

This syllabus has been censored by Texas A&M University. Censored material is marked in red; newly added material is marked in blue.

Syllabus

Course Information

Course Number: PHIL 111
Course Title: Contemporary Moral Issues
Section: Sections 500 - 508
Time: Monday and Wednesday 12:40 – 1:30 plus Friday recitation (time varies)
Location: CHEM 100 – separate room for Friday recitation
Credit Hours: 3

Instructor Details

Instructor: Dr. Martin Peterson
Office: YMCA 402B
Phone: 979 845 7133
E-Mail: martinpeterson@tamu.edu
Office Hours: 2-4 pm, Mondays

Course Description

Current course description: Contemporary Moral Issues. Representative ethical positions and their application to contemporary social problems; also taught at Galveston campus.

Updated course description: Philosophy challenges students to understand, articulate, and evaluate arguments from multiple points of view. Students evaluate the claims, presuppositions, and reasoning of various positions, including one's own, on contemporary social problems, and analyze those problems using ethical and social theories. Students examine how ideas, values, and other aspects of culture (including power and authority) shape and are shaped by human experience and institutions. Students practice respectful and thoughtful engagement on contentious matters, such as abortion, euthanasia, capital punishment, the relationship between ethics and religion, violence and war, animal ethics, sexual morality, gender issues, health care ethics, equality and discrimination, biotechnology and bioengineering, economic injustice, climate ethics and global hunger and poverty, among others.

Course Prerequisites

None

Special Course Designation

Core curriculum (CORE)

- Language, Philosophy and Culture (LPC)

- Culture/Discourse (CD)

Course Learning Outcomes

Asterisks (*) below highlight CD course learning outcomes. Carats (^) highlight KLPC learning outcomes.

At the end of the course, students will be able to:

- identify, reconstruct, and critically evaluate arguments about moral value^
- interpret differing perspectives charitably*
- recognize practices and virtues conducive to constructive discourse in a multicultural and globalized society*
- demonstrate active listening to and respectful dialogue with others on difficult issues*
- articulate and evaluate perspectives on pressing social, moral, and political issues connected to themes of power, authority, privilege, oppression and discrimination*
- articulate and evaluate ideals and goals related to social and personal responsibility, tolerance, and accountability*^
- apply written and oral communication skills and visual interpretation skills.^

Textbook and/or Resource Materials

Required:

- Fiala & MacKinnon, Ethics: Theory and Contemporary Issues, 10th edition, ISBN 9798214136110 or ISBN 9780357700006
- ~~Plato, excerpts from Symposium: 180c-185c, 189c-193d, 210a-212b~~
<https://www.platonicfoundation.org/translation/symposium/>
- “Texas A&M, Under New Curriculum Limits, Warns Professor Not to Teach Plato”, *The New York Times*, January 8, 2026.

Grading Policy

Grade Scale

A (excellent) 90% – 100%
B (good) 80% – <90%
C (acceptable) 70% – <80%
D (passing) 60% – <70%
F (failing) < 60%

Graded Components

- MindTap (Online Quizzes) 10%
- Audio and Visual Presentation 10%

- Very Short Paper 15%
- First Exam 20%
- Pretty Short Paper 25%
- Second Exam 20%

- On-line MindTap quizzes

There will be several graded online MindTap quizzes, which are due on Wednesdays at 11:59 PM. The quizzes are available in MindTap/Canvas.

- Audio and Visual Presentation

Students will work in groups of four, assigned by the TA, on a presentation that includes audio and visual components. Presentations must include visual aids. Students are expected to prepare their presentations outside class. Each student in the group must give part of the presentation in class. More detailed instructions will be provided during the semester.

- Exams

There will be two multiple-choice exams. Exams are cumulative. They will be given using an online test tool.

- Writing Assignments (to be written on your laptop in class)

Writing assignments are an opportunity for students to gain fluency with the theories, ideas, issues, and cases presented in the class and to develop their thoughts on these topics. Students will write two texts: a Very Short Paper (400 words), and a Pretty Short Paper (600 words).

Late Work Policy

Late work is accepted only if satisfactory documentation (from a healthcare professional or equivalent) is provided to the instructor.

Course Schedule

Week	Dates	Topic	Readings / Notes
1	Jan 12–16	M: Introduction W: Ethics vs. politics, law, religion	Ch. 1 pp. 1–20
2	Jan 19–23	M: MLK day W: Consequentialism	MindTap due Jan 21 Ch. 4 pp. 70–83 Ch. 5 pp. 95–115
3	Jan 26–30	M: Duty Ethics W: Virtue Ethics	MindTap due Jan 28 Ch. 6 pp. 116–142 Ch. 8 pp. 165–183
4	Feb 2–6	M: Resilience and Aggie Core Values (Andrew Christjoy) W: Natural Rights	MindTap due Feb 4 Ch. 7 pp. 143–157
5	Feb 9–13	M: The Death Penalty W: The Right to Bear Arms	MindTap due Feb 11 Ch. 17 pp. 475–505
6	Feb 16–20	M: Abortion, part 1	MindTap due Feb 18

7	Feb 23–27	W: Abortion part 2 M: The Ethics of War 1 W: The Ethics of War 2 F: EXAM 1 (Midterm, in recitation)	Ch. 11 pp. 253–292 MindTap due Feb 25 Ch. 18 pp. 509–537
8	Mar 2–6	M: Race and Gender Ideology 1 W: Race and Gender Ideology 2 M: Free Speech W: Academic Freedom F: VERY SHORT PAPER (in recitation)	MindTap due Mar 4 Ch. 13 pp. 329–367; "Texas A&M, Under New Curriculum Limits, Warns Professor Not to Teach Plato", The New York Times, January 8, 2026.
9	Mar 9–13	SPRING BREAK	No classes
10	Mar 16–20	M: Sexual Morality W: Animal Ethics	MindTap due Mar 18 Ch. 14 pp. 438–473; Ch. 20 pp. 581–609
11	Mar 23–27	M: Environmental Ethics W: Climate Ethics	Ch. 19 pp. 539–580; MindTap due Mar 23
12	Mar 30–Apr 3	M: Global Justice W: Economic Justice F: Reading day – no recitation	MindTap due Apr 1 Chs. 14 & 15 pp. 371–437;
13	Apr 6–10	M: Metaethics W: Ethics in the Gray Area	MindTap due Apr 8 Ch. 3 pp. 50–68;
14	Apr 13–17	M: Privacy – why is it important? W: The Ethics of Technology F: PRETTY SHORT PAPER (in recitation)	
15	Apr 20–24	M: Ethics in Large Organizations W: Review for Exam 2 F: EXAM 2 (in recitation)	

University Policies

This section outlines the university-level policies that must be included in each course syllabus. The TAMU Faculty Senate established the wording of these policies.

NOTE: Faculty members should not change the written statements. A faculty member may add separate paragraphs if additional information is needed.

Attendance Policy

The university views class attendance and participation as an individual student responsibility. Students are expected to attend class and to complete all assignments.

Please refer to [Student Rule 7](#) in its entirety for information about excused absences, including definitions, and related documentation and timelines.

Attendance is required. The best way to master material for this class is to prepare properly, listen attentively, participate in activities, and ask questions when an idea is unclear. Students who arrive late, leave early, are clearly unprepared, or do not participate in group work may be counted as absent based on an assessment made by their TA.

Proper preparation includes bringing a copy of assigned texts to the meeting. Students must attend the class meetings for which they are registered unless they have coordinated in advance with their TA or their absence was such that prior planning was not possible.

In addition to absences that are considered excused by the university (which includes one job interview that meets Student 7 criteria, and absences due to academic conferences when the student is a presenter), **two additional** absences related to job interviews or academic conferences will be considered excused for the purpose of the course. Documentation must be submitted to the TA before the intended absence, preferably a week in advance.

In addition to the aforementioned absences that are considered excused for the purpose of the course, students can miss three meetings without penalty, and no make-up assignment is required. Further absences each result in a 2% deduction from the student's course grade. The attendance record in the Canvas Grade Book is considered final two weeks after the date of the activity.

Makeup Work Policy

Students will be excused from attending class on the day of a graded activity or when attendance contributes to a student's grade, for the reasons stated in Student Rule 7, or other reason deemed appropriate by the instructor.

Please refer to [Student Rule 7](#) in its entirety for information about makeup work, including definitions, and related documentation and timelines.

Absences related to Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 may necessitate a period of more than 30 days for make-up work, and the timeframe for make-up work should be agreed upon by the student and instructor" ([Student Rule 7, Section 7.4.1](#)).

"The instructor is under no obligation to provide an opportunity for the student to make up work missed because of an unexcused absence" ([Student Rule 7, Section 7.4.2](#)).

Students who request an excused absence are expected to uphold the Aggie Honor Code and Student Conduct Code. (See [Student Rule 24](#).)

Academic Integrity Statement and Policy

"An Aggie does not lie, cheat or steal, or tolerate those who do."

"Texas A&M University students are responsible for authenticating all work submitted to an instructor. If asked, students must be able to produce proof that the item submitted is indeed the work of that student. Students must keep appropriate records at all times. The inability to authenticate one's work,

should the instructor request it, may be sufficient grounds to initiate an academic misconduct case" ([Section 20.1.2.3, Student Rule 20](#)).

Texas A&M at College Station

You can learn more about the Aggie Honor System Office Rules and Procedures, academic integrity, and your rights and responsibilities at aggiehonor.tamu.edu.

Texas A&M at Galveston

You can learn more about the Honor Council Rules and Procedures as well as your rights and responsibilities at tamug.edu/HonorSystem.

Texas A&M at Qatar

You can learn more about academic integrity and your rights and responsibilities at Texas A&M University at Qatar by visiting the [Aggie Honor System](#) website.

Notice of Nondiscrimination

Texas A&M University is committed to providing safe and non-discriminatory learning, living, and work environments for all members of the University community. The University provides equal opportunity to all employees, students, applicants for employment or admission, and the public regardless of race, color, sex (including pregnancy and related conditions), religion, national origin, age, disability, genetic information, or veteran status. Texas A&M University will promptly, thoroughly, and fairly investigate and resolve all complaints of discrimination, harassment (including sexual harassment), complicity and related retaliation based on a protected class in accordance with System Regulation 08.01.01, University Rule 08.01.01.M1, Standard Administrative Procedure (SAP) 08.01.01.M1.01, and applicable federal and state laws. In accordance with Title IX and its implementing regulations, Texas A&M does not discriminate on the basis of sex in any educational program or activity, including admissions and employment. The following person has been designated to handle inquiries and complaints regarding the non-discrimination policies: Jennifer M. Smith, TAMU Associate VP & Title IX Coordinator at YMCA Ste 108, College Station, TX 77843, 979-458-8407, or email civilrights@tamu.edu. For other reporting options, visit <https://ocrcas.ed.gov/contact-ocr> to locate the address and phone number of the office that serves your area, or call 1-800-421-3481.

Civil Rights, Free Speech, and Title IX Policies

Texas A&M University is committed to fostering a learning environment that is safe and productive for all. University policies and federal and state laws prohibit discrimination and harassment based on an individual's race, color, sex, (including pregnancy and related conditions), religion, national origin, age, disability, genetic information, veteran status, or any other legally protected characteristic. This includes forms of sex-based violence, such as sexual assault, sexual harassment, sexual exploitation, dating/domestic violence, and stalking.

Students can report discrimination/harassment, access supportive resources, or learn more about their options for resolving complaints on the [University's Civil Rights & Title IX webpage](#).

Students should be aware that all university employees (except medical or mental health providers) are mandatory reporters, which means that if they observe, experience or become aware of an incident that they reasonably believe to be discrimination/harassment alleged to have been committed by or against a person who was a student or employee at the time of the incident, the employee must report the incident to the university.

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Policy

Texas A&M University is committed to providing equitable access to learning opportunities for all students. If you experience barriers to your education due to a disability or think you may have a disability, please contact the Disability Resources office on your campus (resources listed below) Disabilities may include, but are not limited to attentional, learning, mental health, sensory, physical, or chronic health conditions. All students are encouraged to discuss their disability related needs with Disability Resources and their instructors as soon as possible.

To request academic accommodations, contact the designated ADA office based on your location:

- Texas A&M University, College of Nursing, College of Dentistry, Irma Lerma Rangel College of Pharmacy College Station, College of Medicine, School of Public Health, Institute of Biosciences and Technology, EnMed Program, Bush School in Washington DC, Mays Business School – CityCentre, TAMU Engineering Academies, Texas A&M University Higher Education Center at McAllen and Texas A&M University at Galveston should contact [Disability Resources](#) at (979) 845-1637 or disability@tamu.edu.
- Texas A&M University School of Law should contact the Office of Student Affairs at (817) 212-4111 or law-disability@law.tamu.edu to request accommodations.
- Irma Lerma Rangel College of Pharmacy in Kingsville should contact the Disability Resource Center at Texas A&M University - Kingsville at (361) 593-3024 or drc.center@tamuk.edu to request accommodations.
- Texas A&M University College of Veterinary Medicine & Biomedical Sciences in Canyon should contact the Office of Student Accessibility at West Texas A&M University – Canyon at (806) 651-2335 or osa@wtamu.edu.
- Texas A&M University at Qatar (TAMUQ) should contact the campus psychologist, Dr. Steve Wilson +974-4423-0047 or stephen.wilson@qatar.tamu.edu.

If you are experiencing difficulties with your approved accommodations, contact the office responsible for approving your accommodations or the Texas A&M ADA Coordinator Julie Kuder at ADA.Coordinator@tamu.edu or (979) 458-8407.

Pregnancy Accommodations

Texas A&M provides reasonable accommodations to students due to pregnancy and/or related conditions, such as childbirth, recovery and lactation. Students should contact the University's [Pregnancy Coordinator](#) as soon as they become aware of the need for accommodation. Depending on the circumstances, accommodations could include extended time to complete assignments or exams, changes in course sequence, or modifications to the physical classroom environment. Texas A&M will also allow a voluntary leave of absence, ensure the availability of lactation space, and maintain grievance procedures to provide for the prompt and equitable resolution of complaints of sex

discrimination. For information regarding pregnancy accommodations, email TIX.Pregnancy@tamu.edu.

Statement on Mental Health and Wellness

Texas A&M University recognizes that mental health and wellness are critical factors influencing a student's academic success and overall wellbeing. Students are encouraged to engage in healthy self-care practices by utilizing the resources and services available through [University Health Services](#) on its [mental health webpage](#). The [TELUS Health Student Support app](#) provides access to professional counseling in multiple languages anytime, anywhere by phone or chat, and the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline offers 24-hour emergency support at 988 or 988lifeline.org.

Texas A&M College Station

Students needing a listening ear can contact University Health Services (979.458.4584) 24-hour emergency help is also available through the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline (988) or at 988lifeline.org.

Texas A&M at Galveston

Students who need someone to talk to can call (409) 740-4736 from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. weekdays or visit tamug.edu/counsel for more information. For 24-hour emergency assistance during nights and weekends, contact the TAMUG Police Dept at (409) 740-4545. 24-hour emergency help is also available through the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline (988) or at 988lifeline.org.

Texas A&M at Qatar

Texas A&M University at Qatar students wishing to discuss concerns in a confidential setting are encouraged to visit the [Health and Wellness](#) website for more information.

Statement on the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)

FERPA is a federal law designed to protect the privacy of educational records by limiting access to these records, to establish the right of students to inspect and review their educational records and to provide guidelines for the correction of inaccurate and misleading data through informal and formal hearings. Currently enrolled students wishing to withhold any or all directory information items can do so within howdy.tamu.edu using the Directory Information Withholding Form. The complete [FERPA Notice to Students](#) and the student records policy is available on the Office of the Registrar webpage.

Items that can never be identified as public information are a student's social security number, citizenship, gender, grades, GPR or class schedule. All efforts will be made in this class to protect your privacy and to ensure confidential treatment of information associated with or generated by your participation in the class.

Directory items include name, UIN, local address, permanent address, email address, local telephone number, permanent telephone number, dates of attendance, program of study (college, major, campus), classification, previous institutions attended, degrees honors and awards received, participation in officially recognized activities and sports, medical residence location and medical residence specialization.

Campus-Specific Policies

Campuses may establish their own policies and minimum syllabus requirements. As long as these policies and requirements do not contradict the university level requirements, Campuses can add them in this section. Please remove this section if not needed.

College and Department Policies

College and departmental units may establish their own policies and minimum syllabus requirements. As long as these policies and requirements do not contradict the university level requirements, colleges and departments can add them in this section. Please remove this section if not needed.

Optional Syllabus Statements

Free Speech and Civil Discourse

Texas A&M recognizes that the pursuit of truth through open and robust discourse is critical to academic inquiry. However, as a community of scholars, the university has an aspirational expectation that such discourse will be conducted in accordance with Aggie Core Values. In this “marketplace of ideas,” we encourage civil dialogue creating an environment that allows individuals to express their ideas and to have their ideas challenged in respectful and responsible ways. Students can learn more about Freedom of Expression and Free Speech on the University’s [website](#) about the [First Amendment](#).