

Syllabus

Introduction to Ethics

21:730:212 – Section 2

Spring 2018

Rutgers University, Newark
Monday and Wednesday 4:00 PM – 5:20
Conklin 352

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Office Hours: By Appointment Only.

Course Objective: This course is designed to provide the student with additional analytical tools with which to (i) approach ethical issues in his or her personal life as well as (ii) issues relevant to the public culture and public policy. The 'style' of the course will be to employ a good deal of in-class discussion, supplemented by the readings. The final weeks of the course will spotlight climate change and international relations, bringing the accumulated theoretical discussions to bear on those matters.

The core text will be **Peter Singer's *A Companion to Ethics***, which was selected because it covers a lot of ground in a number of relatively short, but challenging, essays. The assigned readings may be supplemented by hand-outs, including hand-outs that summarize the approaches of specific philosophers. These handouts will be short and the instructor will try to summarize the main arguments of the respective thinkers. The student is encouraged to delve deeper into any philosophers whom he or she finds of particular interest, and the instructor will recommend further reading and will outline the principal texts of each of these thinkers, as appropriate. (Many of the classical texts referenced are available, in html format, on the Web.)

A second text will also be used: ***Comparative Religious Ethics: A Narrative Approach to Global Ethics***. Too often, the narration (stories) of real-life confrontations with ethical issues and crises go missing, as philosophers tend to focus on formalistic and abstract normative analysis. But reviewing the actual lives of actual people who have confronted difficult moral challenges can be instructive, as these are the ethical struggles that take place outside of college and university classrooms. Often they show that there are often no purely right or wrong answers, but only better or worse ones, as the moral agent (person) wrestles with all of the considerations **that just have to matter**. This text also takes religious approaches seriously, as ethical reasoning based upon religious considerations is pervasive around the world. This is critical in an age dealing with religious-rooted terrorism and nationalism and in which conflicts between modernity and tradition threaten the social fabric in many societies.

Requirements: In addition to the requirements indicated below, the student will be responsible for a brief summary (one or two paragraphs) of each of the assigned readings which will be due **no later than seven days** after each assignment. The readings are short so the summaries will be expected **on time**. The summaries must be e-mailed to the instructor as designated during the first week of class. Sufficient detail should be provided in these summaries, however, to demonstrate an appropriate

familiarity with the material. The student may include questions in the summaries for further clarification by the instructor during class time or via e-mail (etc.). It should be noted that not all of the readings from the text will be immediately discussed in class, but each will eventually be discussed or woven into class discussions and lectures regarding various issues and topics. In addition, certain readings may/will be made available by e-mail or posted on a web site designated by the instructor.

The primary reading assignments are covered on a separate sheet.

Papers:

Term paper, 8-12 pages (**single-spaced**) that is an ethical analysis of some aspect of a current issue in public policy (e.g., abortion, the ethics of warfare, climate change, gay marriage etc.). The student **must** use the tools and analyses learned in the course to discuss the selected issue in view of the various ethical schools/approaches, or show why the proponents or opponents, as the case may be, have flawed or compelling analyses (e.g., in their holding to one of such ethical schools in their analyses of the issue). The term papers will be due near the end of the semester (due date to be announced). Papers that are vague or do not argue using the theories, analyses and narratives learned during the course will be graded accordingly. **YOU MUST PROVIDE THE TOPIC OF YOUR PAPER BY THE MID-TERM DATE.**

Grades:

Summaries of the readings (**and handing them in on-time**) will constitute **1/3 of the final course grade. There will be several** quizzes on ethical terms and concepts which will constitute 1/3 of the student's final course grade. (The summaries and quizzes will be graded in the aggregate, **not individually**, for the purposes of inclusion in the final course average. Quality of the writing counts, so please note.) Finally, the term paper will constitute 1/3 of the student's final course grade. **Attendance and class participation are important**, and deductions from the final course average can be made for poor attendance and lack of participation. More than 2 unexcused absences will result in a reduction in your final grade.

Deductions from Final Grade:

See above. As well, the instructor retains discretion to reduce the final grade based upon: noted class unpreparedness; failure to hand-in assignments on time; poor participation; poor preparation; absences; frequent lateness to or early departure from the class; or for violations of student obligations as imposed by the University including, but not limited to, plagiarism. See the University Code of Conduct during the first week of the course: <http://judicialaffairs.rutgers.edu>. It contains information about plagiarism and other matters.

Unless otherwise indicated during the first week of classes, the grading scale will be as follows:

A = 93-100; B+ = 89-92; B = 81-88; C+ = 77-80; C = 70-76; D = 65-69; F = 64.

Texts:

REQUIRED

A Companion to Ethics: Blackwell Companions to Philosophy
Peter Singer, Editor
Basil Blackwell Ltd., Publisher (1994)

Comparative Religious Ethics: A Narrative Approach to Global Ethics,
2nd Edition

Authors: Darrell Fasching, Dell deChant, David M. Lantigua
Publisher: Wiley-Blackwell; 2 Edition
(May 10, 2011)

SECONDARY (OPTIONAL)

Cosmopolitanism: Ethics in a World of Strangers

Kwame Anthony Appiah
W.W. Norton & Company (2007)

The Collapse of Western Civilization: A View from the Future

Naomi Oreskes and Erik M. Conway
Columbia University Press (2014)

All books are available in digital.

Assignments

The assignments will also be posted on Blackboard or Canvas, with due dates. Use this link to post your reading summaries: <https://CompliPort.Compliance.Reports.formstack.com/forms/introtoethi>

Week

Reading Assignment/Chapter

I. Background, Theory, Narratives

Note to Student: Most of the Singer chapters are short. Don't worry!

Week 1

The Origin of Ethics – Singer, Chapter 1
Ancient Ethics - Singer, Chapter 3
Ethics in Ancient Greece - Singer, Chapter 10

Week 2

Kantian Ethics - Singer, Chapter 14
How Could Ethics Depend on Religion? - 46
“Religion: The Sacred and the Holy” (CRE, pp. 9-26)

Discussion: The Charlie Hebdo Murders

Week 3

Jewish Ethics – Singer, Chapter 7
“Life Story: Abraham Joshua Heschel and the Way of Audacity” (CRE, pg. 223-231)

Discussion: The Sacrifice of Isaac

Week 4

Christian Ethics - Singer, Chapter 8
“Life Story: Martin Luther King, Jr. and the Way of the Cross” (CRE, pg 247-259)
Islamic Ethics - Singer, Chapter 9

Discussion: Failures of Christianity and Islam: The Rise of Nazism, The New Islamic Terrorism and other dark happenings

- Week 5 **Natural Law** – Singer, Chapter 13
Utility and the Good - Singer,
Chapter 20
- Discussion: Natural Law and Gay
Marriage
- Week 6 **Rights** - Singer, Chapter 22
Virtue Theory - Singer, Chapter 21
“Formative Story: Siddhartha” (CRE pp. 166 –173)
- Discussion: The UN Declaration on Human Rights
- Week 7 **Morality and Psychological Development**
Singer, Chapter 41
- “Formative Story: Arjuna and Krishna”** (CRE,
pp. 143-148)
- Discussion: The Collision of Metaphysics and Action

II. Challenges in the Contemporary World

- Week 8 **Equality, Discrimination and Preferential Treatment** - Singer, Chapter 29
Animals – Singer, Chapter 30
- Discussion: Types of Discrimination
- Week 9 **Euthanasia** - Singer, Chapter 2
Sex - Singer, Chapter 27
World Poverty - Singer, Chapter 23
- Discussion: Who Gets to Live?
- Week 10 **The Idea of a Female Ethic** – Singer, Chapter 43
Environmental Ethics - Singer, Chapter 24
- “Feminist Audacity and the Ethics of Interdependence”** (CRE, Chapter 10)
- Week 11 **Business Ethics** – Singer, Chapter 31
- “Cosmopolis: The Way of All the Earth”** (CRE, Chapter 11)
- Discussion: Cosmopolitanism, Citizenship and the Ethics of Institutions
- Week 12 **Crime and Punishment** - Singer, Chapter 32
Politics and the Problem of Dirty Hands - Singer, Chapter 33
- Week’s Focus: Head Fakes, Lies and Damned Lies in Politics: The
Presidential Campaign

Week 13

War and Peace - Singer, Chapter 34

“Stories of War and Peace in an Age of Globalization” (CRE, Chapter 2)

Week’s Focus: Obama’s Drones or “Boots on the Ground”

Some Key Words/Phrases (You can check these out on the internet or in the text):

Akrasia
Anti-foundationalism
The Good
Bad Faith
Charity
Relativism
Supererogatory
Golden Rule
Instrumentalism
Ethics
Pragmatism
Soul
Invisible Hand
Prohairesis
Agency
Eudaimonia
Autonomy
Justice
Moral Realism
Morals
Phronesis
Diversity
Hexis
Principle
Intent
Natural Law
Rhetoric
Axiology
Sophistry
Sentiment
Sympathy
Evil
Deontology Holy
Person
God
Telos
Metaphysics
Angst
Existentialism/Existential
Dignity
Virtue
Philosophy
Value
The Golden Rule
Doctrine of Double Effect
Categorical Imperative
Pluralism
Doctrine of the Mean
Genealogy
Ethics
Normative Ethics

Environmentalism and Climate Change Related
Vocabulary, Useful for In-Class Discussion later in the
course

Albedo (Global Albedo)
Biome
Green House Gases
Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (“IPCC”)
Sixth Extinction
Anthropocene
Anthropogenic Climate Change
Carbon Sequestration
Climate Refugees
Paris Agreement
Permafrost
“Atlantic Conveyor” (Atlantic Meridional Overturning
Circulation)
Desertification
Green Energy
United Nations Framework Convention on Climate
Change (“UNFCCC”)
Sustainability
Ecosystem
Ecology

Rights
Divine Command Theory
Intuition
Race/Races
Gender
Epigenetic Rules
Survival of the Fittest
Social Darwinism
Egalitarianism
Entitlement Theory
Fairness
Restorative Justice
Compensatory Justice
Lex Talionis
Jus ad bellum
Jus in bello