Phil 230: Introduction to Moral Philosophy
Fall 2018, McGill University

SYLLABUS

Lecture time and location: M/W/F(ish) 1:35-2:25 pm, LEA 219
Professor: Stephanie Leary (stephanie.leary@mcgill.ca)
Professor's Office Hours: Mondays 2:30-4:30 pm, LEA 942

Course Overview
In this course, we’ll discuss various theories in moral philosophy regarding what makes actions right or wrong, what makes someone a good person, and what it takes for a person to be morally responsible for some action or attitude. And we will evaluate these moral theories, in part, by focusing on how they bear on particular moral issues such as global wealth inequality, the ethics of food, abortion, and implicit bias. While our discussion of these topics will be primarily informed by reading philosophical texts, these readings will occasionally be supplemented by podcasts, newspaper articles, or documentaries. This course aims to improve your ability to think carefully and critically about ethical issues and to express your own views in a clear, well-reasoned way through both writing and conversation.

myCourses
There is a myCourses site for this class and you need to know how to use it. All of the readings are available here (there is no textbook for this course). I will be using myCourses to post announcements and assignments, and you will use it to turn in your papers.

Conferences
You must register for a conference for this course – registration will open soon and conferences will begin in the second week of classes. You will be assigned into a team at your first conference meeting and you will take weekly brief multiple choice quizzes both individually and with your teammates at the beginning of each conference meeting that cover the reading and lecture material covered that week. This means that you must come to conferences on time, having done all the readings and paid attention during lecture so that you are a valuable contributor to your team. There will be peer evaluations twice over the course of the semester, wherein you will do anonymous evaluations of each of your teammates. Your teammates’ evaluations of you will contribute toward 5% of your overall grade. So, it is in your best interest and the best interest of your team that you show up prepared and ready to contribute.

Teaching Assistants for this course:

Daniel Harris
daniel.harris2@mail.mcgill.ca
Office: LEA 111
hours: Fri 3:35-4:35 pm

David Collins
david.collins3@mail.mcgill.ca
Office: LEA 934
hours: Wed 2:30-3:30 pm

Sebastian Rodriguez Duque
sebastian.rodriguezduque@mail.mcgill.ca
Office: LEA 934
hours: Thurs 12-1 pm
Assignments and Grades

(1) **Quizzes:** Your cumulative individual quiz score and cumulative team quiz score, as well as your peer evaluations, will contribute toward your overall grade (see distribution below). Your lowest two individual and team scores will be dropped from your cumulative quiz scores.

(2) **Two Philosophical Papers:** There will be two 5 page (double-spaced) papers, which will require you to explain and critically evaluate some philosophical argument or theory that we cover in the course. You will be provided with a selection of paper topics to choose from.

(3) **Final exam:** There will be a formal final exam for this course during the exam period (Dec 6\textsuperscript{th}-20\textsuperscript{th}). It will be a comprehensive final exam that contains a mixture of multiple choice, short answer, and essay questions. A study guide will be made available to you prior to the exam.

*Special arrangements for the final exam.* Please note that all formal final examinations at McGill are centrally scheduled and administered. This means that the instructor has no control over the date of the exam for his or her course, which will be set by the Examination Office. (A preliminary draft of the examination schedule is released in October.) Nor is it possible to arrange to sit the exam at an alternative time which is more convenient for you: as specified in section 3.6.2.1. of the Calendar, instructors are not permitted to make special arrangements for final exams with individual students. Given these facts, all students must plan to be in Montreal and available to write final exams during the entire exam period.

*You must turn in all these writing assignments to pass this course. If you do not turn in one of these assignments, you will automatically receive an F for the course. So, put the due dates in your calendar now so that they don’t sneak up on you!*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade Percentages</th>
<th>Due Dates</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Individual Quiz Score</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team Quiz Score</td>
<td>5%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Peer Evaluations</td>
<td>5%</td>
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<tr>
<td>1st Paper</td>
<td>26.67%                   Friday Oct 12\textsuperscript{th} at 11:59 pm</td>
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<tr>
<td>2nd Paper</td>
<td>26.67%                   Friday Nov 16\textsuperscript{th} at 11:59 pm</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Exam</td>
<td>26.67%                   TBD</td>
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**Electronic Devices Policy**
If you would like to use your laptop or tablet during lecture to take notes, you must notify the professor via email (stephanie.leary@mcgill.ca) by Friday September 14th and you will be assigned to sit in the back section of the classroom. (I highly recommend not using a laptop to take notes – handwritten notes typically lead to greater comprehension.) Use of cell phones or any other electronic devices is not permitted during lecture, and violators of this policy will be subject to public shaming.

**Late-Work Policy**
Late work is not accepted, unless you have an extremely serious excuse and can provide some documentation for your excuse (e.g. photo of your detached limb). The writing prompts for the papers will be posted very early so that you have plenty of time to complete them.
Language Policy
In accord with McGill University’s Charter of Students’ Rights, students in this course have the right to submit in English or in French any written work that is to be graded.

Academic Integrity Policy
McGill University values academic integrity. Therefore, all students must understand the meaning and consequences of cheating, plagiarism and other academic offences under the Code of Student Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures (see www.mcgill.ca/students/srr/honest/ for more information).

Meta-policy
I reserve the right to amend the readings, assignments, and policies as the semester progresses. I will only do so fairly, for good reasons, and with plenty of warning.

Topics and Materials

(Readings for each class will be determined as we go, and will be announced at the end of lecture and on myCourses.)

1. Moral relativism vs. moral objectivism
   • James Rachels’s “The Challenge of Cultural Relativism”
   • Daniel Engber’s “The Kids Are All Right” from Slate.com
     http://www.slate.com/articles/health_and_science/science/2015/03/does_common_core_teach_children_to_be_immoral_as_justin_mcbrayer_says_meta.html

2. Global wealth inequality and our duties to the global poor
   • Peter Singer’s “Famine, Affluence, and Morality”
   • John Arthur’s “World Hunger and Moral Obligation: the Case Against Singer”

3. Consequentialist ethics
   • Jeremy Bentham’s “The Principle of Utility”
   • J.S. Mill’s “In Defense of Utilitarianism”
   • Robert Nozick’s “The Experience Machine”
   • Jean Kazez’s “Necessities”
   • Russ Shafer-Landau’s “Consequentialism: it’s Difficulties”

4. The ethics of what we eat
   • Peter Singer’s “All Animals are Equal”
   • At the Fork – A documentary on Kanopy: https://mcgill.kanopy.com/video/fork

5. Deontological ethics
   • Kant’s “The Moral Law and Autonomy of the Will”
   • Joshua Glasgow’s “Kant’s Principle of Universal Law”
   • Onora O’NeiI’s “Kant on Treating People as Ends in Themselves”
   • Ross’s “What Makes Right Acts Right?”
• Walter Sinnott-Armstrong’s “How Strong is this Moral Obligation?”
• McNaughton’s “An Unconnected Heap of Duties?”

6. Abortion
• “Abortion” episode from the Science VS. podcast: https://www.gimletmedia.com/science-vs/abortion-what-you-need-to-know
• Judith Jarvis Thomson’s “A Defense of Abortion”
• Don Marquis’s “Why Abortion is Immoral”

7. Virtue ethics
• Excerpt from Aristotle’s NIchomachean Ethics, “Virtue and Character”
• Rosalind Hursthouse’s “Normative Virtue Ethics”
• Robert Johnson’s "Virtue and Right"
• Gilbert Harman’s “Moral Philosophy Meets Social Psychology”

8. Moral responsibility (and implicit bias: a case study)
• Angela Smith’s “Responsibility for Attitudes: Activity and Passivity in Mental Life”
• Neil Levy’s “The Good, the Bad, and the Blameworthy”