



SAINT LOUIS UNIVERSITY
MADRID

Topics in Ethics: Applying Ethics

PHIL 4310 - M01, fall 2017

Course details

Meeting times: Tues. & Thurs. from 2:30 to 3:45

Classroom: Padre Arrupe Hall 24

Dates: 5 Sept. – 18 Dec. (dates of first class session and final exam)

Prerequisite: PHIL 2050: Ethics

Credits: 3

Professor: Jawara Sanford, Ph.D.

Office location: San Ignacio Hall 315 (3rd floor¹)

Office hours: Tues. & Thurs. 12:20 – 12:50 in PRH2 or my office. I will usually be in my office; but, if I am not, I am helping a student in PRH2 or I am on my way from there to my office. I am also available briefly after each class session and by appointment for students with classes that coincide with my office hours.

E-mail: jawara.sanford@slu.edu. Please write “PHIL-4310” in the “subject” area of your e-mail messages to ensure that they do not look like spam. I respond to all e-mails so that you can be sure that I have received your message. So, if you do not receive a reply within a day or two, assume that for some strange reason your message has not reached me.

Office phone number: 91-554-5858, ext. 235 (useful mainly during office hours)

Course description

1 Philosophy is rationally critical, careful thinking about the big questions. Ethics, which is one of the main fields of thought within philosophy, applies this same sort of distinctive thinking to various kinds of moral questions. The field of ethics—also known as “moral philosophy”—may itself be divided into the subfields of (1) normative ethics, (2) metaethics, and (3) applied ethics. The first of these three subfields is devoted to accurately identifying broadly applicable fundamental ethical principles and norms, such as the norm requiring truthfulness. The aim of the second—metaethics—is to answer deep philosophical questions about the concepts, assumptions, goals... of the first. The point of the third—applied ethics—is to provide answers to comparatively narrow ethical questions about particular moral issues. In many cases these answers involve applying to these issues the principles and norms identified within normative ethics. The philosophical methodologies of applied ethics and the other subfields of ethics provide the most enlightened way of seeking well-grounded answers to ethical questions and, hence, of dispelling doubts about moral matters and moving beyond mere preconceptions and prejudice.

2 In this particular course we will tackle particular moral issues that center on (1) world hunger and poverty, (2) abortion, (3) sexual morality, (4) animal rights, (5) procreation, and (6) the death penalty. (Of these six topics, that of animal rights will receive the least attention in this course because S.L.U. Madrid offers a semester course that focuses on this topic.) To gain a deeper philosophical perspective on these issues, at especially relevant times during the semester we will also consider these issues in relationship to some cardinal ethical theories (from the subfield of normative ethics): utilitarianism, Kantian ethics, virtue ethics, natural law theory, and ethics of prima facie duty. Let us now consider each of the six aforementioned particular moral issues.

2.1 According to the World Bank, in 2014 1.2 billion people were living in extreme poverty, in other words, they did not have enough income to meet their most basic needs. On the one hand, most people believe that we have some sort of “duty of beneficence” to, for example, family members. On the other, many people also believe that we have a duty of beneficence to more or less distant people in dire need,

¹ In Spain (and elsewhere) the ground floor is considered to be floor 0.

although there is considerable disagreement over the extent of this duty. Do we indeed have such a duty? Supposing we do, what exactly is the content, the strength, and the basis of the duty?

2.2 As Lewis Vaughn points out, “Views on abortion—whether by church, state, or citizenry—have varied dramatically through time and across cultures.” As for the present and the United States, according to a rather recent poll, 35% of adults thought that abortion should be “legal in most cases,” while 30% held that it should be “illegal in most cases.” Another 15% responded that it should be “illegal in all cases,” while 19% held that it should be “legal in all cases.” In 1973 the Supreme Court decision in *Roe v. Wade* made many abortions legal, declaring, among other things, that no state may ban abortions that are performed before viability. Since then the Supreme Court has circumscribed to some extent the right to abortion but has not invalidated the decision in *Roe v. Wade*.¹ In the U.S. in 2014, 19% of pregnancies (excluding miscarriages, i.e., spontaneous abortions) ended in abortion.² At what stages in fetal development—if any—and for what reasons—if any—is abortion ever morally permissible, and why? We will consider “conservative,” “liberal,” and “moderate” responses to these questions.

2.3 Sexual activities include adultery, contraception, heterosexual intercourse, masturbation, sex with multiple partners, homosexuality, premarital sex, and others. What sexually activities are morally permissible or impermissible? And under what conditions are they permissible or not? And, finally, what is it precisely that *makes* them morally acceptable or not? A very conservative position may hold, e.g., that all sexual activity must be restricted to legally married couples of different sexes and must aim at procreation. On the other hand, a much more liberal position may hold, e.g., that homosexual sex, premarital sex, sex with multiple partners, and heterosexual intercourse with contraception are all morally permissible *provided that* specific cases of engagement in these activities do not infringe any widely applicable valid moral rules governing human relations in general, such as the rules against deception and harming others. We will consider, among other things, both conservative and liberal positions.

2.4 In the United States 9.2 billion cattle, chickens, ducks, hogs, sheep, lambs, and turkeys were slaughtered in 2015.³ Humans also use (non-human) animals for experimentation, clothing, entertainment, and companionship. According to a survey in 2007, 72% of the adults in the U.S. believed that “animals deserve some protection from harm and exploitation but it is still appropriate to use them for the benefit of humans” and 25% believed that “animals deserve the exact same rights as people to be free from harm and exploitation.” Do we have duties *to* animals? If so, what exactly is the basis and the extent of these duties? Do we have, for example, a duty not to support “factory farming”?

2.5 In her introduction to *Permissible Progeny?*, Sarah Hannan asserts that “many individuals do not seriously consider *whether to become parents*.” The fact, e.g., that almost half of the pregnancies in the U.S. are unintended suggests that she is correct.⁴ Whatever the case may be, the decision of whether to become a parent is one of the most important ones that a person can make. And it is a decision that raises many relevant questions. On the one hand, it raises questions about the value of procreation *for* the person who is procreated. Can causing someone to exist benefit this person? *Supposing* that it can, under what conditions does it do so? On the other hand, procreation also affects people other than the procreated person. For example, procreation may contribute to overpopulation or global warming, thereby diminishing or spoiling resources needed by others. It may also fail to provide adoptable children with the opportunity to be raised by parents. It may contribute to the well-being of the parents. In light of these and other considerations, when is procreation wrong, permissible, or even obligatory?

2.6 In a Gallup poll in 2016, 60% of Americans said that they were in favor of the death penalty for persons convicted of murder.⁵ On the other hand, in the world there are 141 “abolitionist” countries as opposed to 57 “retentionist” countries.⁶ No more than 23 countries were known to have carried out judicial executions in 2016. Is the death penalty ever a morally permissible form of punishment? If it ever is or never is, what explains why it sometimes is or never is? Retribution? Deterrence or a lack thereof? Prevention? The inherent worth of persons? We will consider these and other questions when we discuss arguments in favor of and against the death penalty.

¹ See course book, p. 122.

² www.guttmacher.org

³ www.humanesociety.org

⁴ www.guttmacher.org

⁵ www.gallup.com

⁶ “Abolitionist” countries include “abolitionists for ordinary crimes” and “abolitionists in practice.” For more details see deathpenaltyinfo.org.

Learning Objectives

Students who take advantage of the opportunities that this course provides will progress in (1) developing well-informed, critical, well-reasoned views on the abovementioned ethical issues and (2) gaining a greater ability to think productively about ethical questions in general. More specifically, these students will gain

- a basic understanding of the nature of the aforementioned issues, including an understanding of some of the central questions involved in each one;
- familiarity with differing responses to these questions;
- knowledge of relevant and useful distinctions and concepts, such as the concepts of personhood, speciesism, natural law theory, mere use, supererogation, and consequentialism;
- knowledge of key arguments and theories, such as the personhood argument for abortion or the retributivism argument for the death penalty;
- understanding of some of the relations between, on the one hand, various ethical theories and, on the other, particular ethical issues, such as relations between the utilitarianism and world hunger or relations between Thomistic natural law theory and sex; and
- understanding some common methodological aspects of philosophical reasoning within the field of applied ethics, such as (the method of) appealing to “common-sense morality,” drawing elucidative analogies, applying plausible ethical theories to specific problems, adducing counterexamples, and appealing to hypothetical cases.

These students will also make progress in improving their ability to

- identify, comprehend, and critically evaluate arguments in applied-ethics texts;
- creatively develop critical, well-reasoned positions of their own on these matters; and
- understand and critique ethical thought in general.

Main course book

Lewis Vaughn, ed. *Contemporary Moral Arguments: Readings in Ethical Issues*, 2nd ed. Oxford University Press, 2013.

Other useful texts

Mark Timmons, ed. *Disputed Moral Issues: A Reader*, 2nd ed. Oxford University Press, 2011.

Alan Soble & Nicholas Power, eds. *The Philosophy of Sex: Contemporary Readings*, 5th ed. Rowman & Littlefield, 2008.

Reading and discussion schedule

All readings not marked with “sup.” (for “supplementary”) are in the main course book: Contemporary Moral Arguments: Readings in Ethical Issues, 2nd ed.

Disagreement

- Handout on this topic

World Hunger and Poverty

- Peter Singer, *The life you can save* (excerpts) (sup.) & Food First, “World Hunger: Ten Myths” (sup.).
- John Arthur, “Equality, Entitlements, and Distribution of Income” (excerpt) (sup.).
- Lewis Vaughn, “Utilitarianism,” 64-66.
- Onara O’Neill, “The Moral Perplexities of Famine and World Hunger” (sup.)
- Lewis Vaughn, “Kantian Ethics,” 68-69 & Kant, “Fundamental Principles. . .,” 92-93.

Abortion

- Lewis Vaughn, “Abortion,” 118-24.
- Mary Anne Warren, “On the Moral and Legal Status of Abortion,” 126-30.
- Stephen Schwarz, “The Being in the Womb is a Person,” 130-39.
- Louis P. Pojman, “Abortion: A Defense of the Personhood Argument,” 140-47.
- Judith Jarvis Thomson, “A Defense of Abortion,” 183-93.
- Francis J. Beckwith, “Arguments from Bodily Rights,” 193-201.

Sexual Morality

- Raja Halwani, “Virtue Ethics and Adultery” (sup.)
- Lewis Vaughn, “Virtue Ethics,” 73-74.
- Alan Sobel, *The Philosophy of Sex and Love*, 2nd ed., 24-30, 69-70, 72-73, 89-92. (excerpts on St. Augustine & St. Thomas Aquinas) (sup.).
- Lewis Vaughn, “Natural Law Theory,” 69-71.
- *Vatican Declaration on Some Questions of Sexual Ethics* (short excerpt) (sup.).
- John Corvino, *What is Wrong with Homosexuality?* (excerpt) (sup.).
- Thomas A. Mappes, “Sexual Morality and the Concept of Using Another Person” (sup.).
- Howard Klepper, “Sexual Exploitation and the Value of Persons” (sup.).

Animal Rights

- James Rachels, “The Moral Argument for Vegetarianism,” 617-22.
- W.D. Ross, *The Right and the Good* (brief excerpt) (sup.).
- Mary Anne Warren, “The Rights of the Nonhuman World,” 605-14.

Procreation

- Derek Parfit, “Whether Causing Someone to Exist Can Benefit this Person” (sup.).
- Gerald K. Harrison & Julia Tanner, “None” (sup.).
- Elizabeth Brake, “Creation Theory: Do Genetic Ties Matter?” (sup.).

The Death Penalty

- Lewis Vaughn, “The Death Penalty,” 348-352.
- Igor Primoratz, “A Life for a Life,” 356-62.
- Stephen Nathanson, “An Eye for an Eye?,” 362-67 plus a supplementary excerpt from the original text.
- Ernest van den Haag, “On Deterrence and the Death Penalty,” 381-88.
- Hugo Adam Bedau, “Capital Punishment and Social Defense,” 388-93.
- Jeffrey H. Reiman, “Justice, Civilization, and the Death Penalty: Answering van de Haag” (excerpt) (sup.).

Please note that this schedule is subject to changes and we may not have time to complete it.

Readings

At the very beginning of each class session, the professor will announce the reading for the next class session, if there is one. Students who arrive late or are absent are responsible for finding out what reading, if any, was assigned for the next class.

Summary of course requirements

- Reading this syllabus
- Three essay exams: two midterm exams and a final exam.
- Quizzes
- Classroom participation (see section below for details)
- Returning all *graded* exams and quizzes to the professor

Exams

All exams will be composed of questions taken from a list of possible exam questions that will be handed out before the days of the exams. Please note that the classes and the readings—and, if necessary, the office hours—should be taken advantage of, so that any questions about the course subject matter are cleared up *before* the possible exam questions are handed out. Note also that the expected quality of the answers to the exam questions will be higher than it would have been, had the questions not been available prior to the exams.

Excellent responses to the exam questions will be complete, precise, and well-organized. In responding to the exam questions, the most effective strategy to use is to seek to show that the readings, the lectures, and the classroom discussions were taken full advantage of. When exam questions ask for your view on a topic, an excellent response will provide a reasoned, clear, well-organized, and appropriately knowledgeable answer. Note that, in formulating all of your responses to exam questions, it is essential to think constantly about the reader’s point of view, asking yourself what you have to say so that the reader will follow and understand you well. In general, once one has figured out what ideas one wants to convey, one still needs to devote a good deal of thought to determining how to express those ideas so that someone *else* will understand them.

General advice

Philosophy professors frequently find that a number of students overestimate how well they understand course material. The ability to avoid this sort of overestimation is one that is improved over time. To work towards avoiding such overestimation, students can conscientiously try to be careful and precise in assimilating course material. They can also keep in mind that one does not really know a set of ideas until one is capable explaining them to someone else in such a way that this other person ends up having a clear understanding of them. Note that the exams in this course will include the following instructions: “In responding to the questions, remember to formulate your answers in such a way that someone who knows nothing about the subject matter would understand them well.” These instructions will be taken into consideration when the exams are graded.

Exam dates

- 1st midterm exam: 5 Oct. (Thurs.)
- 2nd midterm exam: 14 Nov. (Tues.)
- Final exam: 18 Dec. at 12:00 (Mon.)

Note that the final exam will not require the three hours allotted by the university.

Quizzes

Brief and fairly simple unannounced quizzes will be given at the *very beginning* of various class sessions throughout the semester. The point of the quizzes is to give students credit for doing the course readings, which are an indispensable part of the course. There are three possible grades on the quizzes. The main ones are “pass” and “fail.” For exceptional cases, there is also the possibility of “fail – 2.” This grade is only for those exceptional cases in which it is evident that the answer given to the quiz question is simply made up in an attempt to make it look as though the reading has been done even though it has not been read at all. To pass a quiz it is necessary to be present to take the quiz; however, a quiz that is missed on account of an excused absence or an excused late arrival will not be counted. A maximum of two quizzes will be counted as excused.¹ For the sake of their grade in this class, *students should be sure to notify the professor of any excused absences*. There will be a quiz on *approximately* half of the readings. As for the grading system, the first failed quiz subtracts 10 percentage points from 100, and the second subtracts an additional 10 points.² The rest of the grading system will be such as to prevent zero passes from being worth more than zero points.

Class participation

Any form of participation that enriches the class—such as useful participation in class discussions and apropos comments and questions—counts toward a high grade in class participation. This grade will reflect both the quantity and the quality of class participation. Students may rest assured that the professor keeps records of class participation, instead of relying solely on memory. Conduct that any professor would deem detrimental and unfitting for a university class—such as untimely chatting, frequent tardiness, or inappropriate uses of laptops or mobile phones—may lower the class-participation grade. As for absences, repeated absences may lower the class-participation grade.

Absences

For absences to be counted as excused—such as absences due to field trips—, students should inform the professor of the absences *before* the absences takes place. If this is not possible, the professor should be notified by the next class session at the latest.³

Classroom discussion constitutes a substantial component of this course. For this and other reasons, missing *fewer than* a dozen class sessions is a requirement for *merely passing* this course, *regardless of what the absences may be due to*.

¹ If any additional quizzes are missed on account of an excused absence, the completion of an extra assignment will be required to make up for these quizzes.

² If there are more than 10 quizzes and/or there are excused absences that must be taken into consideration, this procedure will be slightly modified.

³ An *unexcused* absence from an exam will result in a penalty of 25 percentage points on any make-up exam, and any make-up exam due to unexcused absence must be done within two weeks of the original exam date.

Etiquette

Except on exceptional occasions, there should never be more than one person talking at a time. For the good of *other students* and the instructor, students are kindly requested to try to avoid arriving late or temporarily leaving the classroom while the class is in session.

The overall grade

The grade for class participation will be worth 17% of the overall grade, if the former raises the latter. If it does not, it will be worth 6% of the overall grade. Accordingly, the overall grade will be determined in one of the following two ways:

17% class participation		6% class participation
20% quizzes		22% quizzes
21% 1 st midterm exam	or	24% 1 st midterm exam
21% 2 nd midterm		24% 2 nd midterm
21% final exam		24% final exam

N.B. Some students may require at least a C grade to obtain credit for this course from their home campus. If you are one of these students, it would be prudent to work toward getting your desired grade starting from day one. Please recall that professors are expected not to assign grades on the basis of criteria external to their courses.

Extra credit

If (a) the grades on the second midterm and the final exam are both greater than the grade on the first midterm and (b) the difference between the first exam grade and each of the last two exam grades is 11, 12, 13, . . . or 20 percentage points, then in the calculation of the overall grade for the course the grade on the first midterm will automatically be counted as being 1, 2, 3, . . . or 10 percentage points higher, respectively. If the last two exam grades are not identical—which is highly likely—the grade closest to the first exam grade will be used to establish the extent of the aforementioned difference.

In addition, there is a second possible form of extra credit. If (1) a student's class participation—with regard to both quantity and especially quality—goes well beyond what is necessary for a score of 100 and (2) the participation is *also* strongly suggestive of exceptional philosophical promise, then the participation grade will be made to count for as much as 25% of the overall grade.

Please note that the foregoing are the only possible forms of extra credit.

Grading scale

100 - 93: A	83 - 86.99: B	70 - 72.99: C-
90 - 92.99: A-	80 - 82.99: B-	60 - 69.99: D
87 - 89.99: B+	. . .	0 - 59.99: F

Important dates

- 17 Sept.: last day to “drop” a class without a grade of “W” and/or “add” a class, and last day to choose “audit” (AU) or “satisfactory/unsatisfactory” (S/U) options.
- 30 Oct.: last day to “drop” a class and receive a grade of “W.”
- 2 Nov.: Spring registration opens.

Holidays affecting *this* course: 12 Oct. (Thurs.) & 9 Nov. (Thurs.)

“The University’s Academic Integrity Statement”

“Academic integrity is honest, truthful and responsible conduct in all academic endeavors. The mission of Saint Louis University is “the pursuit of truth for the greater glory of God and for the service of humanity.” Accordingly, all acts of falsehood demean and compromise the corporate endeavors of teaching, research, health care and community service via which SLU embodies its mission. The University strives to prepare students for lives of personal and professional integrity, and therefore regards all breaches of academic integrity as matters of serious concern.

“The governing University-level Academic Integrity Policy can be accessed on the Provost’s Office website at <https://www.slu.edu/the-office-of-the-provost/academic-affairs-policies>.

Additionally, SLU-Madrid has posted its academic integrity policy online: <https://www.slu.edu/madrid/academics/student-resources/academic-advising/policies-and-procedures#43>. As a member of the University community, you are expected to know and abide by these policies, which detail definitions of violations, processes for reporting violations, sanctions and appeals.

“The professor will review these matters during the first weeks of the term. Please direct questions about any facet of academic integrity to your faculty, the chair of the department of your academic program or the Academic Dean of the Madrid Campus.”

Note also that all violations of academic integrity will be reported to the Chair of Humanities. In consultation with the professor, the Chair will write a report, which will then be sent to the Madrid Campus Committee on Academic Honesty.

The university requests that professors explicitly specify sanctions for violations of academic integrity. Cheating on a quiz will result in an F on all quizzes. Cheating on an exam will result in an F in the course. Instead of subjecting the possibility of cheating to a cost-benefit analysis, cheating should simply be considered not to be an option.

Official statement for “Students with Special Needs”

“In recognition that people learn in a variety of ways and that learning is influenced by multiple factors (e.g., prior experience, study skills, learning disability), resources to support student success are available on campus. Students who think they might benefit from these resources can find out more about:

- Course-level support (e.g., faculty member, departmental resources, etc.) by asking your course instructor.
- University-level support (e.g., tutoring/writing services, Disability Services) by visiting the Academic Dean's Office (San Ignacio Hall) or by going to <https://www.slu.edu/madrid/campus-life/student-services/disability-services>

“Students with a documented disability who wish to request academic accommodations must contact Disability Services to discuss accommodation requests and eligibility requirements. Once successfully registered, the student also must notify the course instructor that they wish to access accommodations in the course. Please contact Disability Services at disabilityservices-madrid@slu.edu or +915 54 58 58, ext. 230 for an appointment. Confidentiality will be observed in all inquiries. Once approved, information about the student's eligibility for academic accommodations will be shared with course instructors via email from Disability Services. For more information about academic accommodations, see "Student Resources" on the SLU-Madrid webpage.

“Note: Students who do not have a documented disability but who think they may have one are encouraged to contact Disability Services.”

Official assessment statement

“Saint Louis University - Madrid Campus is committed to excellent and innovative educational practices. In order to maintain quality academic offerings and to conform to relevant accreditation requirements, the Campus regularly assesses its teaching, services, and programs for evidence of student learning outcomes achievement. For this purpose anonymized representative examples of student work from all courses and programs is kept on file, such as assignments, papers, exams, portfolios, and results from student surveys, focus groups, and reflective exercises. *Thus, copies of student work for this course, including written assignments, in-class exercises, and exams may be kept on file for institutional research, assessment and accreditation purposes.* If students prefer that Saint Louis University - Madrid Campus does not keep their work on file, they need to communicate their decision in writing to the professor.”

Official “University Title IX Statement”

“Saint Louis University and its faculty are committed to supporting our students and seeking an environment that is free of bias, discrimination, and harassment. If you have encountered any form

of sexual misconduct (e.g. sexual assault, sexual harassment, stalking, domestic or dating violence), we encourage you to report this to the University. If you speak with a faculty member about an incident of misconduct, that faculty member must notify SLU's Title IX deputy coordinator, Marta Maruri, whose office is located on the ground floor of Padre Rubio Hall, Avenida del Valle, 28 (mmaruri@slu.edu; 915-54-5858, ext. 213) and share the basic fact of your experience with her. The Title IX deputy coordinator will then be available to assist you in understanding all of your options and in connecting you with all possible resources on and off campus.

“If you wish to speak with a confidential source, you may contact the counselors at the SLU-Madrid's Counseling Services on the third floor of San Ignacio Hall (counselingcenter-madrid@slu.edu; 915-54-5858, ext. 230) or Sinews Multipletherapy Institute, the off-campus provider of counseling services for SLU-Madrid (www.sinews.es; 917-00-1979). To view SLU-Madrid's sexual misconduct policy and for resources, please visit the following web address: <http://www.slu.edu/Documents/Madrid/campus-life/SLUMadridSexualMisconductPolicy.pdf>.”

SLU E-mail

Notifications from Saint Louis University, as well as all notifications in connection with this course, will be sent to your slU.edu address. So, it is important to check your slU.edu account regularly.

Counseling Services

“At SLU-Madrid, we believe that personal well-being is essential for academic success. Students who are struggling with personal issues (e.g., relationship issues, emotional distress, mental illness, etc.) may contact SLU-Madrid Counseling Services for help. At the Counseling Center, you can receive a free consultation about issues affecting you, at which time the Counseling Center staff will help you find the appropriate follow-up services off campus.” This quote is from the Counseling Center Web page. For more information see <http://www.slu.edu/madrid/campus-life/student-services/counseling-services>.