

FYS 100-07: ETHICS (FALL 2018)
GAIGE 302, MONDAY/WEDNESDAY 10:00-11:50

Professor Amy Berg
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OFFICE: Gaige 225
OFFICE HOURS: Wednesdays 2:30-4:30 (or by appointment)

COURSE OVERVIEW

The theme of this course is “Ethics and the Family: From 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 topics 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. If you have children, can you favor them over strangers? As an adult, what should your relationship with your parents be like? What marriages should the state recognize, 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, and bring the reading for the day with you to class. We will be using one book and one course reader:
 - 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). There are many textbooks with similar names; **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 only available at the Bookstore.
- 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 September 10 and ending November 19. 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 on Friday, December 14.

- You are required to visit my office hours once during the first four weeks of the course (that is, by Wednesday, September 19). 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 I will check them using SafeAssign. Keep in mind that, in this course, **your writing is a public act**. I will occasionally use anonymized and (sometimes) edited versions of your work in class and in future courses in order to generate discussion, share viewpoints, ask questions, and so on.

Attendance and participation:

- Participation is part of your final grade in this course; to participate, you need to attend. You are allowed **two absences**, no explanation needed, over the course of the semester. I will deduct one percent from your participation grade for each additional absence, unless you receive prior permission or can provide documentation which I believe justifies excusing an additional absence. You count as absent if you are not present when I take attendance, even if you show up later in the class period. If at any point in the semester, you believe you are in a situation for which I should make an exception to this policy, please talk with me outside of class.
- 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. You will receive a midsemester evaluation of your participation. 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:** 50% (5% per assignment, based on your ten highest scores)
- **Final paper:** 38%
- **Office hours visit (by Wednesday, September 19):** 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 **any time after the start of class** on the day it’s due and

three percent 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 I give you permission to use technology, please minimize your distractions to other students (by sitting in the back or to the side of the classroom). If you need to use a RIC computer to print, view documents, or upload your assignments to Blackboard, there are computers available at Adams Library.
- **I use email** to send announcements about this course. It is your responsibility to check your RIC email (including your spam folder) every day. Our emails to each other in this course are professional documents, and it is your responsibility (and mine) to write them professionally. I will respond to your email no later than 5 pm on the next business day; in the rare case I do not, please feel free to follow up with me. (Please note: I use Blackboard when I need to send announcements to the entire class. Replies to emails I send through Blackboard do not go to me, and I have no way to see them. **If you need to contact me over email, please make sure you're emailing my email address, aberg@ric.edu.**)
- **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 sources. 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 find that you have violated academic integrity standards, the minimum 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.

- There are lots of resources at RIC to support you during your time here. OASIS (Adams Library, lower level; <http://www.ric.edu/oasis/>) is here to help you succeed academically. Learning For Life (Adams Library, level 1; <http://www.ric.edu/learningforlife/>) can connect you to resources on- and off-campus to support you with non-academic needs you may have while you're at RIC. Project ExCEL (Roberts 303; <http://www.ric.edu/esl/>) has a variety of programs and classes for multilingual students. 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.

Monday, August 27: Course introduction

Reading: None

Wednesday, August 29: Should you have children?

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

Monday, September 3: LABOR DAY – NO CLASS

Wednesday, September 5: Should you have children?

Reading: Vehmas, "Parents and Genetic Information"

Monday, September 10: Should you have biological children?

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

Wednesday, September 12: Should you have biological children?

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

Monday, September 17: Introduction to utilitarianism

Reading: Mill, "Utilitarianism"

Wednesday, September 19: Should anyone ever have an abortion?

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

Monday, September 24: Should anyone ever have an abortion?

Reading: Thomson, "A Defense of Abortion"

Wednesday, September 26: Introduction to deontology

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

Monday, October 1: Should you genetically modify your children?

Reading: Savulescu, "Procreative Beneficence"

Wednesday, October 3: Should you genetically modify your children?

Reading: Sandel, "The Case against Perfection"

Monday, October 8: COLUMBUS DAY – NO CLASS

Wednesday, October 10: Introduction to virtue ethics

Reading: Driver, "Virtue Ethics"

Monday, October 15: Should you favor your children over strangers?

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

Wednesday, October 17: Should you favor your children over strangers?

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

Monday, October 22: Do adult children owe their parents anything?

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

Wednesday, October 24: Do adult children owe their parents anything?

Reading: Keller, "Four Theories of Filial Duty"

Monday, October 29: What marriages should the state recognize?

Reading: Brake, "Minimal Marriage"

Wednesday, October 31: What marriages should the state recognize?

Reading: Wedgwood, "Is Civil Marriage Illiberal?"

Monday, November 5: Should your marriage be gender-just?

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

Wednesday, November 7: Should your marriage be gender-just?

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

Monday, November 12: VETERANS' DAY – NO CLASS

Wednesday, November 14: Catch-up day

Reading: None

Monday, November 19: What kind of death should you have?

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

Final paper assigned on Monday

Wednesday, November 21: What kind of death should you have?

Reading: ***Singer, "Justifying Voluntary Euthanasia"***

Monday, November 26: What kind of death should you have?

Reading: ***Callahan, "A Case against Euthanasia"***

Wednesday, November 28: What is the meaning of life?

Reading: Taylor, "The Meaning of Life"

Monday, December 3: What is the meaning of life?

Reading: Wolf, "Meaning of Life"

Wednesday, December 5: What is the meaning of life?

Reading: Vitrano, "Meaningful Lives"

Monday, December 10: Catch-up day

Reading: None

Finals week

Final paper due on Friday, December 14