

## **Tentative Syllabus**

Summer 3, 2013

Religious Studies 260 - Moral Decision Making

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## **Course Description**

This course is an introduction to the problems of moral decision making. As such, it will provide an introduction to various moral theories as well as a careful examination of a select number of contemporary moral issues. Specifically, we will examine utilitarian, Kantian, and natural law ethical theories, and we will take up the moral issues surrounding reproductive technology, cloning and stem cell research, euthanasia and abortion. The course is designed to promote critical discussion of these issues. We will examine a variety of arguments and approaches to these moral issues—both religious and secular—in an effort to help us think and reason more clearly about them.

## **Expected Outcomes**

The course is designed with various learning outcomes in mind. It seeks to increase awareness of moral issues that have frequently been debated in the past. It seeks to develop skills of analysis and presentation of arguments. And it attempts to introduce students to moral and theological resources in the traditions of Christianity and secular humanism, which are helpful for developing critical positions on controversial moral issues. The anticipated learning outcomes are thus multiple: (1) greater awareness of philosophical and theological approaches to moral decision making; (2) better skills of analysis and presentation of reasoned argument; (3) greater clarity of expression in written work.

## **Blackboard**

The course will be conducted largely through the Blackboard environment. You will need to check Blackboard daily and complete the daily online assignments that will be posted there. **This includes contributing to the ongoing discussion forums in Blackboard.**

## **Statement on Academic Honesty**

Academic honesty is essential to the success of this course. For this reason, no dishonesty of any sort will be tolerated. **Cheating of any sort will be grounds for a grade of F in the course.**

## **Participation Policy**

This course will be conducted entirely online. You will be expected to complete daily online assignments within 24 hours of their assigned date.

### **Course Requirements**

1. Daily participation online
2. Active participation in discussion forums = 25%
3. Three writing assignments = 60%
4. A final examination = 15% of final grade

### **Grading**

Because professors sometimes differ in how they understand the meaning of letter grades, I believe it is important that students understand my views. Typically, students say that I am a difficult grader. Below I have provided a description of my expectations for particular grades.

A Grade = Outstanding work. Work that receives an A in this course will typically be well conceived and well argued. It will typically demonstrate a command of the material under consideration. Such work will generally be free of grammatical and spelling errors.

B Grade = Good work. Work that receives a B in this course will typically be solid work. It will demonstrate a good understanding of the concepts and material under consideration. Such work will typically be well written with few grammatical or spelling errors.

C Grade = Average work. Work that receives a C in this course will typically demonstrate an adequate understanding of the materials under consideration, but may not demonstrate a very deep or broad knowledge of course material. Work that is not well organized, well written, or well argued will generally receive a grade of C.

D Grade = Passable work. Work that receives a D in this course will typically demonstrate some effort to understand the course material but with limited success. Work that is very poorly written or that is very carelessly put together may receive a grade of D.

F Grade = Unacceptable work. Work that receives an F in this course will typically demonstrate little or no command of the course material or will be so poorly written as not to be college-level work.

### **Weekly Writing Assignments**

There will be weekly assignments that will be posted on Friday and due by Monday. These assignments will focus primarily on the assigned reading.

### **Texts**

All readings for this course will be available through the Blackboard site.

**Tentative Schedule**

Week of:

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|------|----|---|
| July | 22 | Making and Assessing Moral Arguments—Various Strategies<br>Different Approaches to Ethics |
| July | 29 | From Theory to Practice: Assisted Reproduction, Cloning and Stem Cell Research            |
| Aug  | 05 | Euthanasia and Physician-assisted suicide   |
| Aug  | 12 | Abortion  |
| Aug  | 16 | Final Exam  |