PHI 860: Creation Ethics

Spring 2023
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Office hours: 2:15-3:15 M/W and by appointment
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Description:

We will discuss a number of controversial topics concerning the ethics of procreation and obligations concerning future generations. These topics include: Is it morally obligatory, or even morally permissible, to procreate? May the state intervene in procreation decisions? Are we morally obligated to adopt rather than have a genetically related child? Can someone be harmed, benefited, or wronged by being created? Can embryos or fetuses be harmed, and do they have rights? Is it permissible to select against disability? How should we take the interests of merely possible people into account in our deliberations?

Required Text: All readings will be distributed electronically.

Course requirements:

1. **Term Paper.** You will write a substantial (15-20 page) research paper on some course-related topic. Topics must be approved by me. The term paper is worth 60 points. More information on the term paper will be distributed later.
2. **Short paper.** You will write one short paper, roughly 5 pages, worth 15 points. Topic and due date TBA.
3. **Presentation.** You will do a class presentation. The presentation may be on the topic of your term paper but that is not a requirement. The presentation is worth 15 points. More details will be provided later.

3. Questions: You are expected to do all the reading assignments and submit questions to me by email each week. Questions should be based on the reading assignments. They can be long questions but they don't have to be. You will get one point per question, for a maximum of 10 points. You may get credit for only one question per reading assignment, though of course you can ask as many questions as you want.

4. **Attendance and Participation:** You are expected to attend the class meetings and be ready to participate. Syracuse University requires class attendance. I do not take attendance or give participation grades.

Grading Table:

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	60-69

Syracuse University Policies

Please consult **https://academicaffairs.syracuse.edu/important-syllabus-reminders/** for many university-wide policies. Policies relevant to this course are explained below.

Disability Statement

Syracuse University values diversity and inclusion; we are committed to a climate of mutual respect and full participation. There may be aspects of the instruction or design of this course that result in barriers to your inclusion and full participation in this course. I invite any student to contact me to discuss strategies and/or accommodations (academic adjustments) that may be essential to your success and to collaborate with the Center for Disability Resources (CDR) in this process.

If you would like to discuss disability-accommodations or register with CDR, please visit Center for Disability Resources. Please call (315) 443-4498 or email disabilityresources@syr.edu for more detailed information.

The CDR is responsible for coordinating disability-related academic accommodations and will work with the student to develop an access plan. Since academic accommodations may require early planning and generally are not provided retroactively, please contact CDR as soon as possible to begin this process.

Faith Tradition Observances

Syracuse University's Religious Observances Policy recognizes the diversity of faiths represented in the campus community and protects the rights of students, faculty, and staff to observe religious holy days according to their traditions. Under the policy, students are given an opportunity to make up any examination, study, or work requirements that may be missed due to a religious observance, provided they notify their instructors no later than the academic drop deadline. For observances occurring before the drop deadline, notification is required at least two academic days in advance. Students may enter their observances in MySlice under Student Services/Enrollment/My Religious Observances/Add a Notification.

Orange SUccess

Orange SUccess is the platform used to help students succeed by providing timely feedback on academic progress. Throughout the semester I may communicate with you about your progress through Orange SUccess, including via Early-semester

progress reports and Mid-semester progress reports. You will receive immediate email notification of these reports.

Academic Integrity

Syracuse University's Academic Integrity Policy reflects the high value that we, as a university community, place on honesty in academic work. The policy holds students accountable for the integrity of all work they submit and for upholding course-specific, as well as university-wide, academic integrity expectations. The policy governs citation and use of sources, the integrity of work submitted in exams and assignments, and truthfulness in all academic matters, including course attendance and participation. The policy also prohibits students from: 1) submitting the same work in more than one class without receiving advance written authorization from both instructors and, 2) using websites that charge fees or require uploading of course materials to obtain exam solutions or assignments completed by others and presenting the work as their own. Under the policy, instructors who seek to penalize a student for a suspected violation must first report the violation to the Center for Learning and Student Success (CLASS). Students may not drop or withdraw from courses in which they face a suspected violation. Instructors must wait to assign a final course grade until a suspected violation is reviewed and upheld or overturned. Upholding Academic Integrity includes abiding by instructors' individual course expectations, which may include the protection of their intellectual property. Students should not upload, distribute, or otherwise share instructors' course materials without permission. Students found in violation of the policy are subject to grade sanctions determined by the course instructor and non-grade sanctions determined by the School or College where the course is offered, as outlined in the Violation and Sanction Classification Rubric. Students are required to read an online summary of the University's academic integrity expectations and provide an electronic signature agreeing to abide by them twice a year during pre-term check-in on MySlice.

The Violation and Sanction Classification Rubric establishes recommended guidelines for the determination of grade penalties by faculty and instructors, while also giving them discretion to select the grade penalty they believe most suitable, including course failure, regardless of violation level. Any established violation in this course may result in course failure regardless of violation level.

Please note that submitting work written by ChatGPT or any other artificial intelligence program counts as a violation.

Class Schedule (tentative)

Date	Topic	Assignment
Jan 18	Intro to population ethics	N/A

Jan 25	The non-identity problem	David Boonin, "How to Solve the Non-Identity Problem"; Molly Gardner, "A Harm-Based Solution to the Non-Identity Problem"
Feb 1	Arguments against reproduction	David Benatar, "Why It Is Better Never to Come into Existence"; Tina Rulli, "Preferring a Genetically-Related Child"
Feb 8	The right to parent	Anca Gheaus, "The Best Available Parent"; Liam Shields, "Won't Somebody Please Think of the Parents?"
Feb 15	Wrongful Life	Seana Shiffrin, "Wrongful Life, Procreative Responsibility, and the Significance of Harm"
Feb 22	**No Class**	
Mar 1	Is abortion permissible?	Elizabeth Harman, "Creation Ethics: The Moral Status of Early Fetuses and the Ethics of Abortion"; Harman, "The Ever Conscious View and the Contingency of Moral Status"
Mar 8	Procreative Beneficence	Julian Savulescu and Guy Kahane, "The Moral Obligation to Create Children with the Best Chance of the Best Life"; Rob Sparrow, "A Not-So-New Eugenics"
Mar 15	**Spring Break**	
Mar 22	Asymmetries I	Jeff McMahan, "Asymmetries in the Morality of Causing People to Exist"; Johann Frick, "Conditional Reasons and the Procreation Asymmetry"
Mar 29	Asymmetries II	Krister Bykvist, "The Benefits of Coming Into Existence"; Jacob Nebel, "Asymmetries in the Value of Existence"
Apr 5		
Apr 12	**No Class**	
Apr 19	TBA – Class choice	
Apr 26	**Guest Speaker: Liz Harman**	TBA
TBA	**Makeup session(s)**	

May 8	**FINAL PAPERS DUE BY 5:00PM**	