

Spring 2007  
TF 12-1:15  
JC 104

Mr. Wright  
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**PHIL 105.01 Personal Values  
Difficult Dialogues Course Syllabus**

- I. **Introduction:** Personal Values is an introduction to philosophy by way of ethics. “Philosophy” is an intellectual discipline that works to expose, analyze, and criticize our fundamental beliefs, the arguments by which we support them, and the unexamined assumptions on which both these beliefs and arguments are based. In philosophy, everything is open to question. It pursues all its questions critically, logically, and to the end. As a result, philosophy also asks some fundamental questions that lie outside the domain of special scientific disciplines: Who are we? Does human life have any meaning beyond itself? What exists ultimately? What can human beings know? How should we best live? This last question takes us into the domain of “ethics.”

Personal Values applies a critical philosophical approach to the fundamental problem of ethics: how shall we live best as human beings? Ethics is a large subject, and different sections of Phil 105 generally take up different problems or approaches. This section is a “Difficult Dialogues” course, one of 14 Clark courses this semester that are part of Clark University’s Ford Foundation program that is attempting to enhance the culture of dialogue at Clark. So our work together will focus on fostering a dialogic approach to basic value questions.

- II **Readings:** Our readings will focus on a series of problems in applied ethics. Most will come from one source that is now available at the Clark University Bookstore:

*Ethics in Practice* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed) edited by Hugh LaFollette (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing 2007)

Some supplementary reading material will be distributed in class or through our course “Blackboard” site.

Our text book contains much more material than we can possibly cover in one semester. Rather than determining all the topics to include in the syllabus, our TA Sheryl-Ann Simpson and I have established a limited set of assignments carrying us through mid-semester break. We invite you to review the table of contents carefully and to vote for the three remaining topics that you would most like to take up. We will build the remainder of the syllabus from your preferences. The topics from LaFollette that are still unassigned are: euthanasia, abortion, the status of animals, family and reproductive technology, sexuality, paternalism and risk, free speech, sexual and racial discrimination, affirmative action, and the environment. Look at the details of each section before deciding which you prefer.

III. **The Basic Agreements:** By registering for this course, you have contracted to do the following **six** things. Grades will depend on how well you do them. If you think it necessary to clarify or renegotiate any of the terms of the basic agreement, let me know this week.

1. **Attend all class meetings and contribute appropriately**
2. **Complete all readings prior to the class for which they are assigned**
3. **Post to our blackboard “discussion boards”**
4. **Complete the papers as assigned**
5. **Participate in the Difficult Dialogues Symposium programs**
6. **Take the scheduled final exam**

**Notes on the terms of the agreement:**

- 1.0 You agree to attend class meetings unless you are ill or facing a *bona fide* emergency.
- 1.1 **Contributing appropriately** includes participating in class discussions and dialogues, and showing respect to classmates. In discussion, listen to what others are saying and treat others with courtesy and dignity. Disagreement is fine—indeed philosophy encourages disagreement based on clear reasoning— but we should show respect for the beliefs of others, even when we may disagree.
- 2.0 Because most of our class meetings will consist in analysis and discussion of specific readings, you agree to complete all assigned readings prior to the class at which they will be discussed.
- 2.1 Be aware that, even if some assigned readings are not discussed in class, **any** of them may appear on the final exam.
- 2.2 If you have any questions about our assigned readings, please ask them in class, raise them on Blackboard, or send me an e-mail.
- 2.3 The readings for each class are all fairly short. That is because philosophical texts are intricate and require close attention. Most students will need to read each article at least twice or even three times prior to the class meeting for which it is assigned. Read carefully, take notes, and ask about anything that you find unclear.
- 3.0 Blackboard gives us the opportunity to continue discussions outside of class. You are invited to contribute postings on the main questions we take up, to add new threads or questions of your own, and to write comment on other people’s postings. Obviously, any comments on postings by others must be offered with courtesy and respect!
- 3.1 Sheryl-Ann and I will follow the Blackboard discussions and will also post from time to time.
- 4.0 During the semester, I will assign 5 short essays. Each one should be double spaced on 8.5 x 11 paper in 12 point type. Papers should be 1-2 pages in length. Aim to be concise, accurate, and thoughtful. Short papers will be collected at the beginning of the Friday class in the week that they are due.
- 4.1 There will be one longer final paper the details of which we will discuss later.
- 5.0 During the semester there will be two series of special programs related to our class. Some of these will be included as part of our class requirements.
- 6.0 The final examination will be scheduled during Clark’s regular final examination period. Make sure that your end-of-year travel plans don’t conflict with this date.

- 6.1 Near the end of the semester, I will distribute a study sheet for the final exam. Attention to this sheet will prepare you to do well on the final. We will hold a study session during the reading days between the end of classes and the examination.

IV. **Grading:** Your scheduled work will be weighted as follows:

Short papers	10% each
The final paper	20 %
Final	20%
Other	10%

(“Other” includes attendance, participation, and “discussion board” activity.)

V. **Work Schedule:** The following table indicates our provisional work schedule. This schedule represents my best estimate of how this semester will unfold. **It will probably change as we proceed.** I will announce any such changes in class and on Blackboard.

Week	Topic	Tuesday	Friday	Assignments
<b>Jan 15</b>	Introduction	Review syllabus	Discuss initial readings	
<b>22</b>	Topic 1—Deontology & Economic Justice	2	52, 53	
<b>29</b>	Economic Justice & Consequentialism	54, 55	1	Paper #1
<b>Feb 5</b>	Topic 2—World Hunger	56, 57	58, 59	
<b>12</b>	Topic 3—War and Terrorism	64	65	Paper #2
<b>19</b>	Topic 3—War and Terrorism	66	67	
<b>26</b>	Topic 4—Justice: Truth and Reconciliation	47	48, 49	Paper #3
<b>Mar 5</b>	Spring Break			

<b>12</b>	Topic 5—Racism	39, 40	44	
<b>19</b>	Topic 5—Racism continued	45, 46	Council	Paper #4
<b>26</b>	Topic 6—Sexuality	Nagel (on line)	24, 25	
<b>Apr 2</b>	Topic 6—Sexuality continued	26, 27	Council	
<b>9</b>	Topic 7—Abortion	9	10	Paper #5
<b>16</b>	Topic 7—Abortion	11	12, 13	
<b>23</b>	Topic 7 continued; conclusion	Council	No Class	Paper #6

There will be a review session for the final exam at 12 noon Tuesday, May 1<sup>st</sup>, a “reading day.”