

# **CONTEMPORARY MORAL PROBLEMS– PHIL 1304.003 FALL 2015**

**Instructor: Dr. Shaun D. House**

**Meeting Time:** August 27 – December 9, 2015

**Meeting Place:** Preston Hall (PH) 302

**Office and Office Hours:** 305 Carlisle Hall  
M-W-F, 10:00-10:50 AM & By Appointment

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## **I. Text**

**Hugh LaFollete, Ethics in Practice**

## **II. Course Description**

This course is a survey of different major ethical problems and the arguments supporting opposing sides. In each section students will read two opposing views on a topic. The purpose of the is not to change the student's position about ethical issues, but rather to encourage greater contemplation about the reasons behind those beliefs. Topic covered during this course will include: abortion, euthanasia, gun control, animal rights, affirmative action, death penalty, and war and terrorism.

## **III. Course Objectives**

Students will gain a better understanding of arguments supporting different ethical positions. In the process, we will stress the importance of being receptive to an opposing viewpoint. Students will also improve their ability to evaluate the strength of arguments and some of the common mistakes that occur in reasoning. Since a significant portion of the class will be devoted to discussion, students will develop their ability to more effectively communicate about challenging issues.

#### IV. Course Requirements and Grading

This course will be graded by a series of quizzes on recent readings, and two papers. Each of these will count 25% of the final grade. Class participation (**in-class & weekly assignments**) will count an addition 25% of the final grade.

**Class Participation:** Each student is required to participate regularly in class discussions, AND submit **weekly discussion** questions.

| Percentage | Grade |
|------------|-------|
| 90-100     | A     |
| 80-89      | B     |
| 70-79      | C     |
| 60-69      | D     |
| 59 or less | F     |

#### Policy on Late Exams, Quizzes, and Assignments

All late work must be accompanied with appropriate written documentation from a health care provider unless the student has another legitimate excuse, e.g. religious holiday, university obligation, etc. When these conditions are satisfied, appropriate accommodations will be made for the student to complete the missed assignment. When these conditions are not satisfied, the student will receive a reduction of 10 points per weekday on papers and exams.

- *If, for any reason, students have a problem and are unable to turn an assignment in on time, they should contact the instructor before the assigned work is due, in order to help ensure the best possible solution.*

#### V. Attendance and General Student Responsibilities

This class will cover essential material very rapidly. Students who miss class on a regular basis should not expect a passing grade. Students are expected to be respectful of each other. If entering class late, please try to avoid overly disturbing the class. When engaged in discussions, please be respectful. Together, we will foster an environment where controversial issues, such as abortion, can be discussed in a respectful manner.

#### VI. Review of University Policies

**Drop Policy:** Students may drop or swap (adding and dropping a class concurrently) classes through self-service in MyMav from the beginning of the registration period through the late registration period. After the late registration period, students must see their academic advisor to drop a class or withdraw. Undeclared students must see an advisor in the University Advising Center. Drops can continue through a point two-thirds of the way through the term or session. It is the student's responsibility to officially withdraw if they do not plan to attend after registering. **Students will not be automatically dropped for non-attendance.** Repayment of certain types

of financial aid administered through the University may be required as the result of dropping classes or withdrawing. For more information, contact the Office of Financial Aid and Scholarships (<http://www.uta.edu/aao/fao/>).

**Americans with Disabilities Act:** The University of Texas at Arlington is on record as being committed to both the spirit and letter of all federal equal opportunity legislation, including the *Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)*. All instructors at UT Arlington are required by law to provide "reasonable accommodations" to students with disabilities, so as not to discriminate on the basis of that disability. Any student requiring an accommodation for this course must provide the instructor with official documentation in the form of a letter certified by the staff in the Office for Students with Disabilities, University Hall 102. Only those students who have officially documented a need for an accommodation will have their request honored. Information regarding diagnostic criteria and policies for obtaining disability-based academic accommodations can be found at [www.uta.edu/disability](http://www.uta.edu/disability) or by calling the Office for Students with Disabilities at (817) 272-3364.

**Academic Integrity:** Students enrolled in this course are expected to adhere to the UT Arlington Honor Code:

*I pledge, on my honor, to uphold UT Arlington's tradition of academic integrity, a tradition that values hard work and honest effort in the pursuit of academic excellence.*

*I promise that I will submit only work that I personally create or contribute to group collaborations, and I will appropriately reference any work from other sources. I will follow the highest standards of integrity and uphold the spirit of the Honor Code.*

UT Arlington faculty members may employ the Honor Code as they see fit in their courses, including (but not limited to) having students acknowledge the honor code as part of an examination or requiring students to incorporate the honor code into any work submitted. Per UT System *Regents' Rule* 50101, §2.2, suspected violations of university's standards for academic integrity (including the Honor Code) will be referred to the Office of Student Conduct. Violators will be disciplined in accordance with University policy, which may result in the student's suspension or expulsion from the University.

**Student Support Services:** UT Arlington provides a variety of resources and programs designed to help students develop academic skills, deal with personal situations, and better understand concepts and information related to their courses. Resources include tutoring, major-based learning centers, developmental education, advising and mentoring, personal counseling, and federally funded programs. For individualized referrals, students may visit the reception desk at University College (Ransom Hall), call the Maverick Resource Hotline at 817-272-6107, send a message to [resources@uta.edu](mailto:resources@uta.edu), or view the information at [www.uta.edu/resources](http://www.uta.edu/resources).

**Electronic Communication:** UT Arlington has adopted MavMail as its official means to communicate with students about important deadlines and events, as well as to transact university-related business regarding financial aid, tuition, grades, graduation, etc. All students are assigned a MavMail account and

are responsible for checking the inbox regularly. There is no additional charge to students for using this account, which remains active even after graduation. Information about activating and using MavMail is available at <http://www.uta.edu/oit/cs/email/mavmail.php>.

**Student Feedback Survey:** At the end of each term, students enrolled in classes categorized as “lecture,” “seminar,” or “laboratory” shall be directed to complete an online Student Feedback Survey (SFS). Instructions on how to access the SFS for this course will be sent directly to each student through MavMail approximately 10 days before the end of the term. Each student’s feedback enters the SFS database anonymously and is aggregated with that of other students enrolled in the course. UT Arlington’s effort to solicit, gather, tabulate, and publish student feedback is required by state law; students are strongly urged to participate. For more information, visit <http://www.uta.edu/sfs>.

## **VII. Reading Assignments**

### Moral Duty

|                               |         |
|-------------------------------|---------|
| Letter from a Birmingham Jail | Handout |
|-------------------------------|---------|

### Euthanasia

|                                      |       |
|--------------------------------------|-------|
| Justifying Physician-Assisted Deaths | 72-81 |
| Against the Right to Die             | 81-90 |

### Abortion

|                                    |         |
|------------------------------------|---------|
| A Defense of Abortion              | 117-125 |
| An Argument that Abortion is Wrong | 126-136 |

### Animal Rights

|                       |         |
|-----------------------|---------|
| All Animals are Equal | 171-180 |
|-----------------------|---------|

### Gun Control

|                                |         |
|--------------------------------|---------|
| The Liberal Right to Bear Arms | 345-356 |
| Gun Control                    | 347-370 |

### Affirmative Action

|  |         |
|--|---------|
| The Case Against Affirmative Action          | 473-485 |
| Affirmative Action as Equalizing Opportunity | 492-504 |

### Death Penalty

|                                 |         |
|---------------------------------|---------|
| In Defense of the Death Penalty | 544-553 |
| Against the Death Penalty       | 554-561 |

### Economic Justice

|                                   |         |
|-----------------------------------|---------|
| The Entitlement Theory of Justice | 578-590 |
| Famine, Influence, and Morality   | 613-622 |

### War and Terrorism

|   |         |
|---|---------|
| Nipping Evil in the Bud                         | 715-725 |
| The Justifiability of Humanitarian Intervention | 726-734 |