

PHI 2603 ETHICS IN CONTEMPORARY SOCIETY

Dr. Sally Ferguson

Course Overview:

Each of us has views of what is right and wrong, or what is good and bad. On the basis of these views, we make decisions that affect both others and ourselves. Can any of these views be justified? Or is morality simply a matter of personal opinion? In this course we will apply the standards of critical reasoning and rational argument to a number of moral issues that are the subject of contemporary debate. Along the way, we will learn about several competing theories of morality and about how to apply general moral rules consistently in our own moral judgements.

Required Texts:

James P. Sterba: *Morality in Practice*, 5th edition, (Wadsworth Publishing, 1997)

Homework and Exams:

As this is a **Gordon Rule class**, it is required that each student writes 6000 words. Each of the four written assignments, will therefore have a required length of about 1000 words (typically 3 – 4 pages, double-spaced). The written assignments must be typed or word-processed, double-spaced. There will be two paragraph-answer and essay examination. An adequately completed exam will also average 1000 words (usually 10-15 blue book pages.) The examinations must be written in “blue books” – examination booklets that are available at the UWF bookstore. Each student is responsible for bringing his or her own blue books to the exams. Late written assignments and make-up exams will only be allowed in cases of legitimate need, and authentication of excuse will be required (e.g. doctor’s note.) Arrangements should be made in advance except in cases of emergency, and as soon as possible in the case of emergency.

Each student will be expected to have read the applicable material in advance of class, and to be prepared to contribute to the discussion of the material. In class we will be discussing the issues raised in the reading, and expanding on them.

Grading Policy:

The grade in this course will be determined on the basis of four written assignments, two paragraph-answer and essay exams, and attendance. The written assignments will each be weighted equally at 10% of the final grade, the exams will each be weighted at 25% of the final grade, and attendance will be weighted at 10% of the final grade. The two examinations will each count as 45% of the final grade. Attendance will count as the remaining 10% of the final grade. Each student should retain all of his or her written work for the course until after receipt of the final grade.

Attendance:

Class attendance is mandatory, and will be taken. It is the responsibility of the student to make sure he or she has been correctly listed as in attendance in the event of a late arrival to class. Students are permitted two unexcused absences from class. After that, subsequent unexcused absences will take 10% off your attendance grade. Thus, if you are absent a total of 5 times, you will end up with a final attendance grade of 70.