ETHICS AND THEORIES OF RIGHTS
179-488-01

COURSE OUTLINE

I. Introduction
   A. Historical Background (1/20)
   B. The Value (or Vacuity) of Rights-Language (1/27)

II. A Utility-Based Theory of Rights:
    John Stuart Mill (2/3)

III. Non-Utility-Based Theories of Rights
    A. Immanuel Kant (2/10)
    B. John Rawls (2/17, 2/24)
    C. Ronald Dworkin (3/3)
    D. Robert Nozick (3/17)

IV. Analyses and Critiques of Rights-Theories and Rights-Language
    A. H.L.A. Hart (3/24)
    B. David A.J. Richards and R.M. Hare (3/31)
    C. Joel Feinberg and David Lyons (4/7)

V. Applications of Theories of Rights
    A. The Right to Health Care (4/14)
    B. The Right to Die (4/21)
    C. Animal Rights (4/28)

VI. Prospects for Philosophical and Religious Theories
    of Moral Rights (5/5)

READINGS

Session 2 (January 27)

Joel Feinberg, "The Nature and Value of Rights," in David
Lyons, ed., Rights (Belmont, Calif.: Wadsworth, 1979),
pp. 78-91.

Ruth Macklin, "Moral Concerns and Appeals to Rights and Duties,"
Session 3 (February 3)


Session 4 (February 10)


Session 5 (February 17)


Session 6 (February 24)


Session 7 (March 3)


Spring Vacation (March 10)

Session 8 (March 17)


Session 9 (March 24)


Session 10 (March 31)


Session 11 (April 7)


Session 12 (April 14)


Session 13 (April 21)


Session 14 (April 28)


Robert Nozick, Anarchy, State, and Utopia, pp. 35-51.


Session 15 (May 5)


COURSE REQUIREMENTS

The requirements of the course are as follows:

1. Completion of all assigned readings.
2. Preparation of a one-to-two page issue paper for a class session.
3. Preparation of a term paper proposal.
4. Completion of a twenty-page term paper.

The issue paper should be an analytical and critical response to one or more readings assigned for a particular week. If a reading or multiple readings are summarized, the summary should not comprise more than one or two paragraphs of the issue paper. An analysis should point out the major presuppositions of the author(s), the most important logical moves of the author(s), or comparisons and contrasts among authors. A critique should discuss either internal consistencies in the author(s) or, from an external viewpoint, the cogency of the arguments presented. The issue paper should be typed, copied, and placed on reserve by the Monday morning preceding the class during which the issue will be discussed. You will be asked to function as a resource person during the class discussion of that week.

The term paper proposal is due on Wednesday, March 24. It should include a statement of the problem you plan to discuss, a description of the approach you plan to adopt, a preliminary outline, and a list of the most important books and articles you plan to use in preparing the paper.

The term paper is due on Friday, May 14, midway through the final examination period. The paper should reflect your ability to analyze, critique, and develop philosophical arguments. It may take one of several forms: a discussion of a particular author's theory of rights; a comparison of two or more authors' rights theories; a discussion of a particular right in the biomedical fields; or any other course-related topic mutually agreed upon by yourself and the instructor.

The components of the final grade will be the following:

Term paper: 50%
Issue paper: 25%
Completion of assigned readings, as evidenced in papers and participation in class discussions: 25%

Suggestions for improving the format or enriching the content of the seminar will be gratefully received.