SYLLABUS

CONTEMPORARY MORAL PROBLEMS (PHIL 1304-XXX)
THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT ARLINGTON
xx AUGUST 20xx

Instructor: XX
Classroom: XX
Meeting time: XX
Office: XX
Office hours: XX
E-mail: XX
Text: XX

Course description. The course is a survey of different major ethical problems and the arguments supporting opposing sides. In each section students will read opposing views on a topics of contemporary moral concern. The purpose of the class is not to change students’ positions about ethical issues, but instead to encourage students to think more deeply about the reasons behind those positions. Some of the topics that will be covered are abortion, euthanasia, gun control, animal rights, affirmative action, the death penalty, and war and terrorism.

This course satisfies the University of Texas at Arlington core curriculum requirement in Language, Philosophy & Culture.

Learning outcomes. Students will gain a better understanding of the arguments supporting different ethical positions. In the process, we will stress the importance interpreting opposing viewpoints charitably. Students will also improve their ability to evaluate the strength of arguments and some of the common mistakes that occur in reasoning. Since a significant portion of the class will be devoted to discussions, students will develop their ability to communicate clearly and coherently about issues that are challenging and often polarizing and emotionally fraught.

Core curriculum objectives.

- Critical Thinking Skills: to include creative thinking, innovation, inquiry, and analysis, evaluation and synthesis of information;
- Communication Skills: to include effective development, interpretation and expression of ideas through written, oral and visual communication;
- Social Responsibility: to include intercultural competence, knowledge of civic responsibility, and the ability to engage effectively in regional, national and global communities; and
- Personal Responsibility: to include the ability to connect choices, actions and consequences to ethical decision-making.
Example schedule.
Weeks 1-2: Basic Concepts of Ethics
Weeks 3-4: Basic Concepts of Moral Reasoning and Debate
Weeks 5-15: Detailed investigation of a series of contemporary moral problems (order and topics selected will vary but may include any of the following: abortion, health care, economic disparities, war, terrorism, drug policy, religious rights, human trafficking, organ trafficking, sexual ethics, discrimination, environmental issues, free market capitalism, socialism, etc.)

Signature assignments. The following assignments (among others) will be used to assess the student's level of achievement of the Core Curriculum Objectives:

1. Each student will analyze an argumentative passage pertaining to a contemporary ethical controversy in order to determine which proposition functions as the conclusion of the argument and which propositions function as the premises. (Critical Thinking Skills)
2. Each student will participate in an individual project in which the objective is (a) to take a position on a matter of personal or social responsibility (such as voting or recycling) and support that position with reasons; and (b) write an essay setting forth the argument. (Critical Thinking Skills, Communication Skills, Social Responsibility, Personal Responsibility)

[The remainder of the syllabus will be filled in by the instructor and will include the mandated policy statements of UT Arlington.]