

**PHIL 2 – Contemporary Moral Issues**  
**University of California, Riverside – Summer 2006**

Lecture: MTWR 9:40-11:00am  
Discussion Sections: R 11:00am-Noon  
Instructor: John McAteer, filmphilosopher@juno.com

**Course Description**

This course is an introduction to applied ethical reasoning through an examination of contemporary moral issues including abortion, the death penalty, and same sex marriage. The main objective of this course is for students to begin to acquire the skill of discerning the morally salient issues in complex real life situations. We will read philosopher Martha Nussbaum on how literature such as the novels of Charles Dickens can help develop our ethical skills, but in this course our primary tool will be cinema. After reading philosophical essays about ethical issues we will examine realistic complex situations (as portrayed in the ten one-hour episodes of the Polish television series *The Decalogue* directed by Krzysztof Kieslowski) and discuss the moral issues together in class.

**Texts**

REQUIRED:

1. [ISBN: 0807041092] Nussbaum, Martha C. *Poetic Justice: The Literary Imagination and Public Life* (Beacon, 1997) \$18
2. [ISBN: 1405133457] Frey, R.G., and Christopher Heath Wellman, eds. *A Companion to Applied Ethics* (Blackwell, 2003/2005) \$37

OPTIONAL:

1. [ISBN: 014143967X] Dickens, Charles. *Hard Times*. (Penguin, 2003) \$8
2. [ISBN: 0826415598] Kickasola, Joseph G. *The Films of Krzysztof Kieslowski: The Liminal Image* (Continuum, 2004) \$20

**Requirements**

Each worth 1/3 of the course grade:

1. *Semiweekly Reflection Papers*. Write 2-3 pages on the ethical issues in 8 of the 10 episodes (you need not write on episodes 1 and 10). Papers are due the next class period after the screening (either Wednesday or Monday). *No late work will be accepted.*
2. *Weekly Quizzes*. There will be short quizzes (multiple choice and short answer questions) at the beginning of each of the five discussion section meetings. *No make up quizzes will be given.*

3. *Term Paper*. Choose either abortion, the death penalty, or sexual ethics. Then read the related book listed below, and watch the related movie. Write 6-8 pages, describing the situation in the movie, the filmmaker's apparent attitude toward the situation, and what philosophers would say about it. Be sure to defend your own view on the topic. First draft due at the beginning of class Wednesday 8/30/06. Failure to bring a draft will result in your paper grade being lowered one full letter grade. The final draft is due in the philosophy office by Noon on Friday 9/1/06. *No late work will be accepted.*
- a. [ISBN: 0879759461] Baird, Robert M. and Stuart Rosenbaum, eds. *Punishment and the Death Penalty: The Current Debate* (Prometheus, 1995) \$21 (Ch 1-17) and *Dead Man Walking* (Robbins, 1995)
  - b. [ISBN: 1573928763] Baird, Robert M. and Stuart Rosenbaum, eds. *The Ethics of Abortion: Pro-Life vs. Pro-Choice*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Prometheus, 2001) \$23 (Ch 1-6, 14-15, 21-28) and *Citizen Ruth* (Payne, 1996)
  - c. [ISBN: 1591022746] Baird, Robert M. and Stuart Rosenbaum, eds. *Same Sex Marriage: The Moral and Legal Debate*, revised ed. (Prometheus, 2004) \$21 (Ch 8-37) and *Brokeback Mountain* (Lee, 2005)

## Schedule

[N=Nussbaum, FW = Frey and Wellman]

### WEEK 1: Art and Ethics

- Mon 7/31      Intro to Course
- Tues 8/1      In class movie: "Thou shalt have no other Gods before Me" (*Decalogue 1*)  
Read Martha C. Nussbaum, "The Literary Imagination" and "Fancy" in N Ch 1-2
- Wed 8/2      Read Nussbaum, "Rational Emotions" and "Poets as Judges" in N Ch 3-4 (Except p. 90-118)
- Thurs 8/3      In class movie: "Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor" (*D 8*)  
Take Quiz 1 in discussion section

### WEEK 2: Abortion

- Mon 8/7      Read Margaret Olivia Little, "Abortion" in FW Ch 23  
Turn in reflection paper on *Decalogue 8*
- Tues 8/8      In class movie: "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain" (*D 2*)  
Read Mary Anne Warren, "Moral Status" in FW Ch 32
- Wed 8/9      Turn in reflection paper on *Decalogue 2*
- Thurs 8/10    In class movie: "Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy" (*Decalogue 3*)

Take Quiz 2 in discussion section

WEEK 3: The Death Penalty

- Mon 8/14 Read Gerald F. Gaus, "Dirty Hands" in FW Ch 13  
and N. Ann Davis, "Moral Dilemmas" in FW Ch 36  
Turn in reflection paper on *Decalogue 3*
- Tues 8/15 In class movie: "Honor thy father and thy mother" (*Decalogue 4*)  
David Dolinko, "State Punishment and the Death Penalty" in FW Ch 6
- Wed 8/16 Turn in reflection paper on *Decalogue 4*
- Thurs 8/17 In class movie: "Thou shalt not kill" (*Decalogue 5*)  
Take Quiz 3 in discussion section

WEEK 4: Love and Sex

- Mon 8/21 Read Alan H. Goldman, "Sexual Ethics" in FW Ch 14  
Turn in reflection paper on *Decalogue 5*
- Tues 8/22 In class movie: "Thou shalt not commit adultery" (*Decalogue 6*)  
Read Larry Alexander, "The Legal Enforcement of Morality" in FW Ch 10
- Wed 8/23 Turn in reflection paper on *Decalogue 6*
- Thurs 8/24 In class movie: "Thou shalt not steal" (*Decalogue 7*)  
Take Quiz 4 in discussion section

WEEK 5: Personal Relationships

- Mon 8/28 Read Lawrence A. Blum, "Personal Relationships" in FW Ch 38  
Turn in reflection paper on *Decalogue 7*
- Tues 8/29 In class movie: "Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's wife" (*Decalogue 9*)  
No reading: Work on Term Paper
- Wed 8/30 Bring first draft of term paper for in class workshop  
Turn in reflection paper on *Decalogue 9*
- Thurs 8/31 In class movie: "Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's goods" (*Decalogue 10*)  
Take Quiz 5 in discussion section

Fri 9/1

No final exam: turn in final draft of term paper to philosophy office by Noon.