

Phil302 FRONTIERS OF ETHICS (Semester one 2015 – 16)

Course Convenor:

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Aims of the Module

The aim of this module is to familiarize students with some of the main theories and arguments in debates about contemporary issues that raise problems for traditional ethical and political thought. These include the treatment of disability, recent developments in warfare and other matters of global concern, such as international justice and issues involved in what some call the 'environmental crisis'.

Structure

This is a 15 credit module and, like most such modules, the contact teaching is delivered through one weekly lecture and one weekly seminar, with students required to attend each. To get the most out of the course it is essential that you follow the lectures and seminars as outlined below.

Lectures begin in week one. Time and place: Wednesdays at 10.00 in the Rendall Building, Lecture Theatre 6.

The first six lectures will be given by Simon Hailwood. The remaining five lectures will be given by Attila Tanyi.

Seminars will begin in week two; one group will be taught by Simon and one by Attila.

You should have been assigned to a seminar group by ORBIT: check the system to see the time and place of your Phil302 seminar group.

Attendance at all lectures and seminars is compulsory, not optional. If you are unable to attend, for example due to illness, you should inform the tutor teaching the session.

The module content will be structured roughly as follows:

Introduction: contractarianism and animals
Nussbaum's capability approach
Ecological justice
Climate change
International justice
Warfare
Disability

Week 6 is independent study week, during which there will be no Philosophy lectures or seminars.

Material pertaining to each lecture will be available on VITAL, but during the lectures you are advised to listen carefully and take notes of your own, to include any points of confusion or difficulty you encounter. These issues can then be addressed in the related seminar. NB – the material posted to VITAL each week will NOT include a report of literally everything said in the lecture.

In the seminars each student in turn will be asked to prepare a short (10-15 minute) presentation – ***which will be assessed*** (see below) - on a relevant topic and a discussion centred on this presentation will follow. *The reading for the seminar presentations will be posted on VITAL the week before the presentations: everyone should read these each week, not just those doing the presentations.*

Assessment

Assessment will take the form of a 2-hour exam during the January examination period, constituting 60% of the total assessment, and one 2,000-word essay, constituting 30% and one assessed seminar presentation, constituting 10%. The exam paper will have 6 questions of which you answer two. **Last year's exam questions are below.** The essay questions will be made available early in the semester; there will be 2 questions of which you answer one. ***The deadline for submission is 14.00 on Friday November 6th; that is the Friday of week 6.***

All essays must be submitted electronically via VITAL and are passed through plagiarism detection software before being marked. Guidance in writing philosophy essays and the philosophy marking descriptors (criteria by which philosophy essays, exams and presentations are graded) are available in the Assessment section of the module on VITAL and on the Philosophy intranet.

Feedback to students

Once essays have been marked and moderated, feedback, not just a mark, will be provided on your essays, via VITAL. ***You should read the feedback provided, not just the mark!*** Marks and feedback should be available on November 28th (Friday of week 9).

Please contact me if you wish to discuss your essay feedback with me individually; to ask questions about it and ensure you understand any advice it contains. It is important that you do consider and understand the feedback provided so that you are better prepared for the exam and for the philosophy essays you will write in the future. Feedback on exam performance will be provided in the form of general comments about common mistakes made in the exam posted to the module email list. Individual feedback on each seminar presentation will be posted on VITAL along with the mark soon after the presentation.

Feedback from students

Towards the end of the semester a module questionnaire will be made available on VITAL. Please take advantage of this opportunity to comment on the module.

Reading

In addition to attending the lectures and actively participating in the seminars, all students are expected to do their own core-reading and some further research. Lecture summaries or PowerPoints, together with specific reading suggestions, will be posted onto VITAL on a weekly basis. These should be read between the lectures in conjunction with relevant texts. This should help with revision for the exam as well as prepare you for the seminars. There is no one book that covers all of the module material, but this is an important book for several issues on the module:

Martha Nussbaum, *Frontiers of Justice: Disability, Nationality, Species Membership*

Again: the reading for the seminar presentations will be posted on VITAL the week before the presentations; everyone should read these each week, not just those doing the presentations.

Last year's exam questions

1. Explain Gardiner's views on the relation between climate change and moral corruption. Is he right?
2. What is it to have a nonanthropocentric ethic? Should we have one?
3. In today's world many (most?) people, even in the developed countries, do not contribute to the alleviation of world poverty. Are they doing the right thing?
4. Could it be just to kill non-combatants?
5. How and why is disability a matter of justice?
6. Should we – the international community – stop the violence in Syria?

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