

CONTEMPORARY MORAL PROBLEMS

Dr. Rona Cohen

Spring Semester

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Office Hours: By appointment

Short description:

Ethical theory is concerned with questions of rightness and wrongness, obligation and permissibility, moral decision-making, virtue, and so on. At its grandest and most ambitious, ethics tells us how to live and explains why we should live that particular way. Most of us engage in intuitive ethical theorizing all the time, when we think about what we ought to do, read about a certain government policy, make major life decisions, or just ask questions about the rightness or wrongness of our decisions and actions. Ethical theorists pursue these kinds of questions systematically and thoroughly.

Throughout the seminar, we will discuss major Western ethical theorists such as Seneca, Kant, Nietzsche, Nussbaum, John Stewart Mill, John Rawls, Catharine MacKinnon, Robert Nozick and others vis-à-vis case studies pertaining to the moral status of animals, the morality of medical decisions, capital punishment, consumption and the environment, genetic engineering, biotechnological enhancement, abortions and more.

Assessment:

Mid Term: A short paper 15%

Final requirement: Seminar paper 70%

Participation: 15%

Attendance:

Attendance is mandatory. Students are permitted a maximum of three absences without penalty. Any additional absences will affect the final grade and may result in failure of the course.

Academic conduct:

Plagiarism is taken extremely seriously. Any instance of academic misconduct which includes: submitting someone else's work as your own; failure to accurately cite sources; taking words from another source without using quotation marks; submission of work for which you have previously received credit; working in a group for individual assignments; using unauthorized materials in an exam and sharing your work with other students, will result in failure of the assignment and will likely lead to further disciplinary measures.