

## Contemporary Moral Problems

Time: Mondays 1:00-4:00 PM  
Location: Rubel Room at the Poetry Center  
University of Arizona, Dept. of Philosophy  
Spring 2022

### CONTACT INFORMATION:

Michael McKenna, Professor  
Office: Social Sciences Building, 226b  
Email: [msmckenna63@gmail.com](mailto:msmckenna63@gmail.com)

### COURSE DESCRIPTION & OBJECTIVES:

This course will examine moral theory and reasoning as applied to issues of current ethical or moral concern, such as: sexual morality, pornography, hate speech, and censorship, drugs and addiction, sexism, racism, and reparation, the ethics of immigration, euthanasia and physician-assisted suicide, the ethical treatment of animals, abortion, cloning and genetic enhancement, the death penalty, war, terrorism, and torture, world hunger and poverty, the environment, and also consumption and climate change. Our goal will be to challenge and develop your own positions on these matters so that you are better able to speak, think, and write about them cogently and critically. We will aim to do so in a way consistent with the University of Arizona's General Education program learning outcomes as specified here: [http://gened.arizona.edu/faculty/expected-outcomes#Learning\\_Outcomes](http://gened.arizona.edu/faculty/expected-outcomes#Learning_Outcomes).

### HOW CLASS WILL PROCEED:

For the first eight of our ten sessions, I will not cover any topic in great detail. Rather, in each session we will consider a different topic. Our last two sessions will be devoted to a single topic that we will cover in considerably greater detail, devoting two sessions to just that topic. For each of our meetings, I will give traditional lectures, explaining and criticizing the assigned readings. Discussion and a seminar-style conversation should emerge naturally as the content presented is set out. Ideally, about half of the class time should involve a lecture and half a discussion. Because our sessions are three hours long and meet once a week, we will break our meetings up into two halves. Each half can be treated as a single class session, with some lecture and then some class discussion. We'll take a brief break about half way through (10-15 minutes).

### COURSE SCHEDULE AND READING ASSIGNMENTS:

#### REQUIRED TEXT:

M. Timmons, *Disputed Moral Issues*, Oxford University Press, 4<sup>th</sup> ed.  
'\*' means 'suggested reading, not required.'

#### Euthanasia and Physician Assisted Suicide

Jan 31      James Rachels, "Active and Passive Euthanasia"  
              Philippa Foot, "Killing and Letting Die"

## World Hunger and Poverty

- Feb 7 Peter Singer, "The Life You Can Save"  
Amartya Sen, "Poverty and Hunger"  
\*Onora O'Neil, "A Kantian Approach to World Hunger"

## Sexual Morality

- Feb 14 Thomas A. Mappes, "A Liberal View of Sexual Morality and the Concept of ..."  
Raja Halwani, "Virtue Ethics and Adultery"  
\*Pope Paul VI, "Vatican Declaration on Some Questions of Sexual Ethics"

## War and Terrorism

- Feb 21 Michael Walzer, "Terrorism: A Critique of Excuses"  
Andrew Valls, "Can Terrorism be Justified?"  
Noam Chomsky (video clip):  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UWuT8d78yts&t=297s>

## Racism & Discrimination

- Feb 28 J.L.A. Garcia, "The Heart of Racism"  
Tommie Shelby, "Is Racism in the Heart?"  
Chris Lebron, "Who First Showed Us That Black Lives Matter?" *NYT* article:  
<https://www.nytimes.com/2018/02/05/opinion/black-lives-matter-philosophy.html>  
Frederick Douglas, "The Meaning of July Fourth for the Negro" at PBS:  
<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/aia/part4/4h2927t.html>

## The Ethics of Immigration

- Mar 14 Joseph H. Carens, "Migration and Morality: A Liberal Egalitarian Perspective"  
Stephen Macedo, "The Moral Dilemma of U.S. Immigration Policy..."

## Cloning and Genetic Enhancement

- Mar 21 Gregory E. Pence, "Will Cloning Harm People?"  
Michael Sandel, "The Case Against Perfection"  
\*Peter Singer, "Parental Choice and Human Improvement"

## The Ethical Treatment of Nonhuman Animals

- Mar 28 Peter Singer, "All Animals are Equal"  
Peter Caruthers, "Against the Moral Standing of Animals"  
Alistair Norcross, "Puppies, Pigs, and People: Eating Meat and Marginal Cases"

## Abortion

- April 4 *Roe v. Wade*, just focus on section IX (Google it)  
Mary Ann Warren, "On the Moral and Legal Status of Abortion"  
Don Marquis, "Why Abortion is Immoral"

- April 11 Judith Jarvis Thompson, "A Defense of Abortion"  
Rosalind Hursthouse, "Virtue Theory and Abortion"