

PHIL 262: Ethical Problems & Public Issues (#39298-39300), Spring 2021
TTh 2:00-3:00 PM, Fisk 217 and Online via Zoom, +1hr Discussion

Instructor: Chad Horne (chad.horne@northwestern.edu).

Office Hours: W 1:00-3:00 PM, via Zoom, and by appointment.

Teaching Assistants:

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Course Description: This course is a study of ethical problems arising in public policy, as well as philosophical approaches to addressing these problems. We will survey contemporary moral theories such as utilitarianism, contractualism, conservatism, and care ethics, and we will apply these theories to disputed moral issues including punishment, immigration, climate change, and global distributive justice.

Learning Objectives: Participation in this course will help you:

- (1) Understand major contemporary moral theories and their application to disputed moral issues.
- (2) Gain a broader awareness of ethical issues in public policy.
- (3) Acquire proficiency in recognizing, reconstructing, and critically evaluating moral and political arguments.
- (4) Develop and defend your own answers to important ethical questions.

Required Text: Mark Timmons, editor, *Disputed Moral Issues: A Reader*, 5th edition (New York: Oxford University Press, 2019). Some additional readings will be made available online through Canvas.

Evaluation: Your grade in this course will be based on the following five elements, weighted as indicated:

Issue Analysis Essay Assignment (4-5 pp.):	25%
Argumentative Video Presentation (6-8 mins.):	25%
Take-Home Final Examination:	25%
Participation in Discussion Section:	15%
Weekly Reading Responses:	10%

Specific expectations for each of the above elements will be discussed in class.

Grading Scale: This course will use the standard Weinberg College grading scale, where grades ending in 7-9 receive the “plus” designation and grades ending in 0-3 receive the “minus” designation. Thus, for example, a grade of 87 is a “B+,” and a 93 is an “A-.” Final grades ending in .5 or higher will be rounded up to the next whole number.

Conduct of Discussion Section, Attendance Policy, and Accommodations: Attendance in discussion section is mandatory and essential for success in this course. Your section participation grade is *not* a mere attendance grade; informed and enthusiastic participation is expected.

For each unexcused absence from section after the first, your final grade in this course will be lowered by a full grade increment. (So, for example, after two unexcused absences, a final grade of “A-” becomes a “B+”; after three unexcused absences, a grade of “A-” becomes a “B.”)

An e-mail informing your TA that you are ill and unable to attend section is a welcome courtesy, but absences are excused only with documented evidence of personal illness, family emergency, significant university or professional obligation, or unavoidable time zone or connectivity problems (see next paragraph). Students with excused absences may be required to complete make-up work during the week of their absence.

Accommodations are possible for students who will have problems attending discussion sections consistently, for example due to time zone differences or connectivity issues; these should be arranged with your Teaching Assistant as soon as possible.

Conduct of Lecture and Attendance Policy: It is expected that your work in this course will display mastery of the material presented in lecture. Course lectures will be delivered primarily in person and via Zoom at our scheduled lecture times (i.e. 2:00-3:00 PM Central Time). Links to these lectures will be available on the course Canvas page. Additional lecture material will be posted as standalone videos to the course Canvas page via Panopto. These videos are also required viewing for this course.

Zoom lectures will be archived for students who are unable to join at the scheduled time; archived lectures may also be found under the “Zoom” tab on Canvas.

When joining our Zoom lectures, please try to find a space where you can be present and uninterrupted for the duration of class. If you are not talking, please have your microphone off.

Contact: E-mail is a good way to get in touch with me outside of office hours with administrative questions, but substantive questions about readings or lecture are best raised in class or during office hours. I will answer e-mail in a timely fashion during normal business hours. Normally, if I don’t respond to your e-mail within 24 hours (48 hours on weekends), it is a good idea to re-send it.

Academic Integrity: Plagiarism is a serious offense and will be treated as such in this course. Suspected violations of academic integrity will be reported to the Dean’s Office. For more information on Northwestern’s academic integrity policies, please see <https://www.weinberg.northwestern.edu/undergraduate/courses-registration-grades/integrity/>.

All student work in this class may be analyzed electronically for violations of the University’s academic integrity policy and may also be included in a database for the purpose of testing for plagiarized content.

Accessibility Needs: Students with a disability are entitled to reasonable accommodations. Any student requesting accommodations related to a disability or other condition is required to register with AccessibleNU and provide professors with an accommodation notification from AccessibleNU, preferably within the first two weeks of class. Accessible NU may be reached at accessiblenu@northwestern.edu or 847-467-5530. All information will remain confidential.

Student Support: Students can find useful resources for safety and security, academic support, and mental and physical health and well-being at the NUhelp website and app. Visit <https://www.northwestern.edu/nuhelp/>.

Course Schedule: Please be aware that the following schedule is tentative and may be modified as we go along; check the course Canvas site for the most up-to-date schedule.

All page numbers refer to Timmins, *Disputed Moral Issues*, 5th edition.

Date: Readings and Assignments:

Th 4/1 Course Introduction.

Part I: Punishment, Mass Incarceration, and the Death Penalty—and a Primer on Moral Theory.

T 4/6 Utilitarianism and Punishment.

Read: Timmons, “Consequentialism,” pp. 6-11; Mill, *Utilitarianism*, pp. 49-54 (12 pages).

Th 4/8 Contractualism and Punishment.

Read: Timmons, “Social Contract Theory,” pp. 27-29; Rawls, “Distributive Justice” (Canvas) (18 pages).

T 4/13 Conservatism and Punishment.

Read: Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, selections (Canvas); Kirk, “Ten Conservative Principles” (Canvas) (11 pages).

Issue Analysis Essay Assignment Distributed.

Th 4/15 The Death Penalty.

Read: Nathanson, “An Eye for an Eye?,” pp. 533-539; van den Haag, “A Defense of the Death Penalty,” pp.540-544; Reiman, “Civilization, Safety, and Deterrence,” pp. 544-547 (15 pages).

Part II: Freedom of Speech, On Campus and Off.

T 4/20 Freedom of Speech I.

Read: Mill, *On Liberty*, pp. 157-160; Lukiannoff and Haidt, “The Coddling of the American Mind,” pp. 182-192 (15 pages).

Th 4/22 Freedom of Speech II.

Read: Bejean, “Two Concepts of Freedom of Speech” (Canvas) (8 pages).

Issue Analysis Essay Assignment Due.

Part III: Racism and Sexism: Conceptual and Moral Issues

- T 4/27 Feminist Theory and Care Ethics.
Read: Timmins, "Care Ethics," pp. 30-34; Collins, "Care Ethics," pp. 93-104 (17 pages).
- Th 4/29 Sexism.
Cudd and Jones, "Sexism," pp. 240-249 (10 pages).
- T 5/4 Racism.
Read: Garcia, "The Heart of Racism," pp. 250-262; Shelby, "Is Racism in the 'Heart'?" pp. 263-270 (21 pages).
- Th 5/6 Racial Integration and Residential Segregation.
Read: Anderson, "The Future of Racial Integration," pp. 271-282 (12 pages).

Part IV: Borders and Our Obligations to Outsiders

- T 5/11 Immigration I.
Read: Macedo, "The Moral Dilemma of U.S. Immigration Policy," pp. 303-314 (11 pages).
- Th 5/13 Immigration II.
Read: Frum, "How Much Immigration Is Too Much?" (Canvas) (15 pages).
Argumentative Video Presentation Assignment Distributed.
- T 5/18 Global Distributive Justice.
Read: Singer, "The Life You Can Save," pp. 633-647 (15 pages).
- Th 5/20 Effective Altruism and Its Critics.
Read: Srinivasan, "Stop the Robot Apocalypse" (Canvas) (8 pages).

Part V: Climate Change and Collective Action.

- T 5/25 Climate Change I.
Read: Gardiner, "A Perfect Moral Storm," pp. 746-753 (8 pages).
- Th 5/27 Climate Change II.
Read: Sinnott Armstrong, "It's Not *My* Fault," pp. 754-768; Hourdequin, "Climate, Collective Action, and Individual Moral Obligation," pp. 769-779 (26 pages).
Argumentative Video Presentation Assignment Due.
- T 6/1 Course Wrap and Review.
Read: Hersh, "College-Educated Voters are Ruining American Politics" (Canvas) (8 pages).
Take-Home Final Exam Distributed.
- Th 6/3 **No Class; Reading Period.**
- Fr 6/11 **Take-Home Final Exam Due at 9:00 A.M.**