

FIRST-YEAR SEMINAR IN PHILOSOPHY: LEAP-BIOETHICS

PHIL083S.201 • Summer 2013 (6/26/13–8/7/13) • MTWRF 11:10–12:25 • 101 [Electrical Engineering West](#)

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

This first-year seminar in philosophy provides an introduction to some foundational concepts in moral theory before covering two topics in bioethics. These topics include the ethical use of drugs for recreational, therapeutic, and enhancement purposes and whether abortion is ethically permissible. In addressing fundamental concepts in moral theory, students will discuss and evaluate possible answers to questions such as the following: what makes an action right or wrong? under what conditions is it morally permissible to use drugs? what constitutes a person? does a fetus have rights? do we have any duties or ethical commitments to unborn children?

COURSE OVERVIEW

REQUIRED TEXTS

1. Rachels, James and Stuart Rachels 2012. *The Elements of Moral Philosophy*. 7th edition. New York: McGraw Hill. ISBN: 978-0-07-803824-2
2. Kaczor, Christopher 2011. *The Ethics of Abortion: Women's Rights, Human Life, and the Question of Justice*. New York and London: Routledge.
3. Readings on Drugs, Therapy, & Enhancement are available via ANGEL.

COURSE OBJECTIVES & GOALS

- **Critical Reading, Thinking, & Reasoning Skills:** Students will read texts in ethics and bioethics critically by assessing the quality of arguments in terms of their validity, strength, cogency, soundness, etc.
- **Dialogue & Oral Expression:** As issues in bioethics tend to be controversial and emotionally charged, students will develop their ability to engage in respectful conversation with others. Students will thus be encouraged to formulate their views on bioethical issues by providing reasons for their position and criticizing alternatives by objecting to the *arguments* supporting these positions.
- **Bioethics Content:** Students will not be encouraged to change their minds on what they think is right or wrong. Instead, the objectives of this course pertain to understanding several normative theories, attempting to apply these theories to two key issues in bioethics, and becoming more adept at providing (and criticizing) arguments for positions in bioethics.
- **LEAP Content:** Students will learn several professional, academic, and technical skills that will allow them to succeed in the rest of their courses at Penn State.

COURSE WORK

- **Two Exams (30% of total grade):** There will be two exams given throughout the course of the semester, one exam for each of the three units in the course. Exams may contain any combination of true/false, multiple choice, matching; however, the main focus will be on short answer questions. Material for exams will come from assigned readings **and** class discussions.
- **Six Pop Quizzes (30% of total grade, lowest score dropped):** There will be six pop quizzes given throughout the course of the session. Every quiz is worth two points. Each quiz will have three questions. If a student gets 2 or 3 of the questions right then s/he will receive the full two points. If one question is answered correctly then one point, and if all three are answered incorrectly zero points. These quizzes will always be given at the beginning of class and will refer to the reading that is due on that day. These quizzes will not primarily test whether the student has fully comprehended the material, but rather are checks to see

if s/he has read the material. As the lowest quiz score is dropped, there will be no make-up quizzes and no one will be allowed to take the quiz if they are late to class.

- **Four LEAP Assignments (40%):** LEAP aims to prepare you for a successful academic career at Penn State. There will be four LEAP exercises throughout the course of this semester. Brief descriptions of these exercises can be found immediately below while extended descriptions can be found at the end of this syllabus:
 - **Exercise #1: Scavenger Hunt (5% of total)**, an exercise designed to orient you to various key spots at Penn State.
 - **Exercise #2: Email Best Practices (10% of total)**, an exercise where you will summarize & respond to an essay and then email me your work using certain guidelines
 - **Exercise #3: Grading Essays Workshop (5% of total)**, an exercise where you will evaluate two different essays and discuss various factors involved in submitting & presenting your work
 - **Exercise #4: Argumentative Essay (20% of total)**, an essay where you will take a stance on a topic in bioethics and argue for this position.

COURSE POLICIES

ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT

The general principles and policy relating to cheating and plagiarism, which are enforced in this class, can be found in *The Student Guide to University Policies and Rules'* policy on academic integrity (see Section 49-20 Academic Integrity, www.psu.edu/ufs/policies). Academic dishonesty encompasses a wide range of activities, whether intentional or unintentional, that includes, but is not limited to: all forms of fraud, plagiarism, and any failure to cite explicitly all materials and sources used in one's work. Sanctions for these activities include, but are not limited to, failure in a course, removal from the degree program, failure in a course with an explanation in the permanent transcript of the cause for failure, suspension, and expulsion. If you are unclear about whether you or someone you know is engaging in academic misconduct, read the following: [University Statement on Academic Integrity](#). For more information, see [PSU Academic Integrity](#), [PSU ITS](#), [Plagiarism Tutor](#), [Turnitin](#), [PSU Teaching & Learning with Technology](#)

GRADING SCALE & ROUNDING POLICY

Grades will be rounded up from the *second* decimal point, e.g. 90.95 rounds up to 91.0 while 90.94 rounds down to 90.90. In the event that eLION does not allow for a particular grade (e.g. D+), you will simply be given the letter grade (e.g. if you have a D+ then you will receive a D, and if you have a C-, you will receive a C).

A: 91–100%;	C+: 79.0–79.9	F: 0–59.9
A–: 90.0–90.9	C: 71.0–78.9	INCOMPLETE
B+: 89.0–89.9	C–: 70–70.9	DROP
B: 81.0–88.9	D+: 69.0–69.9	
B–: 80–80.9	D: 60.0–68.9	

LATE WORK

If you are planning on turning in any of the above assessments late, you will need to clear this with the instructor *before* the day and time of the assessment. If the instructor is not informed that you will be taking the test late, a grade reduction of one letter grade is incurred for every day the test is late. So if the due date is Tuesday at 3p.m. and you email me on Tuesday at 3.01p.m., you will lose a letter grade. You will not lose an additional letter grade until 3.01p.m. the next day (i.e. Wednesday).

STUDENT GUIDANCE AND DISABILITY

If you have a documented disability and wish to receive academic accommodations, please contact the campus disability liaison as soon as possible: (name, office, telephone, email). For additional information, check the university web site for [Disability Services](#). If you are in need of psychological counseling, please do not hesitate to contact Penn State's [Counseling & Psychological Services](#) (phone: 814-863-0395). For any problem related to your studies, university policies and procedures, do not hesitate to seek the help of the [Student Affairs Services](#), your

Academic Advisor, or arrange a meeting with your instructor who will help you obtain assistance through one of the above, or another, agency.

USE OF ANGEL AND EMAIL COMMUNICATION

Please check the webpage on the [ANGEL](#) website regularly. Many helpful resources are available there and on my professional website: www.davidagler.com.

If you have a question about the course, its content or assignments, I encourage you to go through the following three step process:

- (1) Check the syllabus
- (2) Check ANGEL
- (3) Email me

I encourage you to contact me with any concerns you may have about the course. The best way is to get a hold of me is through email at dwa132@psu.edu. Students are responsible for activity on their computer accounts so only send emails pertinent to the course or to your academic development.

TUTORING, DROP PROCEDURES, AND INCOMPLETES

Students who simply stop attending class, for whatever reason, without officially withdrawing from the course, will receive the grade of F. If you expect a refund, be aware that the date the withdrawal form is processed by Penn State registrar's office determines the amount of refund. Consult the Register site for [drop procedures](#). Consult the Handbook for taking an [Incomplete \(D/F\)](#). Before considering dropping the course or taking an incomplete, you might consider getting additional help from your academic advisor or from the following useful links: [Information Literacy Tutorial](#), [University Learning Center](#), [Writing Center](#)

CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT

A number of factors figure into creating a healthy classroom environment. In order to facilitate such an environment, I ask you to obey the following: (1) the use of cell phones in any capacity is prohibited (please turn ringers/buzzers off, no text-messaging during class), (2) please do not begin to 'pack up' your belongings before your instructor has *explicitly* dismissed you, (3) please come to class rested, sleeping in class is strictly prohibited, (4) please do not do other work in class. If you are incapable of performing (1)–(4) or are disruptive in class, you will kindly be asked to leave the classroom.

CALENDAR

Unit I: Normative Ethical Theories

LESSON	TOPIC	READINGS	ASSESSMENTS
W – 6.26	Introduction	None	Leap Assignment #1
R – 6.27	Elements of Reasoning	Review syllabus, check ANGEL, check course website	
F – 6.28	What is Ethics?	Rachels, <i>The Elements of Moral Philosophy (EMP)</i> , Chapter 1, pp.1-13	
M – 7.1	Cultural Relativism	Read <i>EMP</i> , Chapter 2, pp.14-31	
T – 7.2	Subjectivism	Read <i>EMP</i> , Chapter 3, pp.32-44	
W – 7.3	Morality & Religion	Read <i>EMP</i> , Chapter 4, pp.49-58	
R – 7.4	Independence Day	No Class	
F – 7.5	Ethical Egoism	Read <i>EMP</i> , Chapter 5, pp.64-81	
M – 7.8	Utilitarianism	Read <i>EMP</i> , Chapter 7, pp.98-109	
T – 7.9	Utilitarianism	Read <i>EMP</i> , Chapter 8, pp.110-124	
W – 7.10	Kant & the Moral Law	Read <i>EMP</i> , Chapter 9, pp.125-135	
R – 7.11	Kant & Respect for Persons	Read <i>EMP</i> , Chapter 10, pp.136-145	Leap Assignment #2
F – 7.12	Exam Day	None	Exam #1

Unit II: Drugs, Therapy, and Enhancement

LESSON	TOPIC	READINGS	ASSESSMENTS
Part II: Drugs			
M – 7.15	Therapy vs. Enhancement	Skim: The Creation of The President’s Council on Bioethics (Nov 28, 2001): http://bioethics.georgetown.edu/pcbe/about/executive.html Read: From the President’s Council On Bioethics: “Staff Background Paper: Human Flourishing, Performance Enhancement, and Ritalin ” (Also available on ANGEL)	
T – 7.16	Drugs in Sports (PEDs)	Brown, W. M. 1980. Ethics, Drugs and Sport. <i>Journal of the Philosophy of Sport</i> , VII: 15-23.	
W – 7.17	Drugs in Sports (PEDs)	Simon, Robert L. 1985. Good competition and drug enhanced	

		performance. <i>Journal of the Philosophy of Sport</i> 11: 6-13	
R – 7.18	Drugs in Sports (PEDs)	Fraleigh, W.P. 1984. Performance-Enhancing Drugs in Sport: The Ethical Issue. <i>Journal of the Philosophy of Sport</i> 11:23-29.	
M – 7.22	Therapeutic Use of Marijuana	Excerpt from: Clark, Peter A. 2000. The Ethics of Medical Marijuana: Government Restrictions vs. Medical Necessity. <i>Journal of Public Health Policy</i> 21(1): 40-60. (Also available on ANGEL)	
T – 7.23	Morality & Recreational Drugs	Excerpt from: Husak, Douglas 2002. <i>Legalize This! The Case for Decriminalizing Drugs</i> London: Verso, pp. 109-124.	
W – 7.24		<i>The War on Marijuana in Black and White</i> 1. Visit the following website, read the information on the page, and watch the video: http://www.aclu.org/billions-dollars-wasted-racially-biased-arrests 2. Take an hour to skim the following document and jot down any interesting statistics you find or topics you want to discuss in class: http://www.aclu.org/files/assets/aclu-thewaronmarijuana-rel2.pdf	
R – 7.25	Review & Catch-Up	None	Leap Exercise #3
F – 7.26	Exam Day		Exam #2

Unit III: Abortion

LESSON	TOPIC	READINGS	ASSESSMENTS
F – 7.26	Abortion	Kaczor, <i>The Ethics of Abortion (EOA)</i> , 1-12	
M – 7.29	Abortion	Kaczor, <i>EOA</i> , 13-20	
T – 7.30	Abortion	Kaczor, <i>EOA</i> , 20-27	
W – 7.31	Abortion	Kaczor, <i>EOA</i> , 27-37	
R – 8.1	Abortion	Kaczor, <i>EOA</i> , 38-48	
F – 8.2	Abortion	Kaczor, <i>EOA</i> , 48-55	Leap Exercise #4 Explained
M – 8.5	Abortion	Kaczor, <i>EOA</i> , 56-67	
T – 8.6	Abortion	Kaczor, <i>EOA</i> , 68-83	
W – 8.7	Abortion	Kaczor, <i>EOA</i> , 83-90	
R – 8.8	Writing Workshop	No reading but you should bring in a draft of your argumentative essay (see Leap Exercise #4)	Leap Exercise #4
TBA			Leap Exercise #4

LEAP ASSIGNMENTS

LEAP ASSIGNMENT #1 (SCAVENGER HUNT)

Description

There are **eight** tasks below (see Tasks). Every group is asked to compile and email a document (preferably PDF or PowerPoint) that provides photographic evidence of having completed **four** out of the eight tasks. The order in which you complete the tasks does not matter. If you don't know where something is, then ask. If nobody is around, find a map.

Tasks

1. Take a picture of someone on your team reading a book at the Student Book Store. (Hint: not the bookstore in the HUB)
2. Take a picture of someone on your team examining hungrily the menu at one of the restaurants in the HUB.
3. Take a picture of someone on your team standing outside the Student Health Center looking very ill.
4. Take a picture of someone on your team on a computer at the library logged into the Angel page for this class.
5. ~~Take a picture of someone on your team posing next to the Nittany Lion statue near Rec Hall. Make sure to exude your "lion pride."~~
6. Take a picture of someone on your team performing (or attempting to perform) a pull-up on the pull-up bars outside the basketball courts in Rec Hall.
7. Take a picture of someone on your team shaking hands with one of the Nittany lion paws outside the Palmer Museum of Art.
8. Take a picture of someone on your team outside of one of the many *Penn State Learning* offices looking confused.

LEAP ASSIGNMENT #2 (EFFECTIVE EMAIL COMMUNICATION):

In this LEAP workshop, you will learn how to communicate with your instructors and peers in a professional manner through email. After reviewing several examples and best practices for sending email, you will be asked to write a short response paper to one of the readings in Unit II on *Drugs, Therapy, and Enhancement*. The paper should be 1,000 words and should consist of the following: (i) a brief summary of the paper that includes an explanation of key terms, (ii) a statement of the central thesis of the paper, (iii) a reconstruction of its most important argument for this thesis, and (iv) your reaction to the paper with reasons cited or arguments given to support your view.

Once you have completed this paper, you will need to submit your paper using the effective email communication guidelines discussed in class and summarized below:

- Effective Subject Lines
 - P120 Question vs. [No Subject]
- Attaching Files
 - File naming procedures: "394830483.odt" vs. "phil083assignment3_agler.pdf"
- Email Accounts for professional correspondence
 - "dwa132@psu.edu" vs. psychokiller@hotmail.com
- Salutations, Closings, Format

- “Dear David” vs. “yo teach, is there class today?”
- Effective Communication Practices
 - *Check Twice*: It is very easy to send an email and easy to correct mistakes made in email by sending another email. Because of this, you can forget crucial details or forget to attach that important file. However, this puts a burden on your reader. People in academia receive a lot of email. They receive emails from the University, from their department, from organizations they belong to, personal correspondence, from academic journals, and from students. Sending a series of emails to a professor (whose inboxes are already full) can lead to some negative consequences. First, they construe your mistake as unprofessional or become annoyed and so not respond to you (or delay their response to you). Second, your emails may get lost in their inbox and so you will not receive a response to your important question or concern. So, remember that when you send professional academic correspondence, take a couple seconds to look over your email.
 - *Personal, Health, & Family Issues*: Everyone has events in their lives that occasionally make it impossible for you to attend class (or even turn in an assignment). The instructor for your course should understand this and is required to make the necessary accommodations provided you have the proper documentation and/or you inform them ahead of time. You should **not** email details about personal issues, health issues, family emergencies, and so on. Simply (i) email your instructor/advisor, (ii) indicate to them that you have a personal issue you have to attend to and so won't be able to attend class or turn in an assignment, and (iii) ask them if they need further documentation or want you to elaborate during office hours or in a meeting.
- When emailing is not appropriate
 - *Letters of Recommendation*: If you are going to ask for a letter of recommendation from a professor or academic advisor (for graduate school, for law school, for a scholarship), it is advisable **not** to email them asking for a letter. This can be taken as impersonal and somewhat disrespectful. Instead, you should email them and ask if they would be willing to meet with you (or better yet, ask if they will be available at their office hours). When you meet, you should have **copies** of all of the materials required to write the letter, e.g. a personal statement, a writing sample, a resume or CV, a transcript (this is not always necessary), and anything that you think might help your letter writer construct the best possible letter.

LEAP ASSIGNMENT #3 (TURNING IN YOUR WORK)

LEAP Assignment #3 will consist of an **in-class exercise**. You will receive full-credit for your active participation.

LEAP ASSIGNMENT #4 (WRITING AN ARGUMENTATIVE ESSAY)

LEAP Assignment #4 will consist of an **in-class exercise** and an **out-of-class assignment**. Details of the in-class portion will be made available during the scheduled class period (see Calendar) and will cover various tools & techniques for writing an argumentative essay. The out-of-class assignment is an argumentative essay. Details are provided below:

Topic

In your previous paper, you were asked to explicate a point of criticism by Peirce of Descartes. You should have received comments on your blog entry before writing this essay, comments from classmates on this paper, and comments from me on the paper itself. You should modify your paper on the basis of these remarks.

Format

Your paper should follow the following format:

Section 1. Introduction

Explain the topic of your paper and note your principal goals/aims/theses.

Sections 2–4

Try to divide your goals/theses/aims in distinct sections that are either demarcated by section titles (e.g. *Section 1*) or distinct paragraphs that appropriately signify that they address a new point (e.g. The *second* tenet of classical foundationalism states that x, y, z. In the *Discourse on Method*, Descartes holds all three of these positions for he writes x, and then in arguing for x, claims y and z).

Section 5 Conclusion

Summarize the preceding.

Layout Details

Paper Specification: 2-3 pages, 1.5 or 2 spacing, 12-font, Times New Roman, standard 1 inch margins. The Title and Identifying Information about your paper should be formatted as follows:

David W. Agler
PHIL125W – Writing Assignment #1
[Date]

Justified, True Belief is Not Knowledge

[Start 1.5 or 2 spacing]

Other Questions

1. Do I need to quote or cite the texts?

You should keep quotations to an absolute minimum. Instead, try and summarize the contents in your own words. However, whenever you are summarizing you should *cite* the paper and/or page you are summarizing, e.g. (Gettier 1963:121).

2. Do I need a reference (or Works-Cited) section?

Yes, but it does not need to be extremely detailed. Make sure you have the major elements: Author Name. Year Published. Title of Book/Article. Place of Publication or Journal Title, etc. If you are unsure about formatting citations, take a look at [KnightCite](#).

3. Are you grading for correct grammar and spelling?

Yes and no. Improper grammar and bad spelling will likely make your essay difficult to understand, and this will in turn affect how clearly you demonstrate your understanding of the topic.

4. Are there any practices I should avoid?

a. Try not to make generalizations about the history of philosophy, widespread opinion in philosophy, or trivial statements about what occurs in philosophy

- As most arguments in philosophy go, there are always two sides ...
- It is widespread opinion in philosophy ...
- From the dawn of time, people have tried to discover what knowledge is ...
- Defining knowledge is a huge part of philosophical study ...
- Foundationalism is argued for by many philosophers, ...

b. Don't utter something that is controversial or attack someone else's argument unless you are willing to argue for it.

- No matter how the definition of knowledge is argued it is impossible to ever come up with one correct definition.
- Descartes's argument for the existence of God is based on a faulty scientific method, he believes in God because of the time-period in which he wrote, and relies upon the fact that everyone he is writing to already believes in God.
 - This is not informative. What is wrong with Descartes's argument? Is there any way it could be improved, where is its principal weakness?

c. Don't end your paper with a question.

- So, in conclusion Descartes's argument is pretty complicated and could be reworked into a successful one, don't you think?

d. Use Italics.

- If you need to emphasize, use *italics*. Don't underline and don't **bold**.