

Philosophy 2325: Contemporary Moral Problems

Dr. Jacob M. Held

CRN: 19414

Fall 2016

Time: TR 9:25-10:40 pm

Room: Irby Hall 316

Office: Irby Hall 118E

Office Phone: 450-3634

Email: jmhheld@uca.edu

Office Hours: by appt. only

Required Texts: *Doing Ethics: Moral Reasoning and Contemporary Issues*, Second Edition, ed. Lewis Vaughn (DE)
Materials on Blackboard (Bb)

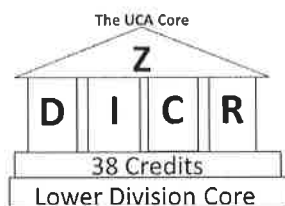
Course Description: This course is an introduction to ethical thinking and its application to various contemporary moral problems from abortion and capital punishment to war, torture, terrorism, and pornography. These are issues, the answers to which define who we are as individuals and what type of people and society we wish to become. It is paramount that we understand the complexity of these issues and our responses to them if we are to engage the world in a meaningful way. This course aims to facilitate the student's development in better understanding their own position among possible alternatives so that they have the tools available to craft a praiseworthy life.

This course rests on two foundational values: respect and humility. *Respect* for each person's bona fide attempt to better understand and thereby navigate a complex world. And *Humility* in one's judgment recognizing the complexity of the issues under investigation and one's limited exposure to and expertise regarding these issues. Respect and humility do not demand that we accept all positions as equivalent or all value systems as laudable, they are not. Rather, through respect and humility we allow ourselves to remain open to the possibility of improvement, recognizing this may come from the most surprising places.

Course Objectives: By the end of this course the student will be able to:

- 1) *Summarize* major theories in the history of ethical thought.
- 2) *Explain* major concepts in the history of ethical thought and in contemporary ethical debates.
- 3) *Analyze* ethical arguments and be able to break them down into their component parts – assumptions and foundational concepts - and put them in context.
- 4) *Assess* the relative merit of ethical arguments and be able to articulate strengths and weaknesses of these arguments.
- 5) *Critique* ethical arguments with respect to their continued relevance to and applicability to contemporary ethical debates.

LD Responsible Living



This course is part of the Responsible Living component of the Lower-Division Core. Responsible Living courses promote the ability to address real-world problems and find ethical solutions for individuals and society. For more information, go to <http://uca.edu/core>.

This section is also designated as a **First-Year Seminar [FYS]** course. The purpose of the first-year seminar is to provide a small-class learning environment to facilitate engagement in academic study at the collegiate level, make a connection to the university, and reinforce the importance of written communication skills.

Grade Scale: Grades are determined against the standard grade scale, Above 90% of total possible points is an A, 80%-89.9% a B, 70%-79.9% a C, 60%-69.9% a D, below 60% is an F.

Grading:	Attendance	10%
	Response Papers (4 at 10 points each)	20%
	Quizzes (4 at 5 points each)	10%
	Mid-Semester Exam	20%
	Final Exam	20%
	Presentation	20%

Point Scale: Total possible points	200	
	200-180	A
	179-160	B
	159-140	C
	139-120	D
	119 or below	F

Course Work:

Attendance: Attendance is worth 10 % of your grade. Attendance is graded on the basis of whether you are or are not present when I call the roll. If you arrive late it is up to you to notify me so I can mark you in attendance. However, every two late arrivals will be counted as an absence. If you accumulate 2 weeks of unexcused absences throughout the semester (i.e. 4 missed classes, 8 late arrivals, or a combination of late arrivals and absences the sum of which is equal to 4 absences) you will receive a 0 for the attendance portion of the class. For every class missed after 4 your grade will be reduced an additional one half letter grade (10 points).

Response Papers: Response papers are to be no less than 3 full pages, typed, double spaced, in 12 point times new roman font with standard margins. If your paper does not meet these guidelines it will not be accepted. Papers should demonstrate college level writing: proper grammar, correct spelling, a coherent structure, and no slang. Your paper will be your response to a current news item related to a topic of class discussion. I will post links on Blackboard to relevant, current news items, as well as a short description of the assignment. I am looking for a brief explanation of the news item and the issues with which it deals, as well as your critical engagement with these issues. Your paper should demonstrate that you can assess and evaluate these issues in the real world context in which they arise. Grades for response papers consist of either a ✓ or ✓+. A ✓ indicates an acceptable response and is worth 8/10 points. A ✓+ is an exceptional response and is worth 10/10 points.

Quizzes: There will be 4 quizzes throughout the semester. Quizzes will be unannounced and may cover any material up to and including the readings due the day of the quiz. Quizzes will consist of vocabulary, multiple choice, and true/false questions drawn from the readings. If you arrive late to class on the day of a quiz and the quiz has already been administered and collected, you will not be allowed to make it up.

Mid Semester Exam: The mid semester exam counts as 20% of your final grade. It will consist of multiple choice, true/false, vocabulary, short answer, and/or essay questions.

Final Exam: The final exam is *cumulative* and counts as 20% of your final grade. It will consist of multiple choice, true/false, vocabulary, short answer, and/or essay questions.

Presentation: During the semester the class will be broken up into 5 teams. Each team member will be given a role within their team. Each team will be charged with creating a short (15-20 minute) presentation over a topic drawn from the course text book. Presentations will be given during the last couple weeks of the semester. Grades will be assigned both for the group and individually. For more information, see the handout on Presentations.

No Late Work: If you miss or fail to hand in an assignment because of an unexcused absence, you will not be allowed to make it up. You will only be allowed to make up work resulting from excused absences. All late work resulting from unexcused absences will be considered incomplete and receive a 0.

Excused absence policy: I will only excuse an absence or tardiness if it results from a medical emergency, debilitating illness, family emergency, or participation in university sanctioned events. I may require documentation or alternative form of verification. It is up to the student to get an absence excused. I will presume all absences to be inexcusable until proof to the contrary is presented. Determination of "excused" is at my discretion.

No E-mailed Work: I will not accept E-mailed assignments, unless special arrangements have been made prior to the due date for that assignment.

School Policies: The University of Central Arkansas adheres to the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act. If you need an accommodation under this Act due to a disability, please contact the UCA Disability Resource Center, 450-3613.

Please also familiarize yourself with all policies in the student handbook, including sexual harassment and academic policies.

Building Emergency Plan: An Emergency Procedures Summary (EPS) for the building in which this class is held will be discussed during the first week of this course. EPS documents for most buildings on campus are available at <http://uca.edu/mysafety/bep/>. Every student should be familiar with emergency procedures for any campus building in which he/she spends time for classes or other purposes.

Title IX Disclosure: If a student discloses an act of sexual harassment, discrimination, assault, or other sexual misconduct to a faculty member (as it relates to "student-on-student" or "employee-on-student"), the faculty member cannot maintain complete confidentiality and is required to report the act and may be required to reveal the names of the parties involved. Any allegations made by a student may or may not trigger an investigation. Each situation differs and the obligation to conduct an investigation will depend on those specific set of circumstances. The determination to conduct an investigation will be made by the Title IX Coordinator. For further information, please visit: <https://uca.edu/titleix>. *Disclosure of sexual misconduct by a

third party who is not a student and/or employee is also required if the misconduct occurs when the third party is a participant in a university-sponsored program, event, or activity.

Academic Dishonesty: The University of Central Arkansas affirms its commitment to academic integrity and expects all members of the university community to accept shared responsibility for maintaining academic integrity. Students in this course are subject to the provisions of the university's academic integrity policy, approved by the board of trustees as board policy No. 709 on February 10, 2010, and published in the student handbook. Penalties for academic misconduct in this course may include a failing grade on an assignment, a failing grade in the course, or any other course-related sanction the instructor determines to be appropriate. Continued enrollment in this course affirms a student's acceptance of the university policy.

During quizzes there is to be no talking or communication of any kind. Any talking or use of electronic devices will be interpreted as cheating and will result in at least a failing grade for quiz. Although working in groups on papers is not prohibited, the work a student turns in must be the product of that student and demonstrate the unique contribution of that student. Passing off another's work as your own is a form of academic dishonesty. Plagiarism is especially heinous and will result in an immediate failing grade for the course. If you don't know what plagiarism is, I suggest you familiarize yourself with university policy as presented in the student handbook. For general guidelines on plagiarism see: <http://www.plagiarism.org/>.

Contemporary Moral Problems
Fall 2016

Tuesday	Thursday
August 16	August 18 Syllabus, Mentor, and Introduction Assign: DE, pp. 3-16, 19-21
August 23 The Examined Life and the UCA Core Assign: DE, pp. 22-40	August 25 Subjectivism and Relativism Assign: DE, pp. 43-61; Bb, Seuss
August 30 Moral Arguments, Truth and Bullshit Assign: DE, pp. 76-99	September 1 Consequentialism Teams Assigned Assign: DE, pp. 100-122
September 6 Non-Consequentialism Assign: DE, pp. 134-150	September 8 Virtue Ethics Team Roles Assigned and Topics Chosen: Report to Dr. Held Assign: DE, pp. 555-574
September 13 Animal Rights and Peter Singer Assign: DE, pp. 575-589	September 15 Animal Rights, Regan and Warren Assign: DE, pp. 161-172; Bb, Roe v. Wade
September 20 Abortion and Roe v. Wade Response 1 Due Assign: DE, pp. 215-219, 173-183	September 22 Abortion, Noonan and Thompson Assign: DE, pp. 183-204
September 27 Abortion, Warren and Marquis Assign: DE, pp. 291-300; Bb, Watchmen	September 29 Capital Punishment and Retributivism Assign: DE, pp. 301-306
October 4 Capital Punishment, Van den Haag Assign: DE, pp. 306-312, 318-323	October 6 Capital Punishment, Reiman and Bedau Group Update #1 Assign: DE, pp. 349-374
October 11 Pornography, Attorney General's Report, and MacKinnon Response 2 Due Assign: DE, pp. 381-390	October 13 Fall Break
October 18 Free Speech Assign: None	October 20 <i>Video: The Price of Pleasure (Warning: Sensitive Content)</i> Assign: Study for Exam

<p>October 25 Mid-Semester Exam Assign: DE, pp. 405-416, 434-438</p>	<p>October 27 Marriage, Rauch and Gallagher Assign: DE, pp. 608-616; Bb, Just War</p>
<p>November 1 Just War Theory, and O'Brien Assign: DE, pp. 617-629</p>	<p>November 3 Pacifism Response 3 Due Assign: DE, pp. 638-649; Bb, Black Sabbath</p>
<p>November 8 Just War, Realism, and Terrorism Assign: DE, pp. 692-698, 720-728</p>	<p>November 10 Walzer and Nathanson on Terrorism Group Update #2 Assign: Bb, Luban; Bb, Shue</p>
<p>November 15 Perspectives on Torture Assign: DE, pp. 744-754</p>	<p>November 17 Torture Continued Assign: Bb: Dewey</p>
<p>November 22 Dewey and Creative Democracy Response 4 Due</p>	<p>November 24 Thanksgiving Holiday</p>
<p>November 29 Presentations: Groups 1, 2, and 3 Individual portfolios due</p>	<p>December 1 Presentations: Groups 4, 5 Individual portfolios due</p>
<p>December 6 Final 11:00-1:00 pm Group Evaluations Due</p>	<p>December 8 Finals Week</p>