

FYS 100-10: ETHICS (SPRING 2018)
BUILDING 3-015, MONDAY/WEDNESDAY 10:00-11:50

Professor Amy Berg
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OFFICE: Gaige 225
OFFICE HOURS: Tuesdays 2-4 (or by appointment)

COURSE OVERVIEW

The theme of this course is “Ethics and the Family: Birth to Death.” During this semester, we will use philosophical tools to think about how our lives should go: about whether we should have children, about the meaning of our lives, about how those lives should end. We will go chronologically, from before birth to the moment of death, investigating some major moral and political theories along our way. The main things we will cover are:

- **The ethics of birth:** We start before birth, looking at the questions surrounding reproduction. Is it ever okay to have children? If it is, should you adopt rather than having biological children? If it’s permissible to have biological children, what about abortion or the genetic enhancement of fetuses? In this section, we’ll also discuss some influential moral theories.
- **Justice and the family:** Next, we talk about how the family should be organized. Once you have children, can you favor them over strangers? As an adult, what should your relationship with your parents be like? Should the state recognize marriages, and should issues of gender justice affect how we organize those marriages? Considering these questions will take us into work on political theories of justice.
- **The end of life:** Finally, we’ll end the course by considering end-of-life issues. What counts as a “good death”? Should you be allowed to have the choice to end your own life? And when you look back on your life, will it have been meaningful?

COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND POLICIES

You will need:

- The readings. Complete all assigned readings before coming to class. We will be using one book and some other readings:
 - The book, *Exploring Moral Problems: An Introductory Anthology* (eds. Steven M. Cahn and Andrew Forcehimes, Oxford University Press 2017, ISBN 978-0-19-067029-0), is available at the RIC Bookstore (and elsewhere). **Please make sure you have the correct textbook and edition!**
 - The rest of the readings you will need are collected in a course reader, which is also available at the Bookstore. You will be responsible for bringing the reading for the day with you to class.
- Access to Blackboard, where I will post the syllabus, assignments, and other information.

Assignments: There are twelve assignments due in this course:

- Eleven short writing assignments. These assignments will require you to master a variety of skills you need for successful paper-writing: defining terms, summarizing others’ views, developing objections to those views, and so on. These assignments are due by the start of class every Monday, starting January 29 and ending April 2. Unless you are in extraordinary circumstances, **I will not accept short writing assignments that are turned in more than one week late.** You must turn in all eleven assignments, but I will drop your lowest grade.

- A final paper, due during finals week.
- You are required to visit my office hours once during the first four weeks of the course (that is, by Tuesday, February 13). This is so I can get to know you, find out your interests, and answer any questions you have about the course.

All assignments will be graded anonymously; you should put your student ID number, *not* your name, on them. Submit all assignments via Blackboard, where they will be checked using SafeAssign.

Attendance and participation:

- Participation is part of your final grade in this course; to participate, you need to attend. You are allowed **two unexcused absences** over the course of the semester; if you must be absent more than that, please speak to me (and bring documentation from a doctor or dean). I will deduct half a percent from your participation grade for each additional unexcused absence.
- But participation is more than just attendance! In order to receive full participation points, come ready to make active, serious, charitable contributions to class discussion. **I reserve the right to call on students at random if you are not participating actively.** If you are not comfortable participating in class, I will count active, serious, charitable visits to my office hours toward your participation grade. When I grade participation, here’s what I’m looking for:
 - A range: Attends all (or almost all) class sessions, does the reading, actively and positively participates in all group activities, asks questions or offers comments at least every other class session, comes to office hours at least a couple of times.
 - B range: Attends most class sessions, does the reading, participates in most group activities, asks questions or offers comments sporadically. Is never a distraction.
 - C range: Attends only occasionally, does not do the reading, does not participate very actively in class (or else is a distraction), never comes to office hours.
 - D or F range: Rarely if ever attends class, either does not participate or is an active distraction in class, never comes to office hours or communicates with me via email.

The grade breakdown is:

- **Short writing assignments:** 30% (3% per assignment, based on your ten highest scores)
- **Final paper:** 28%
- **Office hours visit (by Tuesday, February 13):** 2%
- **Participation:** 10%

The grade scale is:

	A: 93-100%	A-: 90-92%
B+: 87-89%	B: 83-86%	B-: 80-82%
C+: 77-79%	C: 73-76%	C-: 70-72%
D+: 67-69%	D: 60-63%	D-: 60-62%
F: below 60%		

Lateness policy: Assignments must be turned in by the start of class on the day they are due. **There are no exceptions unless you make prior arrangements with me.** I will deduct three percent of your final grade if the paper is turned in the day it’s due any time after the start of class and one-third of a grade for each day after that that the paper is late (so, for example, a paper that would have gotten 100% if it were turned in on time on Monday would get 91% if turned in on Wednesday).

On writing: Your success in this class depends on the ability to express yourself clearly. Here are some writing resources I recommend:

- **The Writing Center** (Craig-Lee 225; <http://www.ric.edu/writingcenter/>) will talk through ideas, work through a draft with you, and generally give advice at all stages of the writing process.
- **Style**, by Joseph M. Williams (University of Chicago Press, 1990) is an excellent guide to clear and forceful writing. It's widely and cheaply available at bookstores and through Amazon.

Other policies

- **Electronic devices (laptops, tablets, phones, etc.) are not allowed in class, except by permission.** I am happy to give permission if you need to use an electronic device in order to be successful in this course; please speak with me during the first two weeks of the course. If you need to use a RIC computer to print or to view documents on Blackboard, there are computers available at Adams Library.
- **Academic honesty is critical to your success in this course.** RIC has policies regarding academic dishonesty such as cheating, plagiarism, and other behaviors. **Cheating** includes receiving unauthorized assistance on an exam or assignment. **Plagiarism** involves the theft of "intellectual property." The college policy against plagiarism bans word-for-word plagiarism, patchwork plagiarism, unacknowledged paraphrasing, and unacknowledged facts. I also ban self-plagiarism (that is, you may not turn in work you have written for a previous class). **Other dishonest behaviors** include anything else that provides an unfair advantage over other students or that sabotages another student's efforts. I am happy to talk to you if you have any questions about academic integrity, or you can consult the Academic Standards section of the RIC Student Handbook (<http://www.ric.edu/studentlife/documents/RICStudentHandbook.pdf>). If I suspect that you may be violating academic integrity standards, the minimal consequences will be a zero for the assignment, and you will not be allowed to redo it. Additional consequences may occur, including your failing the class and/or being brought before the Academic Integrity Board. I will also report you to the Vice President of Academic Affairs.
- Rhode Island College, and I, are committed to making reasonable efforts to assist individuals with documented disabilities. If you are seeking reasonable classroom accommodations under the ADA and/or Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, you must register with RIC's Disability Services Center (Fogarty 137, 456-2776). To receive accommodations for this class, please obtain the proper Disability Services forms and meet with me during the first two weeks of the course to discuss how we can implement them.
- In addition to the Writing Center, OASIS (Adams Library, lower level; <http://www.ric.edu/oasis/>) and Learning For Life (Adams Library, level 1; <http://www.ric.edu/learningforlife/>) are here to support you with challenges you may face during your time at RIC. If you'd like information on how to access and use these resources, please don't hesitate to talk with me.
- You are welcome and encouraged to come to my office hours or make an appointment with me whenever you want to talk about the course material, your assignments, or any other philosophy-related concerns you have.

SCHEDULE OF READINGS AND ASSIGNMENTS [READINGS WITH *AROUND THEIR TITLES*** ARE IN THE COURSE READER]**

Note: This schedule of readings is provisional. I have scheduled two catch-up days in case we fall behind or class is canceled due to weather. If the schedule of readings changes, I will post a new syllabus to Blackboard.

Wednesday, January 17: Course introduction

Reading: None

Monday, January 22: Should you have children?

Reading: Purdy, "Can Having Children Be Immoral?"

Wednesday, January 24: Should you have children?

Reading: Vehmas, "Parents and Genetic Information"

Monday, January 29: Should you have biological children?

Reading: ***Rulli, "Preferring a Genetically-Related Child"***

Wednesday, January 31: Should you have biological children?

Reading: ***LaFollette, "Licensing Parents Revisited"***

Monday, February 5: Introduction to consequentialism

Reading: Mill, "Utilitarianism"

Wednesday, February 7: Should anyone ever have an abortion?

Reading: Marquis, "An Argument that Abortion Is Wrong"

Monday, February 12: Should anyone ever have an abortion?

Reading: Thomson, "A Defense of Abortion"

Wednesday, February 14: Introduction to deontology

Reading: Kant, "Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals"

Monday, February 19: Should you genetically modify your children?

Reading: Savulescu, "Procreative Beneficence"

Wednesday, February 21: Should you genetically modify your children?

Reading: Sandel, "The Case against Perfection"

Monday, February 26: Introduction to virtue ethics

Reading: Driver, "Virtue Ethics"

Wednesday, February 28: Catch-up day

Reading: None

Monday, March 5: SPRING BREAK – NO CLASS

Wednesday, March 7: SPRING BREAK – NO CLASS

Monday, March 12: Should you favor your children over strangers?

Reading: ***MacFarquhar, "The Children of Strangers"***

Wednesday, March 14: Should you favor your children over strangers?

Reading: ***Rachels, "Morality, Parents, and Children"***

Monday, March 19: Do your adult children owe you anything?

Reading: English, "What Do Grown Children Owe Their Parents?"

Wednesday, March 21: Do your adult children owe you anything?

Reading: Kupfer, "Can Parents and Children Be Friends?"

Monday, March 26: What marriages should the state recognize?

Reading: Brake, "Minimal Marriage"

Wednesday, March 28: What marriages should the state recognize?

Reading: Wedgwood, "Is Civil Marriage Illiberal?"

Monday, April 2: Should your marriage be gender-just?

Reading: ***Okin, "Justice and Gender"***

Wednesday, April 4: Should your marriage be gender-just?

Reading: ***Payette, "The Feminist Wife: Notes on a Political 'Engagement'"***

Monday, April 9: What kind of death should you have?

Reading: ***Gawande, "Letting Go"***

Wednesday, April 11: What kind of death should you have?

Reading: Rachels, "Active and Passive Euthanasia"

Monday, April 16: What kind of death should you have?

Reading: ***Velleman, "Against the Right to Die"***

Final paper assigned on Monday

Wednesday, April 18: What is the meaning of life?

Reading: Taylor, "The Meaning of Life"

Monday, April 23: What is the meaning of life?

Reading: Wolf, "Meaning of Life"

Wednesday, April 25: What is the meaning of life?

Reading: Vitrano, "Meaningful Lives"

Monday, April 30: Catch-up day

Reading: None

Finals week

Final paper due (time and date TBA)