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Texts posted on Ares (password ‘Bioomedical’)

Course Work: 3 Take-Home Exams (33% each).

Course Requirements and Policies:

Preparation and participation – students are expected to have carefully read the assigned reading prior to the class meeting in which they are to be discussed, and are expected to participate in discussions regarding the materials. An essential part of this course is critical thought and discussion of philosophical issues – that is, doing philosophy, not just reading about it. Note that a crucial part of participation involves respect for other people in the class and for their views.

Exams – specific details regarding the format and content will be provided in the weeks prior to the exams due dates. The exams will focus on the readings and on class discussions. Late exams will be penalized, 1/3 of a grade will be taken off for every day late.

Plagiarism – plagiarism or other forms of academic dishonesty will result in a failing grade for the course. Please see me if you have any questions about proper citation or incorporation of other texts into your work.

Challenging a Grade – students are often unhappy with a grade they received. Grading exams take time and reflection and explaining the grading process does too. If you feel that you got a lower grade than you deserve, write a brief account, explaining why you
think that is the case and put it in my mail box in the Philosophy Department. The person who graded your exam will then reply with a detailed explanation of the reasons for the grade. If you are still unsatisfied, another instructor will grade your paper (this may be one of the three instructors for this course or someone else from the department). Whatever grade you will receive on the second grading will be your grade for the exam so grades can go down as well as up by this procedure.

Discussion Groups

To facilitate class discussion, the class will break into three small groups. There will be six small groups meeting over the course of the semester and the instructors will rotate between the different groups so that each instructor will meet each group twice. Information about assigned groups will be provided during the first week of classes.

*The syllabus below provides an outline of the course and a list of corresponding readings. Note that the syllabus is subject to change and supplementation, and that it is the responsibility of each participant to follow these changes.

Course Outline:

W - Aug 26 – Introduction

Ethical Theories and Principles

F - Aug 28 – Types of Ethical Theory, pp. 12-21

M - Aug 31 – Types of Ethical Theory, cont’d

W - Sep 2 – Ethical Principles, pp. 21-28

F – Sep 4 – Discussion Groups

M – Sep 7 – Labor Day

Doctor-Patient Relationship – Confidentiality, Truth Telling, and Informed Consent

W – Sep 9 – Tarasoff v. Regents of the University of California, pp. 140-144


M – Sep 14 – Thomasma, “Telling the Truth to Patient”, pp. 149-152


F - Sep 18 – Canterbury v. Spence, pp. 160-162

W – Sep 23 – Faden and Beauchamp, “The Concept of Informed Consent” pp. 166-170

F - Sep 25 – Discussion Groups

Abortion and Reproduction

M – Sep 28 – Marquis, “Why Abortion is Immoral”, pp. 345-352


F – Oct 2 – No Class, work on exam at home


W – Oct 7 – Cohen, “Give Me Children or I Shall Die!” (Ares)

F – Oct 9 – Discussion Groups

Euthanasia and Physician-Assisted Suicide


W – Oct 14 – Cohen and Lynn, “Vulnerable People”, pp. 446-452

F – Oct 16 – Fall Break


F – Oct 23 – Discussion Groups

Controversies in Research Ethics

M – Oct 26 – The Nuremberg Code, pp 70-71, Declaration of Helsinki, pp. 72-75


F – Oct 30 – No Class, work on exam at home

M – Nov 2 – King, “The Dangers of Difference”, pp. 82-85


F – Nov 13 – Discussion Groups

Justice and Health


F – Nov 20 – Pogge, “Responsibilities for Poverty-Related Ill Health”, pp. 575-582


W – Nov 25 – Thanksgiving Break

F – Nov 27 – Thanksgiving Break

M – Nov 30 – Childress, “Putting Patients First”, pp. 505-511


F – Dec 4 – Discussion Groups


M – Dec 14 - Final Exam is due by 5 pm at the Philosophy Department.