

## **Introduction to Ethics (Prospective Syllabus)**

In this class we will start off learning about theories of right and wrong action. In particular we will examine relativism, divine command theory, consequentialism, and Kantian deontology. Next we will apply the theories we learn about to particular moral problems. Specifically, we will consider whether and to what extent one has a duty to help those in need, how one should treat animals, just war theory, and bioethics. Finally, we will consider what one expresses by saying that an action is right or wrong. Is one expressing an emotion, stating an opinion, or saying something that doesn't depend on one's personal feelings and beliefs? Along the way students will learn to read and interpret primary sources, critically evaluate arguments, and develop philosophical positions of their own.

### **Texts**

[RTD] *The Right Thing to Do* by James Rachels and Stuart Rachels

[EMP] *The Elements of Moral Philosophy* by James Rachels and Stuart Rachels

[ME] *Metaethics: An Introduction* by Andrew Fisher

### **Assignments and Grading:**

- 20% In-Class Activities
- 10% Short Paper 1
- 10% Short Paper 2
- 20% Exam 1
- 20% Exam 2
- 20% Argumentative Essay

## SCHEDULE OF READINGS

### Part 1: Theories of right and wrong action

Week 1: RTD, Introduction

Week 2: EMP, The Challenge of Cultural Relativism

Week 3: EMP, Subjectivism in Ethics; EMP, Does Morality Depend on Religion?; **Short Paper 1 Due**

Week 4: EMP, The Utilitarian Approach; EMP, The Debate Over Utilitarianism

Week 5: EMP, Are there Absolute Moral Rules?; EMP, Kant and Respect for Persons

Week 6: EMP, Virtue Ethics; **Exam 1**

### Part 2: Applied ethics

Week 7: RTD, "Famine, Influence, and Morality," by Peter Singer; RTD, "Poverty and Parenthood" by Stuart Rachels

Week 8: RTD, "All Animals Are Equal" by Peter Singer; RTD, "Torturing Puppies and Eating Meat: It's All in Good Taste" by Alastair Norcross

Week 9: RTD, "Do Animals Have Rights?", "The Immorality of Eating Meat" by Mylan Engel (online); **Short Paper 2 Due**

Week 10: RTD, "Hellhole" by Atul Gawande; RTD, "The Ethics of War and Peace," by Douglas P. Lackey

Week 11: RTD, "Fifty Years After Hiroshima" by John Rawls; RTD, "What Is Wrong with Terrorism?" by Thomas Nagel

Week 12: "Procreative Beneficence: Why We Should Select the Best Children" by Julian Savulescu (online), RTD, "The New Eugenics," by Matt Ridley; **Exam 2**

### **Part 3: What ethical statements express**

Week 13: ME, The Open Question Argument; **Term Paper Assigned**

Week 14: ME, Emotivism

Week 15: ME, Moral Realism and Naturalism

Week 16: ME, Moral Realism and Non-Naturalism; **Term Paper Due**