

## SEMESTER AT SEA COURSE SYLLABUS

**Voyage: Fall 2013**

**Discipline: Philosophy**

**PHIL 2510: Global Ethics**

**Division: Lower Division**

**Faculty Name: Brian R. Clack**

**Pre-requisites:** One lower division philosophy course.

### **COURSE DESCRIPTION**

This upper division class will explore some major elements in moral philosophy, with a focus upon moral and cultural diversity. The class will consider and evaluate the relativist and subjectivist conclusions often drawn from the facts of moral diversity, and will explore different religious systems of morality (Christianity, Islam, Buddhism) as well as the differences between religious and secular approaches to ethics. After these theoretical matters have been addressed we will turn our attention to issues of practical moral concern. Such issues will include perennial matters of life and death (abortion, euthanasia, the killing of animals) and global issues arising from our increasingly interconnected global situation (world poverty, environmental ethics, war, torture and terrorism).

### **COURSE OBJECTIVES**

By the end of the course students should be able:

- (i) To describe the main tenets of the major ethical theories (e.g. Utilitarianism, Kantianism) in essay form.
- (ii) To identify specific moral problems and apply these ethical theories to them.
- (iii) To appreciate the diversity of moral perspectives and explain how each perspective makes judgments about specific moral problems.
- (iv) To understand the specific range of global moral problems arising from an increasingly inter-related world.

### **REQUIRED TEXTBOOKS**

**AUTHOR:** James Rachels

**TITLE:** *The Right Thing to Do: Basic Readings in Moral Philosophy*

**PUBLISHER:** McGraw Hill

**ISBN #:** 978-0078038235

**DATE/EDITION:** 2011, Sixth Edition

**AUTHOR:** Heather Widdows

**TITLE:** *Global Ethics: An Introduction*

**PUBLISHER:** Acumen

**ISBN #:** 978-1-84465-282-2

DATE/EDITION: 2011

## **TOPICAL OUTLINE OF COURSE**

**A1- August 27:** First responses to moral diversity: Relativism

READING: Widdows, pp. 30-42.

**A2-August 29:** First responses to moral diversity: Subjectivism and Emotivism

READING: Rachels, chapter 6 ('The Subjectivity of Values', by J. L. Mackie)

August 30-September 1: St. Petersburg

**A3- September 3:** Moral Theories: (I) Kantianism

READING: Widdows, pp. 53-58; Rachels, chapter 7 ('The Categorical Imperative', by Immanuel Kant)

September 4-7: Hamburg

**A4- September 9:** Moral Theories: (II) Utilitarianism

READING: Widdows, pp. 44-52; Rachels, chapters 3-5 (selections from Mill, Williams, and Nozick)

ASSIGNMENT DUE: 500 word reflection-piece on Schopenhauer, sympathy and the Dialogue in the Dark field lab.

September 10-12: Antwerp

September 13-15: Le Havre

**A5- September 17:** Moral Theories: (III) Virtue Ethics

READING: Widdows, pp. 59-65; Rachels, chapter 8 ('The Virtues', by Aristotle)

September 18: Arrive & Depart Galway

September 19: In Transit

September 20-21: Dublin

**A6- September 23:** Morality and Religion: Some Preliminary Issues

READING: Rachels, pp. 5-7.

September 25-27: Lisbon

September 28-30: Cadiz

**A7- October 1:** Religious Approaches: (I) Biblical Ethics

READING: The Gospel of St Matthew, chapters 5-7 (in electronic course material folder)

October 3-6: Casablanca

**A8- October 7:** Religious Approaches: (II) Islamic Ethics

READING: Azim Nanji, 'Islamic Ethics' (in electronic course material folder)

**A9- October 9:** Religious Ethics: (III) Buddhist Ethics

READING: The Buddha, 'The First Sermon and the Synopsis of Truth' (in electronic course material folder)

**A10- October 12:** In-class **midterm test**

October 13-16: Tema

**A11- October 18:** Life and Death: Abortion

READING: Rachels, chapters 11-13 (essays by Marquis, Thomson and Warren)

**A12- October 21:** Life and Death: Euthanasia

READING: Rachels, chapters 34 & 35 (essays by Rachels and Gay-Williams)

October 23-27: Cape Town

**A13- October 28:** Life and Death: The Death Penalty

READING: Rachels, chapters 18 & 19 (essays by Pojman and Bright)

**A14- October 31:** Life and Death: Animals

READING: Rachels, chapters 14-16 (essays by Singer, Norcross and Machan)

**A15- November 2:** Sexual Ethics

READING: Rachels, chapters 26-29 (essays by Russell, McMurtry, Sullivan and Boonin)

**A16- November 5:** Drugs

READING: Rachels, chapter 25 ('America's Unjust Drug War', by Michael Huemer)

ASSIGNMENT DUE: 1500 word paper

November 7-9: Buenos Aires

November 10-12: Montevideo

**A17- November 13:** The Concept of Global Ethics

READING: Widdows, chapters 1, 2, & 4.

**A18- November 15:** Global Human Rights

READING: Widdows, chapter 5.

November 16-18: Rio de Janeiro

**A19- November 20:** World Poverty

READING: Widdows, chapter 7; Rachels, chapter 17 ('The Singer Solution to World Poverty', by Peter Singer)

**A20- November 22:** War

READING: Widdows, chapter 8; Rachels, chapters 20-22 (essays by Gawande, Lackey and Rawls)

**A21- November 25: (enter Amazon) Terrorism and Torture**

READING: Widdows, chapter 8; Rachels, chapters 23 & 24 (essays by Nagel and Luban)

November 27-29: Manaus

**A22- December 1: (exit Amazon) Global Bioethics**

READING: Widdows, chapter 9; Rachels, chapters 38 & 39 (essays by Burrows and Childress)

**A23- December 3: Environmental and Climate Ethics**

READING: Widdows, chapter 10

**A24- December 10: A Day Finals; Journal also due this day.**

**FIELD WORK**

**FIELD LAB** (*At least 20 percent of the contact hours for each course, to be led by the instructor.*) **Attendance and participation in the Field Lab is MANDATORY.**

**First Choice:** Hamburg: The theme of this field lab will be *empathy* and there will be two specific activities: a visit to the *Dialog im Dunklen* [Dialogue in the Dark], a 90 minute experience during which participants are led through various activities and challenges in total darkness by legally blind guides. The second activity is a visit to the Kunsthalle, an art museum in which we will explore the role of empathic understanding in art. These activities are linked to the sections of the class focused on compassion and empathy in moral theory (principally, the philosophy of Schopenhauer).

**Second Choice:** Casablanca: We would spend the day at the White Mosque and the field lab would be related to themes in Islamic ethics.

**FIELD ASSIGNMENTS**

- After completion of the field lab in Hamburg, students will complete an essay on Arthur Schopenhauer and the role of sympathy and empathy in morality.
- In addition to the specific field lab assignment, students will keep a voyage journal. Here, students will respond to class- and port-specific philosophical prompts that will be generated organically during the voyage and assigned before debarkation at each port.
- The journal and the field lab assignment will be graded separately. A detailed breakdown of percentages can be found below.

**METHODS OF EVALUATION / GRADING RUBRIC**

Grades will be based upon five assessed pieces of work:

- (1) Field lab essay on Schopenhauer and sympathy (10%)
- (2) A mid-term test on theoretical issues in ethics (20%)
- (3) A five-page paper on an issue in practical ethics (30%)
- (4) A journal relating to field assignments (10%)
- (5) The final examination (30%)

Class participation may also figure in the determination of grades.

### **RESERVE LIBRARY LIST**

AUTHOR: John Stuart Mill  
TITLE: *On Liberty and Other Essays*  
PUBLISHER: Oxford University Press  
ISBN #: 978-0-199535736  
DATE/EDITION: 2008

AUTHOR: Aristotle  
TITLE: *Nicomachean Ethics*  
PUBLISHER: Hackett  
ISBN #: 978-0872204645  
DATE/EDITION: 1999

AUTHOR: Hugh LaFollette  
TITLE: *Ethics in Practice*  
PUBLISHER: Blackwell  
ISBN #: 978-1405129459  
DATE/EDITION: 2006 / Third Edition

AUTHOR: Peter Singer  
TITLE: *Practical Ethics*  
PUBLISHER: Cambridge University Press  
ISBN #: 978-0521707688  
DATE/EDITION: 2011 / Third Edition

### **ELECTRONIC COURSE MATERIALS**

BOOK: The Bible  
SECTION: Gospel of St Matthew chapters 5-7.

AUTHOR: Azim Nanji  
ARTICLE/CHAPTER TITLE: 'Islamic Ethics'  
BOOK TITLE: *A Companion to Ethics*, edited by Peter Singer  
PUBLISHER: Blackwell  
DATE: 1993  
PAGES: Pp. 106-119.

AUTHOR: The Buddha  
CHAPTER TITLE: 'The First Sermon and the Synopsis of Truth'  
BOOK TITLE: *World Ethics*, by Wanda Torres-Gregory and Donna Giancola  
PUBLISHER: Wadsworth

DATE: 2002  
PAGES: Pp. 181-186.

### **ADDITIONAL RESOURCES**

None required

### **HONOR CODE**

Semester at Sea students enroll in an academic program administered by the University of Virginia, and thus bind themselves to the University's honor code. The code prohibits all acts of lying, cheating, and stealing. Please consult the Voyager's Handbook for further explanation of what constitutes an honor offense.

Each written assignment for this course must be pledged by the student as follows: "On my honor as a student, I pledge that I have neither given nor received aid on this assignment." The pledge must be signed, or, in the case of an electronic file, signed "[signed]."

The Right Thing to Do: Basic Readings in Moral Philosophy is a companion reader to the best-selling text: The Elements of Moral Philosophy (0-07-8119065). Authors James Rachels and Stuart Rachels offer engaging, thought-provoking essays on compelling issues that students are familiar with and understand. This rich collection of essays can be used on its own for a course on moral philosophy, or it can be used to supplement other introductory texts. Instructors and students can now access their course content through the Connect digital learning platform by purchasing either standalone Connect a