is provided afterwards, and for religious observances provided I am informed beforehand. Otherwise, exams will be docked five points for every day that they are late (including weekends). | 67-69.9 D+ |
| | 63-66.9 D |
| | 60-62.9 D- |
| | 0-59.9 F |

Reading

All readings are available on the class's TritonEd page. The readings are not extensive, but they *are* difficult. Part of the purpose of lecture is to help you comprehend and analyze the reading. Note that for some of the readings, you will be required to read particular pages and selections only. The relevant pages and selections will be indicated in the electronic copy of the readings.

Technology

The use of laptops, tablets, and cell phones will not be allowed while class is in session.

Contact

I am available at my office hours (HSS 8061) on Fridays from 1:30-3. I'm also available by appointment. If you miss a lecture, please do not contact me to ask what you missed. **Please note that I might not receive emails sent from addresses other than your official UCSD email.**

Academic Integrity

Any suspected violations of academic integrity will be turned over to the Dean of Judicial Affairs. Details regarding what counts as cheating can be found here: academicintegrity.ucsd.edu. Consult the site or me if you have questions about what counts as cheating. All research papers will be run through the Turnitin service, which will determine whether the author has plagiarized from other papers or from Internet sources.

Special Accommodations

Students requesting accommodations due to a disability should provide a current Authorization for Accommodation (AFA) letter issued by the Office for Students with Disabilities (OSD), located in University Center 202 behind Center Hall. Students are required to present their AFA letters to Faculty (please arrange to contact me privately) and to the OSD Liaison in the department in advance so that accommodations can be arranged. For further info, see: disabilities.ucsd.edu

Readings & Topics

This list is very tentative and subject to change!

I. Ethics of Individual Self-Defense

- Judith Thomson - 'Self-Defense' (1991) [skip sections V, VI, IX, & X]
- Jeff McMahan - 'The Basis for Moral Liability to Defensive Killing' (2005)
- Helen Frowe - *Defensive Killing*, Ch. 3 (2014)

TEST 1

II. Ethics of War

- Seth Lazar - Part 3 & 4 of the *Stanford Encyclopedia* Entry on War (2016)
- Thomas Hurka - 'Proportionality and the Morality of War' (2005)
- Jeff McMahan - 'On the Moral Equality of Combatants' (2006) [skip section V]
- Larry May - 'Contingent Pacifism and the Moral Risks of Participating in War' (2011)
- Jeff McMahan - 'Pacifism and Moral Theory' (2010)

III. Ethics of Terrorism

- Christopher Finlay - *Terrorism and the Right to Resist* (2016) [selections TBD]

TEST 2

IV. Ethics of Torture

- David Sussman - 'What's Wrong with Torture?' (2005)
- Jessica Wolfendale - 'Training Torturers: A Critique of the Ticking Bomb Argument' (2006)

V. Ethics of Civil Disobedience

- John Rawls - *A Theory of Justice* 319-343 (1971)
- Kent Greenawalt - 'Conflicts of Law and Morality' p. 230-243 (1989)
- David Lefkowitz - 'On a Moral Right to Civil Disobedience' (2007)
- Kimberly Brownlee - 'The Communicative Aspects of Civil Disobedience' (2007)
- Candice Delmas - 'Political Resistance: A Matter of Fairness' (2014)

TEST 3