

**CAMOSUN COLLEGE**  
*School of Arts & Science*  
*Humanities*

*Phil 202, Contemporary Moral Issues*  
*Winter, 2005*

**COURSE OUTLINE**

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*Please note: This outline will not be kept indefinitely. It is recommended students keep this outline for your records.*

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**1. Instructor Information**

- (a) Instructor: Karen Shirley
- (b) Office hours: Monday and Wednesday: 8:30 – 9:20; Monday, Tuesday and Thursday: 11:30 – 12:20
- (c) Location: Young 320
- (d) Phone: 370 3518                      Home: 3838164

**2. Intended Learning Outcomes**

- i) Students will be able to describe and evaluate classic and modern moral theories
- ii) Students will be able to describe the resolutions to moral dilemmas that are implied by classic and modern moral theories
- iii) Students will be able to assess various arguments for differing positions on contemporary moral issues
- iv) Students will be able to reason in more sophisticated ways

**3. Required Materials**

- (a) Texts  
Handout called *Philosophy 202*

If your grammar needs work, you may wish to purchase a small style guide with a section on common errors in grammar and usage.

**4. Basis of Student Assessment (Weighting)**

Mid-term Exam (Closed-book).....	25%
Final (Final exam period - closed-book).....	25%
Paper (Due one week before you do your debate).....	20%
Debate.....	20%
Four verbal comments made on debates (Worth 2.5% each).....	10%

**Note:** Double-space. Illegible or *hard-to read* exams/papers will have marks deducted. Capitalise traditionally or lose marks. Keep *all* marked assignments in case there is a discrepancy between your record of your marks and my record of your marks.

**5. Grading System**

The following percentage conversion to letter grade will be used:

A+ = 95 - 100%	B = 75 - 79%	D = 50 - 59%
A = 90 - 94%	B- = 70 - 74%	F = 0.0 - 49%
A- = 85 - 89%	C+ = 65 - 69%	
B+ = 80 - 84%	C = 60 - 64%	

## 6. Course Content and Schedule

### Formatting Assignments and Exams

1. Put the following information on each assignment:
  - a) your student number and your seminar letter (“A” or “B”);
2. Write on both sides of the page, where more than one page is required, and double-space.

### Exams

*You should always bring your course outline, a dictionary and, if you need one, a style guide.. You should also familiarize yourself with the last page of this course outline for guidance on some errors in English usage that may cost you marks.*

**Mid-term and Final Exams:** The exams are one hour long, closed-book and each is worth 25% of your course mark. You will be asked to answer one of the study questions from one of the two lists below. You will also be asked to make an argument on one of the debate/paper topics. The final is not cumulative.

**Paper:** The paper is worth 20% of your final grade. Argue for or against the topic statement that you have been assigned to debate. You don’t need to take the same side that you take on the debate. Papers must be typed. You may print out your paper on the blank side of used paper. No title pages. The paper should be between 1000 and 1500 words long and, since conciseness is a virtue, do not feel obliged to aim at 1500 words. Grammar and spelling count and 5% per day will be deducted from late papers which don’t have a doctor’s note attached.

You may rewrite your paper if you do not like the grade you get on it. In order to get a rewrite marked, you must submit both the original paper and the rewrite within a week of getting the mark for the original. If you radically change your paper in the process of rewriting it, some of my comments on the original paper may become redundant. Nevertheless, you must hand in the original paper with the rewrite.

**Participation after Debates:** Each instance of participation is worth up to 2.5%. Only four instances count and you should indicate to me that you want a comment to count when you are about to make it. You may provide constructive criticism or praise, suggest alternative arguments, comment on the quality of the contributions and so on. Questions will not usually be sufficient for a participation mark, as they do not usually require much thought.

**Debates:** You are required to participate in a debate which is worth 20% of your final grade.

During the first class, students will be divided into groups of two to four people. One or two people in each group will take either the pro or con position on a chosen topic. Each group will be given a topic and a date on which to debate.

You will be graded on the strength of your arguments, the knowledge you show on the topic and your ability to present your arguments in a way that helps other students understand the relevant issues.

**Do not read out your presentation or any other part of the debate. If you do read, you will automatically lose 5 of the 20 marks.** You may *occasionally* refer to notes.

Handouts are forbidden.

If you are at a loss as to what arguments have been made on the topic, see the *Encyclopaedia of Philosophy* (a reference book in the library) for a start. See me, if you need to do so, well in advance, for additional advice. Some of the topics require knowledge of factual information. Ensure that you know this information. Once you have an idea of what issues are at stake and of some of the arguments that have been presented on the topic, you should spend time *thinking for yourself* on the topic. What do *you* think the truth of the matter is? Why?

## Structure of Debates

Be concise: You don't have time to verbally meander around.

### First,

- a) Pro side: *one strong* argument in favour of the claim. (Speak for up to two minutes.)
- b) Con side: objection to the above argument. (Speak for up to thirty seconds.)
- c) Pro side: response to the above objection. (Speak for up to thirty seconds.)
- d) Con side: objection to above response or a second objection to the pro side's original argument. (Speak for up to thirty seconds.)
- e) Pro side: response to the second objection. (Speak for up to thirty seconds.)

### Second,

Repeat steps one through five above, beginning with the con side this time.

### Third,

Pro and con sides now address points put to them by the class.

## SCHEDULE

You are expected to have done the readings *before* the class in which they are covered.

**Jan. 11:** administration

**Jan 13:** metaethical theories

1 **St. Q:** characterize whichever of the following positions I pick and present a strong objection to it: objectivism, relativism, subjectivism, emotivism, teleological, deontological, ethical egoism, psychological egoism, utilitarianism, virtue ethics contractarianism.

**Jan 18:** **Issue:** Euthanasia and suicide ; **Reading:** Active and Passive Euthanasia

2 **St/ Q:** Under what circumstances is suicide immoral?

**Jan. 20:** Cont'd

3 **St. Q:** Is active euthanasia morally worse than passive euthanasia? Explain.

**Jan. 25:** **Issue:** Abortion; **Reading:** In Defense of Abortion and Infanticide

4. **St. Q:** In plain English, describe Tooley's second argument against the modified potentiality principle.

**Jan. 27:** **Theory:** Self interest versus morality; **Reading:** The Supremacy of Moral Reasons

5. **St. Q.:** Why does Baier think that one should enter into the theoretical task of deliberation?

**Feb. 1:** Cont'd

**Feb 3:** **Theory:** Moral Relativism; **Reading:** Moral Relativism Defended

6. **St. Q.:** Harman's view is that in the second hereditary slave society, it isn't true that the slaves ought to be freed. How does the moral repugnance of this view form the basis of an objection to it?

**Feb. 8:** Cont'd

**Feb. 15: Theory:** Kantianism; **Reading:** Good Will, Duty and the Categorical Imperative

7. **St. Q.:** Describe Kantianism.

**Feb. 17:** Cont'd

**Feb. 22 MID-TERM EXAM**

**Feb. 24: Theory:** Pluralistic Deontology; **Reading:** Prima Facie Duty

1. **St. Q.:** Describe Ross's view.

**Mar. 1: Theory:** Utilitarianism; **Reading:** The Structure of Ethics and Morals

2. **St. Q.:** What role does universalizability play in Hare's argument in *The Structure of Ethics and Morals*?

**Mar. 3:** Cont'd

**Mar. 8: Theory:** Utilitarianism; **Reading:** Issues for Utilitarians

3. **St. Q.:** Explain Sidgwick's view on what the utilitarian should say about an act which is morally morally right but which may set a bad example to others.

**Mar. 10:** Cont'd

**Mar. 15: Theory:** Virtue ethics; **Reading:** After Virtue

4. **St. Q.:** Can MacIntyre specify the human good clearly enough to aid in the resolution of value conflict?

**Mar. 17:** Cont'd

**Mar. 22: Theory:** Contractarianism; **Reading:** A Theory of Justice

5. **St. Q.:** Describe Rawls' position.

**Mar. 24:** Cont'd

**Mar. 29: Theory:** Contractarianism; **Reading:** Why Contractarianism?

6. **St. Q.:** Explain the last paragraph on page 6 of Gauthier's paper, in words a non-philosophy student could understand.

**Mar. 31:** Cont'd

**Ap. 5: Issue:** Obligations to starving people; **Reading:** Famine, Affluence and Morality

7. **St. Q.:** Describe the *reductio ad absurdum* that can be made against both versions of Singer's principle.

**Ap. 7:** Cont'd

**Ap. 12: Issue:** antidepressants; **Reading:** Listening to Prozac: A Psychiatrist Explores Antidepressant Drugs and the Remaking of Self

8. **St. Q.:**

**Ap. 14:** Cont'd

### Seminar Schedule

**Jan. 11/13** - exercise to find out what sorts of things your *moral intuition* tells you are moral patients

**Jan. 18/20** - overview of the classic ethical theories

**Jan. 25/27** - **Issue:** Legal punishment and free will; **Reading:** Punishment  
**Debate/Paper topic:** People have free will.

**Feb. 1/3** - **Issue:** Terrorism; **Reading:** Terrorism and Morality  
**Debate/Paper topic:** Terrorism is always immoral.

**Feb. 8** - **Issue:** The value of culture; **Reading:** None  
**Debate/Paper topic:** All cultures are worthy of respect. (Note that *prima facie*, a group of people can be distinguished from their culture.)

**Feb. 15/17** – **Issue:** Culture and genetics; **Reading:** None  
**Debate/Paper topic:** One’s skin colour or cultural background should not be taken into consideration when one is being assessed as a possible adopting parent of an infant.

**Feb. 24** : The value of culture; **Reading:** None  
**Debate/Paper topic:** All cultures are worthy of respect. (Note that *prima facie*, a group of people can be distinguished from their culture.)

**Mar. 1/3** - **Issue:** Environmentalism; **Reading:** Philosophical Problems for Environmentalism  
**Debate/Paper topic:** Environmental values are really aesthetic values.

**Mar. 8/10** - **Issue:** Immoral thoughts?; **Reading:** Pornography and Fantasy  
**Debate/Paper topic:** Failing to resist having certain fantasies is immoral.

**Mar. 15/17** – **Issue:** Freedom of thought and discussion; **Reading:** Of the Liberty of Thought and Discussion  
**Debate/Paper topic:** Post-secondary students have a moral right to express their racist, sexist or homophobic views in classrooms.

**Mar. 22/24** - **Issue:** What is sex for?; **Reading:** Plain Sex  
**Debate/Paper topic:** Sex change procedures should be insured by the medical insurance plan.

**Mar. 29/31** - **Issue:** The value of sexual fidelity; **Reading:** Monogamy: A Critique  
**Debate/Paper topic:** Sexual fidelity benefits people in a way, or ways, which cannot be duplicated by participating in other practices.

**Ap. 5/7** - **Issue:** Affirmative Action; **Reading:** A Defense of Programs of Preferential Treatment.  
**Debate/Paper topic:** Affirmative action is unjust. (Note: claims about what is ‘just’ or ‘unjust’ presuppose a deontological framework.)

**Ap. 12/14** - Review

**Note that failing to follow the following rules may cost you marks.**

1. Do not use the first or second person on your exams. Here are two examples of the first person: “**We** cannot pass students who cannot use the English language adequately,” and “**I** cannot pass students who cannot use the English language adequately.” Here is an example of the second person: “**You** don’t realise that it is not our fault that we were not taught how to write in high school.” The following are examples of sentences written in the third person. “**People** cannot pass the buck forever.” “**One** will find that a style guide is essential in university.”
2. Do not ask rhetorical questions.
3. Do not use a pronoun which disagrees with the noun it refers to. You should try to use gender neutral language in this course, although failure to do so will not result in a lower grade. At first, this effort may result in a number of cases of pronoun disagreement. In many cases, pronoun disagreement can be avoided through the use of plural nouns. Here is an example of a sentence in which the pronoun disagrees with the noun: “**A philosopher** should not be so picky about English; **they** are not English teachers.” Here is the corrected version: “**Philosophers** should not be so picky about English; **they** are not English teachers.”
4. Do not confuse “its” with “it’s.” Since you are not allowed to use contractions, you should never use “it’s.”
5. Do not confuse “their” with “there.”
6. Do not add “ly” to “first,” “second” and so on.
7. Do not forget possessive apostrophes and do not put them in the wrong place.
8. Do not use abbreviations or a contractions.
9. Do not use “e. g.”; use “for example.”
10. Do not use “etc.”; use “and so on.”
11. Do not use “i.e.”; use “that is.” Better yet, say it clearly the first time.
12. Do not use the upper-case where the lower case is standard. 5% will be deducted from a student’s exam if he or she makes this mistake.
13. Do not misspell the following words:
  - despite
  - argument (*one* “e”)
  - philosophy
  - Socrates
  - Descartes

### **LEARNING SUPPORT AND SERVICES FOR STUDENTS**

There are a variety of services available for students to assist them throughout their learning. This information is available in the College Calendar, Registrar’s Office or the College web site at <http://www.camosun.bc.ca>

### **ACADEMIC CONDUCT POLICY**

There is an Academic Conduct Policy **which includes plagiarism**. It is the student’s responsibility to become familiar with the content of this policy. The policy is available in each School Administration Office, Registration, and on the College web site in the Policy Section.

[www.camosun.bc.ca/divisions/pres/policy/2-education/2-5.html](http://www.camosun.bc.ca/divisions/pres/policy/2-education/2-5.html)