Course Title: Personal Identity and Applied Ethics  
Course Code: PHI399Q  
Recommended Study Year: 2nd and 3rd Years  
No. of Credits/Term: 3  
Mode of Tuition: Lecture and Tutorial  
Class Contact Hours: 2 hours lecture per week; 1 hour tutorial per week  
Category in Major Programme: Programme Elective - Special Topics  
Prerequisite(s): None  
Co-requisite(s): N/A  
Exclusion(s): N/A  
Exemption Requirement(s): N/A

Brief Course Description

This course investigates the connection between influential theories of personal identity and some issues in applied ethics. The first part of the course gives a foundational knowledge of classic and contemporary theories of personal identity and the self. In the second part, we will discuss various controversial topics in applied ethics, such as the morality of abortion, self-concern, the definition of death, and the legitimacy of genetic human enhancements (in particular those enhancements aimed at extending human life beyond its perceived ‘natural’ limits). An emphasis will be placed on the role played by different conceptions of personal identity in the proposed answers to these moral debates.

Aims

The course’s main aim is to introduce the students to the interaction between hotly debated issues in applied ethics and various theories of personal identity and the self.

Intended Learning Outcomes

Students who complete the course should demonstrate to have:

- (LO1) An understanding of what it is (if anything) that makes us persons and of the criteria, often left implicit, that make us the same person over time.
- (LO2) The ability to assess controversial disputes in contemporary applied ethics by taking into account the theoretical presuppositions on the nature of the self behind various moral choices.
- (LO3) The capacity to formulate original and/or personal views on ethical and moral issues.

Indicative Content

Part I:

- Classic theories of the Self and Personal Identity  
  (Plato, R. Descartes, J. Locke, D. Hume, Buddhist Non-self theories)  
- Contemporary theories of the Self and Personal Identity  
  (S. Shoemaker, E. Olson, M. Schechtman)
Part II:

- Future concern and survival  
  (D. Parfit, R. Martin)
- The morality of abortion  
  (D. DeGrazia, D. Marquis)
- The definition of Death  
  (J. McMahan)
- Human enhancements and life extension  
  (J. Harris, W. Glannon)

Teaching Method

Lectures and Tutorials

Measurement of Learning Outcomes

Students will take a midterm exam, a final exam, and will be tested during the weekly tutorials. Performance in class discussions and tutorials will be a measure of LO1 and LO3. A midterm and a final exam will be used to measure LO1 and LO2.

Assessment

20% Tutorials and class participation; 40% Midterm exam; 40% Final exam.

Required Readings


Selections from Plato (*Phaedo, The Republic*), Descartes (*Meditations on First Philosophy*), Locke (*Essays Concerning Human Understanding*).


Supplementary Readings


