Philosophy 111/20: Contemporary Moral Issues
Zachary 333A
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Course Objectives: This introductory course starts with a brief look at two of the most influential theories of value, Mill’s utilitarianism and Kant’s deontological theory of right action. These theories of value will help us in two ways. First, because most of the arguments that we shall read fall under utilitarian or Kantian traditions, they will help us to understand the rest of the course authors. Second, Mill and Kant provide theories of value under which we can begin to build a construcrive moral debate. Notably, each theory gives us an account of the moral value of particular actions under which moral reasons are equally available to all of us. Some of us may ultimately decide that we simply cannot productively discuss sensitive issues like abortion and capital punishment. On such a perspective, my beliefs about the good are based upon reasons or feelings that, in some cases, I simply cannot communicate to you. The point of this course, however, is to see what progress we can make in understanding the reasoning of others and in building moral views that others can understand and appreciate.

Texts: Judith Boss (ed.), Analyzing Moral Issues
Immanuel Kant, Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals
John Stuart Mill, Utilitarianism

Requirements:

2 Area Papers (25% each): The area papers will give students an opportunity to defend particular positions on given topics. They will be 3-4 pages in length. The quality of the argument, the expression of understanding of course texts, and the clarity of writing will be the basis of the paper grades. Only university approved excuses are acceptable for late papers. Papers turned in late without university approved excuses will be penalized a full letter grade for each day late.

Area Paper 1 due: 11/3
Area Paper 2 due: 12/6

10 in class exercises (2% each): Various exercises designed to promote discussion.

3 Exams (10% each): The exams will test students’ knowledge of course material, including facts about various issues that will be presented in class. Students will be responsible for knowing: 1. Course authors’ positions and arguments. 2. Facts about the issues presented in supplementary readings during the course. 3. All lecture material. Only university approved excuses are acceptable for missed exams.

Exam 1: 9/27
Exam 2: 10/27
Exam 3: 12/1
Assigned Reading:

**Area One: Theories of Value**

*Week One (8/29-9/2):* Introduction and *Utilitarianism*

*Week Two (9/5-9/9):* *Utilitarianism*

*Week Three (9/12-9/16):* *Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals*

*Week Four (9/19-9/23):* *Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals.*

**Area Two: Biomedical Ethics**


*Week Seven (10/10-10/14):* Euthanasia, cont. Readings from Boss: Callahan, “Aid in Dying’':The Social Dimensions;” Hardwig, “Is there a duty to die?”


**Area Three: Social Justice**


**Paper 2 Due 12/6**
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The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you believe you have a disability requiring accommodation, please contact the Department of Student Life, Services for Students with Disabilities in Cain Hall, Rm. B118, or call 845-1637.

Aggie Honor Code
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Students are responsible for knowing the Honor Code and the Honor Council Rules and Procedures. They may be found at http://www.tamu.edu/aggiehonor.