

Second Term, 2013-14

Course Code: **UGC 2841**

Course Title: **APPLIED ETHICS**

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Language of Instruction: English

Reading materials are in English.

Introduction:

This course is for students with no prior knowledge of ethics or philosophy. I will pitch the level of the course to be assessible, and yet interesting, to beginners.

This course is about 3 philosophical problems:

- (1) The ethical problem of abortion. (Is it wrong to have abortion?),
- (2) Our treatment of animals. (Is it wrong to eat animals? Is it wrong to experiment on them?)
- (3) Criminal punishment. (Why punish? How much?).

Requirements:

You are asked to read every week, usually a very short piece. But this course is not about reading, but thinking, and especially thinking in a carefully and systematic way. (Remember the slogan: "Don't read; think. Don't think; write.")

You have to write three 5-page papers.

Your performance in a weekly small-group tutorial will be assessed.

Grading:

Tutorial contribution: 20%

Paper 1: 20%

Paper 2: 20%

Paper 3: 20%

Final Exam: 20%

Reading Materials:-

The following list is for your reference only. In Week One, I will ask you to read a short piece for each week.

Anthologies:

A = Jeffrey Olen & Vincent Barry, ed., *Applying Ethics*, 5th Edition. (But note that, e.g., A2 = Second Edition of *Applying Ethics*.)

C = Tom L. Beauchamp & LeRoy Walters, ed., *Contemporary Issues in Bioethics*, 3rd edition.

E = Hugh LaFollette, ed, *Ethics in Practice: An Anthology*, 1997.

M = James Sterba, *Morality in Practice*, 5th Edition.

S = Mappes & Zembaty, *Social Ethics*, 5th Edition.

Notations:

* = important

** = very important

Topic #1: Is Abortion Immoral?

(A) *When does a fetus become a person?*

1. *Singer, Peter. 1979. *Practical Ethics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, Chapter 6. (This is a pro-abortion introduction to the topic of abortion. Its discussion on criteria of personhood is extremely helpful?)
2. John T. Noonan, "An Almost Absolute Value in History," in *Applying Ethics*, third edition, edited by Jeffrey Olen & Vincent Barry.
3. **Veatch, Robert M. 1983 "Definitions of Life and Death: Should There Be Consistency?" in *Contemporary Issues in Bioethics*, Third Edition, editors Tom L. Beauchamp & LeRoy Walter, Belmont, California: Wadsworth Publishing Company. (Here, Veatch proposes that possession of brain waves be the criterion of personhood.)

* Li, Hon-Lam, "Is possession of brain waves a good criterion for personhood?" (unpublished paper).
4. **Warren, Mary Anne. 1973. "On the Moral and Legal Status of Abortion," in *The Monist*, Vol.57, no.1 (January 1973); also reprinted as Pp.159-169, in *Morality in Practice*, Second Edition, editor James P. Sterba. Belmont, California: Wadsworth Publishing Company. (This paper proposes the "Rationality Criterion.")
5. *Li Hon-Lam, "Abortion and Uncertainty," (section III), in *Ethics in Business and Society*, edited by Gerhold K. Becker, pp. 173-176. (This overlaps with Singer's discussion to some extent, but also offers a discussion on "Brain Waves Criterion" and "Rationality Criterion" of personhood.)

(B) *Attempts to Avoid the Problem of Personhood*

6. **Thomson, Judith Jarvis. 1973. "A Defence of Abortion", originally *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, vol.1, no.1 (1971), pp.47-66; now in most anthologies, and especially in James P. Sterba, ed., *Morality in Practice*, 5th ed.
7. **Thomson, J. J. "Self-Defense," *Philosophy of Public Affairs*, Vol. 20, No. 4, pp. 283-310 (1991).

- 7A. Li, Hon-Lam, "Abortion and Self-Defense: Why Thomson's Arguments Fail" (unpublished draft).
8. Noonan, John T., Jr.. 1973. "How to Argue About Abortion". Pp.149-159 in *Morality in Practice*, Second Edition, editor James P. Sterba. Belmont, California: Wadsworth Publishing Company. (This discusses, and disagrees with, J. J. Thomson's view.)
9. **English, Jane. 1975. "Abortion and the Concept of a Person." Pp.233-243 in *Canadian Journal of Philosophy*, Vol.5, no.2 (October 1975); also reprinted as pp.170-176 in *Morality in Practice*, Second Edition, editor James P. Sterba. Belmont, California: Wadsworth Publishing Company.
10. Glover, Jonathan. 1977. *Causing Death and Saving Lives*, chapter 11. Harmondsworth, England: Penguin Books Ltd, pp. 228-240.
11. **Marquis, Don. 1989. "Why Abortion is Immoral," *Journal of Philosophy*, vol. 86 (April 1989). Also in E, M and S.
12. *Li Hon-Lam, "Abortion and Uncertainty," (section II), in *Ethics in Business and Society*, edited by Gerhold K. Becker, pp. 171-173. (This provides a general discussion on the views of Thomson, English, and Glover.)

(C) Other ways to deal with the Problem of Abortion

13. *Li Hon-Lam, "Abortion and Uncertainty," (section IV), in *Ethics in Business and Society*, edited by Gerhold K. Becker, pp. 176-178. (This deals with the problem of abortion on the assumption that personhood is all-or-nothing.)
14. **Hon-Lam Li, "Abortion and Degrees of Personhood," *Public Affairs Quarterly*, Volume 11, Number 1, January 1997, pp. 1-19. (Contrary to item #11, this paper assumes that personhood is *not* all-or-nothing, but a matter-of-degree.)

Topic #2: Animals and Ethics

For Animal Rights:

1. **Peter Singer, "All Animals Are Equal," in A, M, M2, M4, S, S4.
2. **Tom Regan, "The Case for Animal Rights" in A, E, M2, S, S4.
3. * R. G. Frey, "Moral Vegetarianism and the Argument from Pain and Suffering," in S.
4. **Paul W. Taylor, "The Ethics of Respect for Nature," in M, M4. (In M, pp. 474-479. From the section "The Denial of Human Superiority" onward.

Against Animal Rights:

5. **R. D. Guthrie, "Anthropocentrism," in M, M4.
6. **Carl Cohen, "The Case for the Use of Animals in Biomedical Research," in S, S4.
7. Tibor R. Machan, "Do Animals have Rights?" in A.

In-Between Views:

8. **R. G. Frey, “The Case for Animal Rights,” in E.
9. **Bonnie Steinbock, “Speciesism and the Idea of Equality,” in A.
10. *Mary Ann Warren, “Human and Animal Rights Compared,” in S, S4.
11. **Hon-Lam Li, “Animal Research, Non-vegetarianism, and the Moral Status of Animals – Understanding the Impasse of the Animal Rights Problem” *Journal of Medicine and Philosophy*, Vol. 27, No. 5 (October 2002).
12. **Hon-Lam Li, “Toward Quasi-vegetarianism,” to be published in Hon-Lam Li & Anthony K-W Yeung, eds., *New Essays in Applied Ethics: Animal Rights, Personhood, and the Ethics of Killing*, UK: Palgrave Macmillan.
13. *Jenny Teichman, “Human Being and the Other Animals,” *Social Ethics: A Student’s Guide* (Chapter 5), Blackwell, 1996.

Topic #3: Punishment and the Death Penalty

(a) Punishment:

1. *Immanuel Kant, “The Retributive Theory of Punishment,” in James E. White, ed., *Contemporary Moral Problems*, 4th edition. (in UL 2-hour Reserve.)
2. ** Jeffrie Murphy, “Marxism and Retribution,” *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, Vol. 2, no. 3 (1973), pp. 217-243.
3. **Joel Feinberg, 'Justice and Personal Desert,' in Joel Feinberg, *Doing and Deserving*.
4. **R. A. Duff, “Penance, Punishment, and the Limits of Community,” in Michael Tonry, ed., *Why Punish? How Much?*
5. ** T. M. Scanlon, “Giving Desert its Due.”
6. *Hon-Lam Li, “Two Dimensions of Punishment: Desert and Deterrence” (unpublished draft paper)

(b) The Death Penalty

7. **H. L. A. Hart, “Murder and the Principles of Punishment: England and the United States,” in his *Punishment and Responsibility: Essays in the Philosophy of Law*
8. **Igor Primoratz, “A life for a life,” in *Social Ethics*.
9. **Stephen Nathanson, “An eye for an eye?” in *Social Ethics*.
10. *Jonathan Glover, *Causing Death and Saving Lives*, Penguin, 1977, ch.18., 228-240.
11. **Ernest van den Haag, “Deterrence and Uncertainty,” in S, M. (This is similar to 6 below.)

12. Ernest van den Hagg & Louis Schwartz, "The Death Penalty: For and Against," in M2, 1988. (This is similar to 5. above.)
13. **Charles L. Black, Jr., *Capital Punishment: The Inevitability of Caprice and Mistake*, 2nd Ed., Norton, 1981, Chs. 1, 2.
14. Hon-Lam Li, "Why the Death Penalty should be Abolished" (unpublished draft).