

**PHILOS 5**  
**Contemporary Moral Problems**  
**UC Irvine, Spring 2023**

**<https://canvas.eee.uci.edu/courses/54038>**

Class Meeting Time: Tu/Th 2:00pm-3:20pm (ALP 2300)

Instructor: Professor Rena Beatrice Goldstein

[renag@uci.edu](mailto:renag@uci.edu)

[https://www.faculty.uci.edu/profile.cfm?faculty\\_id=7106](https://www.faculty.uci.edu/profile.cfm?faculty_id=7106)

Office Hours: Tuesdays 12:45pm-1:45pm (HIB 69)

Virtual office hours by appointment: [calendly.com/renag](https://calendly.com/renag)

**Syllabus Version:** May 8, 2023<sup>1</sup>

**Course overview:** This course will connect disputed moral issues with moral theories. There are many such disputed issues, but this semester we shall concentrate on the following:

- Sexual Morality
- Abortion
- Cloning and Genetic Enhancement
- Economic Justice

Students will also be able to pick one topic from the following list for debate:

- Freedom of Speech
- Drugs and Addiction
- Sexism and Racism
- The Ethics of Immigration
- Euthanasia and Physician-Assisted Suicide
- The Death Penalty
- War, Terrorism, and Torture
- The Ethical Treatment of Animals
- The Environment and Climate Change

We begin the course with a very brief introduction to the philosophical study of moral issues, including what is called moral (or ethical) theory. As we shall see, philosophers often approach

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<sup>1</sup> Subject to revision

specific moral issues by making use of a particular moral theory and applying the theory to the problem. (That's why what we will be studying is sometimes called applied ethics.) So, as we proceed, not only will we be learning about the philosophical controversies surrounding the above-mentioned issues, we will also be learning about moral theory. Indeed, moral viewpoints are often situated in a moral theory with certain moral assumptions. Students will analytically examine the assumptions and arguments in both the moral issues and theories covered in class. We will also examine arguments for and against controversial issues, doing our best to understand both sides with open minds. In the end, students should have a better understanding of the nature of these disputes.

**Materials** (*available as an eBook for purchase*)

Timmons, M., ed. *Disputed Moral Issues: A Reader*. 5th ed. New York: Oxford University Press, 2019.

*Oxford Direct 2 Student* store extends a 10% discount for 2023 classrooms: [Disputed Moral Issues - Paperback - Mark Timmons - Oxford University Press \(oup.com\)](https://www.oup.com/9780190262512)

**Course Format**

The eBook will be available on <https://www.redshelf.com/>. Other aspects of the course, including assignment instructions, quizzes, and deadlines will be available on Canvas. All the deadlines for this course are for the US west coast, that is Pacific Standard Time.

This course will have both teaching and learning assistants. Teaching assistants (TAs) are largely responsible for conducting discussion, grading assignments, holding office hours, and providing input into the development of assignments or exams. Learning Assistants (LAs) are undergraduate peer educators that work with students in the classroom setting to support and facilitate active learning in courses that are traditionally difficult or have high enrollment. The main responsibility of an LA is to support their professor and TAs by assisting students while they are engaged in active learning. LAs are expected to interact with students to facilitate collaborative activities and discussions. LAs are not expected to be content experts.

**Teaching Assistants:**

- Ignacio Perez <[jjperez@uci.edu](mailto:jjperez@uci.edu)>
- Natalia Nealon <[nnealon@uci.edu](mailto:nnealon@uci.edu)>
- Cherrish Hardy <[cherrish@uci.edu](mailto:cherrish@uci.edu)>

**Learning Assistants:**

- Madison Godbee
- Anthony Garcia-Hernandez
- Christopher Lanning

- Haiyi Yu

**Prerequisites:** There are no prerequisites for this course.

**Requirements for Philosophy Major/Minor:** Philos 5 satisfies a requirement for the B.A. degree in philosophy and the minor in philosophy.

**General Education Category IV:** Philos 5 satisfies the General Education Category IV (Arts and Humanities). General Education Category IV courses expand the student's sense of diverse forms of cultural expression, past and present. Students develop their critical capacity as they discover how meaning is created and experience is variously interpreted.

**General Education Objectives:** After completing PHILOS 5, successful students should be able to do the following:

- Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of how verbal communication is used in philosophy to produce and contest knowledge claims about large-scale issues and questions related to human behavior, socially constructed identities, institutions, economic, political, or social systems, or human societies within and/or across cultures and civilizations.
- Understand and explain the research methods used in the philosophy and the testing of competing theories.
- Demonstrate imaginative, creative, and reflective abilities by articulating philosophical insights.
- Evaluate information from a variety of sources and use this information to formulate well-reasoned responses to major ideas, concerns, and debates.
- Articulate the relevance of social science theories and research to their lives.

**PHILOS 5 Learning Outcomes:**

- Be familiar with the moral controversies surrounding the above-listed topics
- Come to reasoned positions on these (and related) issues
- Have sharpened ability to think clearly and critically about such issues

**Social Justice and Equity Learning Outcomes:**

- Analyze, articulate, and apply principles of social justice in addressing social constructions of identity, hierarchy, power, and privilege.
- Identify ways in which they can contribute to social justice within local communities, nations, or the world.

As part of anti-oppression efforts on campus, UCI's Students Activating Social Innovation (SASI) has compiled a [list of Spring courses](#) broadly related to social justice and equity. For other courses that have social justice and equity learning outcomes, visit [this list of courses](#).

**Communication:** We will send course announcements to the official course mailing list, so you should check your email regularly. Note that this mailing list goes to the email address that the registrar has for you. If you prefer to read your email on another account, you should set your account to forward your email to your preferred account. To reach the professor and the teaching assistants, please use the email addresses listed above. If you have questions about your grades for your discussion posts or your essays, then in the first instance please contact the teaching assistant assigned to your discussion group.

## Course Requirements

-Attendance (10%): The large class will be lecture-based, with some in-class group activities and collective discussions. As part of your participation grade, you are required to attend your discussion section. The TA's will record attendance at the beginning of each class. Your attendance may be marked down if you are (1) consistently absent, (2) consistently late, and/or (3) you are disruptive/disrespectful in class.

-Quizzes (20%): Each week you will be asked to answer some multiple choice questions about the readings for that week. The quizzes will be open-book and open-note.

-Mid-Term Exam (25%): The exam will consist of short-answer questions and mini essay questions. The purpose of the exam is three-fold, 1) to determine whether students can identify the values, norms and principles associated with the different positions exemplified in the reading assignments and class lectures, 2) to ascertain students' ability to articulate the reasons why these values, norms and principles are held and 3) to evaluate students' ability to understand the implications of holding these values, norms and principles.

-In Class Group Assignment (20%): Debates will take place during section. These debates will require students to identify the values, norms and/or principles that undergird different moral positions, articulate the reasons given for different moral positions and discuss the implications of these moral positions. In addition students will evaluate the relative merits of these positions arguing that one position is better or more important or more justified than another.

-Final Paper (25%): The final paper will build on the group assignment by requiring students to write a careful and sympathetic exposition of the relevant positions or arguments for the topic they were assigned. Students will also reflect on the debate process, including what they gained from the experience.

The essay will be 1400-1600 words in length. You will find the relevant deadlines in the appendices below. Both papers will be graded by the teaching assistants. **Papers must be submitted to Canvas.** If you have questions about the essays, please don't hesitate to contact either your TA or myself. We are also willing to give feedback on essay plans (no more than one page), though naturally you will need to do this well in advance of the essay deadline. **Please note that in the interests of fairness, neither I nor the TAs will provide feedback on essay drafts.**

Essays don't need to use a particular style of formatting or referencing. All that is important is that they are clearly written throughout (and full references are given somewhere, where appropriate). Note that we give guidance in the course itself in terms of what we are expecting from the essays, so you need to carefully attend to that advice.

**Grading:** The breakdown for the 100% over the course is as follows:

- Attendance: 10%
- Quizzes: 20%
- Midterm Exam: 25%
- Debate: 20%
- Final Essay: 25%

Overall grading for the course follows the standard UCI grading scheme:

A+ = 96.5% A = 93.5% A- = 90%  
B+ = 86.5% B = 83.5% B- = 80%  
C+ = 76.5% C = 73.5% C- = 70%  
D+ = 66.5% D = 63.5% D- = 60%  
F = Less than 60%

## **Late Penalties**

For all assessed work, for each day, or part of the day, that the assessment is late we will deduct one grade (e.g., a one-day late penalty means that A+ goes down to A, B- goes down C+, and so on). If you have a good excuse for being late—and please note that a good excuse doesn't mean 'I forgot about the deadline', or 'I left it to the very last minute and my computer broke down', and so on—then it is important that you get in touch with both myself and your TA ASAP to explain the situation.

## **Class Policies**

Respect: This class involves significant online discussion of topics on which you and your classmates may have differences of opinion. You may also have opinions that differ from those of the instructors. Please be respectful of classmates, the professor, and teaching assistants at all times.

Academic Honesty: Please familiarize yourself with UC Irvine's academic honesty policy (<http://honesty.uci.edu>).

Academic Dishonesty: All students are expected to adhere to the UCI Academic Dishonesty Policies. The consequences of academic dishonesty (e.g., course failure and not learning the material) are not worth the small artificial benefits to your grade and the impugning of your character. The penalty for any violation of academic integrity—including but not limited to plagiarism—failure for the course and a letter recording the violation sent to the Associate Dean for Curriculum and Student Services in the School of Humanities. Note that submitting work for assessment that you have previously submitted for assessment is also a case of academic misconduct. If you have questions about what constitutes academic dishonesty, it is always better to ask than to guess. All students are expected to adhere to the UCI Academic Dishonesty Policies.

**Disability Services:** There will be accommodations for students eligible for disability services. Contact the Disability Services Center (DSC) and make the appropriate arrangement. \*All lectures in ALP 2300 will be recorded. If you would like to be sent the recording for any or all lectures, please contact the professor.

## SCHEDULE

Date	Lecture	Readings	Assignments
Week 1 April 4 April 6	Tu: Course Overview	Syllabus	
	Th: Introduction to Moral Theory	Ch 1. Introduction “A Moral Theory Primer” Ch 1.1 “What is a Moral Theory”	
Week 2 April 11 April 13	Tu: Introduction to Moral Theory Continued	Ch 1.2. “Eight Essential Moral Theories” Ch 2. Timmons “Why I’m not a moral relativist and neither are you”	<b>Reading Quiz</b>
	Th: Moral Relativism		
Week 3 April 18 April 20	Sexual Morality	Ch. 2 Aquinas “Treatise on Law” Ch 3: Corvino “What’s Wrong With Homosexuality”	<b>Reading Quiz</b>
		Ch. 2: Kant “The Moral Law” Ch 3: Linda Papadaki “Sexual Objectification”	
Week 4 April 25 April 27	Economic Justice	Ch. 2: W.D. Ross “What Makes Right Actions Right?” Ch. 13 Introduction Ch. 13: Hardin, Lifeboat Ethics	<b>Reading Quiz</b>  <b>Peer-review midterm in section</b>
		Ch. 2: Mill Utilitarianism Ch. 13: Singer, The Life You Can Save	
Week 5 May 2 May 4	Tuesday: Economic Justice	Ch. 2: Rawls A Theory of Justice Ch. 13: Arthur, World Hunger and Moral	<b>Midterm Exam Due</b>

		Obligation	
	Thursday: Economic Justice	Ch. 13: Ashord, Severe Poverty as an Unjust Emergency	
Week 6 May 9 May 11	Cloning and Genetic Enhancement	Ch.2 Aristotle Virtue and Character	<b>Reading Quiz</b>
		Ch. 10: Introduction Ch. 10: Kass, Preventing a Brave New World	
Week 7 May 16 May 18	Cloning and Genetic Enhancement	Ch. 2 Collins Care Ethics: The Four Key Claims Ch. 10: Pence, Will Cloning Harm People?	<b>Reading Quiz</b>
		Ch. 10: Sandel, The Case against Perfection	
Week 8 May 23 May 25	No lecture; student prepare for debates during lecture time and in section	Student Choice	In-class debate preparation and group work
Week 9 May 30 June 1	Abortion	Ch. 9: Hursthouse, Virtue Theory and Abortion Ch. 9: Marquis, Why Abortion is Immoral	<b>Reading Quiz</b>
		Ch. 2: Locke, Natural Rights Ch 9: Thompson, Defense of Abortion	
Week 10 June 6 June 8	No lecture; student debates in section	Students present arguments in section	<b>Debates in sections</b>
Week 11 Finals Week	No lecture	No readings	<b>Final Essay Due</b>