

## Public Policy and Ethics

### PPL 300, Section 1

Fall 2019

M/W/F 12:00–12:50 pm

Lott Institute, Room 113

## Dr. Kyle Fritz

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Office Hours: M/W 9:00am–10:00am,  
2:00pm–3:00pm (or by appt.)

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## 1. COURSE OVERVIEW\*

### 1.1 Description:

In a democracy, reasonable citizens may disagree about what is right and wrong, and consequently about what policies should be in place. One way to try to adjudicate these disputes and determine whether policies are ethical is by appealing to various moral considerations (e.g. consequences, rights, duties, virtues), highlighted by competing moral theories. In this course, we will explore several of these moral considerations and their corresponding moral theories, with an eye toward how to determine whether some policy is ethical and thus resolving moral disputes about public policy issues. In the first part of the course, we will explore theoretical moral foundations, pausing with each to see how they can be applied to some policy issue. In the second part of the course, we will dive into a few timely public policy issues in more depth. By exploring some of these controversial policy topics, we can see (1) how moral theories underlie the disagreements, (2) how to effectively argue for good public policy, and (3) how to create public policies that are ethical and that respect the diversity of our American democracy.

*A note on success in this course: This course is different from most of your other PPL courses because it focuses on more abstract philosophical concepts. It's perfectly understandable and natural to feel confused sometimes. There is a great deal of value in the questions that we ask, even if we can't all agree on the answers. We will examine many challenging issues, and I ask that you approach each topic with humility and an open mind. In order to make progress, we have to cooperate and respect each other, and that requires admitting that you might be mistaken in your beliefs. My hope is that after this course, you will realize the complexity of these moral issues so that you can empathize with those who hold contradictory views to your own, even if you don't agree with them. That empathy and respect should help us to compromise and make progress toward better public policies.*

### 1.2 Course Objectives and Student Learning Outcomes:

This course is designed to:

- Help students better understand several of the major moral theories in ethics
- Develop or improve students' critical thinking skills
- Show students how to apply moral reasoning and critical thinking to moral issues in public policy
- Help students to understand, appreciate, and respect views and arguments that are substantially different from their own
- Develop or improve students' skills in effective communication, including expository and persuasive writing skills and in presenting information

By the end of the course, students should be able to:

- Classify arguments as moral or non-moral
- Compare and contrast various moral considerations within moral theories

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\* Except for changes that substantially affect implementation of grading, this syllabus is a guide for the course and is subject to change with advanced notice. Students should read the entire syllabus carefully. It aims to cover every question students might have about course policies, procedures, and requirements.

- Apply and synthesize moral considerations within public reason to determine whether some policy or action is moral or immoral
- Evaluate moral claims and principles using evidence or a counterexample
- Analyze and evaluate moral arguments
- Create, develop, and defend their own arguments for a variety of moral issues in public policy
- Charitably interpret and critique the moral claims and arguments of others
- Communicate more effectively and confidently about moral issues
- Synthesize the skills above to create cooperative persuasive presentations

## 2. REQUIRED TEXT

There is no required textbook for this course. Articles, links, and videos will be posted to the Course Library section of Blackboard.

## 3. COURSE REQUIREMENTS

**3.1 Attendance and Participation:** Students are expected to attend all class meetings (unless the absence is excused according to official University policy [see 6.1]). Attendance is not officially a part of the final grade in that students will not receive any points for attending class. Instead, they will lose points from their final grade if too many classes are missed.

Participation is calculated as part of the final grade, and it is a function of two factors: (1) reading class materials and (2) actively participating in classroom discussion and activities. Active participation involves answering and asking questions and engaging in group discussion. Students who attend every class but never speak or participate will receive a 0 for participation. Students must make a meaningful contribution through their vocal participation in at least 20 class sessions for full participation points. A meaningful contribution is one that shows reflective critical thought or answers a question that has been posed to the class.

I understand that some students are uncomfortable sharing their thoughts, especially on controversial moral topics. Because this is a Public Policy *Leadership* class, however, participation is a vital component of the course. I strive to create a welcoming classroom environment where students can voice their thoughts freely. Students who are shy or concerned about the participation portion of the course are encouraged to talk to me in office hours at the beginning of the semester.

**3.2 Pop Quizzes:** The reading schedule in this course is demanding. Productive class discussion requires everyone in class to have completed the reading before coming to class. Consequently, throughout the semester I will give brief pop quizzes to verify students are reading the course materials. These quizzes will only ever be over *required* reading material, not background or recommended reading material (see 7 below). There is no set number of quizzes that I will give. **Quizzes can be given at any time throughout the class period, and they may not be made up.** If a student has an excused absence when a pop quiz is given, they will also be excused from the quiz. If a student is absent without an excuse during a pop quiz, they will receive a 0 for the quiz.

**3.3 Short Writing Assignments:** There will be two short writing assignments. Each assignment will be no more than two pages, double-spaced. For the first assignment, students will need to summarize an argument made in a reading and present an original objection to the argument. For the second assignment, students will need to present an argument made in a reading in the style of an op-ed piece. Further instructions on these assignments, along with grading rubrics, are posted on Blackboard.

**3.4 Exam:** We will have one exam. This exam will focus on the theories and frameworks underlying policy decisions and how they fit with public reason (material covered in the first 5 weeks). Anything covered in either the reading or in-class discussions may be included on the exam. **Students should bring a blue book to take the exam.** Further details about the exam will be given in class.

**3.5 Group Presentation:** After the exam, we will apply the moral considerations we discussed in the first part of the course to real-world policy issues. After reading and discussing some philosophical arguments regarding these topics, we will have days set aside for case studies. On a case study day, a small group of students will bring to class some recent policy related to the topic under discussion. The group will (i) summarize the policy and its current status (proposed, being debated, rejected, enacted). Then the group will (ii) take a stand on the morality of the policy and defend that position by highlighting the moral considerations that they think are relevant (i.e., consequences, rights, duties, etc.). Students in the group might not agree on the morality of the policy, but they should explain the nature of their disagreement and how to resolve it in a way that respects liberal democratic values and public reason. After their presentation, the group will answer questions from the class, which may include clarificatory questions and criticisms of the group's position.

To ensure students are evaluated fairly, each student in the group will write up a group summary report detailing the work that each member of the group completed prior to the presentation. Detailed instructions for the group presentations, as well as a grading rubric, are posted on Blackboard. The schedule for group presentations will be determined in the first few weeks of class. See 6.1 to learn about the penalties for a student not attending class on the day they have signed up to present.

**3.6 Essay Outline:** Students are required to write an **original** essay for the course. To prepare for that essay, students must first write an essay outline. The outline should address a moral issue related to some real-world contemporary policy debate (e.g., some policy is immoral, unjust, unfair, etc. and should therefore be rejected, or some policy is morally required to be in place). The outline should consist of (i) a clear thesis, (ii) a moral argument for that thesis, (iii) an objection to some premise of that argument, and (iv) a response to that objection. The theoretical frameworks discussed early in the course should help students understand how to construct a moral argument. Nevertheless, writing moral arguments can be difficult, so students are *strongly* encouraged to meet with me in office hours or by appointment to discuss the topic of their outline and to ensure that their thesis, argument, objection, and response are clear.

Detailed instructions for the outline are posted on Blackboard, and we will discuss the assignment further in class. I have also posted an example essay outline from a student, along with some of my comments, on Blackboard under Resources. The essay outline grading rubric (available on Blackboard) indicates how the outlines will be evaluated.

**I do not tolerate plagiarism and will punish any plagiarism to the fullest extent. See 5.1 for further information regarding plagiarism.** Students must submit an electronic copy of their outline (in .doc, .docx, or .pdf format) to SafeAssign via Blackboard by the beginning of class on the day the outline is due. *Failure to submit an electronic copy in one of these formats by the deadline will result in a late penalty.*

**3.7 Essay:** The essay should be constructed from the essay outline. (In cases where an outline is too problematic, students must meet with me to discuss an alternative.) The essay will defend the thesis offered in the outline and will flesh out this outline with a carefully written, well-researched moral argument for the thesis. It will also include a detailed objection and response to the argument. Students should carefully consider feedback received on their outline when writing their essay. In fact, students

are *strongly* encouraged to meet with me in office hours to discuss revisions of their outline and to ensure that their thesis and argument are clear before beginning their full-length term papers.

Essays should be 1000-1200 words (roughly 4-5 pages), double-spaced, with 12-point Times New Roman font and 1-inch margins on all sides. Detailed instructions for the essay are posted on Blackboard. The essay grading rubric (available on Blackboard) indicates how essays will be evaluated.

As with the outlines, **any plagiarism will be punished to the fullest extent.** Students must submit an electronic copy in the appropriate format to SafeAssign via Blackboard by the deadline to avoid a late penalty.

**3.8 Op-Ed:** Rather than a final exam, students should write and submit a 500-word version of their term paper. This version of the paper should be written as an accessible but carefully researched and argued editorial piece that could be submitted to local or regional newspapers. We will read some editorial style articles throughout the course, and further details and examples will be given in class. This op-ed piece should be submitted electronically in the appropriate format to SafeAssign via Blackboard by the deadline to avoid a late penalty.

## 4. GRADING POLICIES

**4.1 Grade Distribution:** Participation, quizzes, short writing assignments, the exam, the group presentation, the essay and outline, and the op-ed will contribute to your final grade as follows:

Participation:	8%	Group Presentation:	16%
Pop Quizzes:	8%	Essay Outline	8%
Short Assignment 1:	4%	Essay:	20%
Short Assignment 2:	4%	Op-ed:	12%
Exam:	20%		

### 4.2 Final Grading Scale:

A	93-100	B+	87-89	C+	77-79	D+	67-69
A-	90-92	B	83-86	C	73-76	D	63-66
		B-	80-82	C-	70-72	D-	60-62
						F	0-59

**4.3 Late or Missed Assignments:** Assignments handed in late without a legitimate excuse will be penalized a full letter grade for each day late, including weekends. Late assignments will be accepted up to three days after the due date. *After three days, assignments will not be accepted and will receive an automatic 0.* Quizzes cannot be made up. Group presentations may not be made up unless there is an emergency which renders a student unable to attend class on the day they are scheduled to present (see 6.1). The exam may not be made up unless the absence is excused. **If you need special accommodations regarding the day and time of the exam, please see me as early as possible.**

## 5. UNIVERSITY POLICIES

**5.1 Academic Misconduct and Plagiarism:** Students are expected to uphold the University of Mississippi's standards for academic honesty. For a description of various kinds of academic misconduct and the disciplinary ramifications involved, refer to the University of Mississippi's standards of academic misconduct. A PDF is available on Blackboard, and information can also be found on the University of Mississippi website at: <http://catalog.olemiss.edu/academics/regulations/conduct>. In addition, students

can refer to the university's *M Book* for answers to any questions about academic honesty. **I take academic dishonesty very seriously. If students have questions about what plagiarism is or how to avoid it, they should see me as soon as possible for clarification and watch the following video:** [http://www.olemiss.edu/depts/general\\_library/instruction/resources/plagiarism\\_ac\\_honest/plagiarism\\_academic\\_honesty.html](http://www.olemiss.edu/depts/general_library/instruction/resources/plagiarism_ac_honest/plagiarism_academic_honesty.html). **Ignorance of what plagiarism is will not excuse students from penalties** for violations of the Student Academic Conduct and Discipline Policy, which can be severe and may result in expulsion.

**5.2 Disability Access and Inclusion:** The University of Mississippi is committed to the creation of inclusive learning environments for all students. If there are aspects of the instruction or design of this course that result in barriers to your full inclusion and participation, or to accurate assessment of your achievement, please contact the course instructor as soon as possible. Barriers may include, but are not necessarily limited to, timed exams and in-class assignments, difficulty with the acquisition of lecture content, inaccessible web content, and the use of non-captioned or non-transcribed video and audio files. If you are approved through SDS, you must log in to your Rebel Access portal at <https://sds.olemiss.edu> to request approved accommodations. If you are NOT approved through SDS, you must contact Student Disability Services at 662-915-7128 so the office can: 1. determine your eligibility for accommodations, 2. disseminate to your instructors a Faculty Notification Letter, 3. facilitate the removal of barriers, and 4. ensure you have equal access to the same opportunities for success that are available to all students.

## 6. CLASSROOM POLICIES

**6.1 Attendance:** Attendance verification during the first two weeks of class is required by the University of Mississippi. Students must attend class at least once during this two-week period to ensure that they are not dropped from the course and to avoid any adjustments to financial aid. For more information on this policy, see <http://olemiss.edu/gotoclass>. Attendance verification will be submitted on Sept. 4, 2019.

I will take attendance at the beginning of every class meeting. This is to encourage students to come to class meetings, as students who attend class and actively participate are more likely to be successful in the course. Students are expected to know any material discussed in class, even if that material was not in the readings. Additionally, this course is largely driven by student participation, which requires attendance. *Students may miss up to four class meetings without penalty on days in which they are not required to give a presentation, turn in an assignment, or take a test. **After the fourth unexcused absence, the student's final grade will be lowered by 2% for each absence.***

In special circumstances, students may miss more than four class meetings without penalty. This can happen only if there is an extraordinary reason to do so, the student can provide documentation or evidence of this reason (notes from medical emergencies, police reports, etc.), and the student has made arrangements with me prior to the absences insofar as this is possible.

If a student misses class on the day of their group presentation without a legitimate justifying excuse, they will receive a 0 for the assignment and will have their final grade lowered by 5 percentage points. Students are expected to act professionally and to be respectful of the time of both the instructor and their fellow students.

**6.2 Punctuality:** Walking in late is distracting and disrespectful. It is also disadvantageous for students, as they may miss important material or pop quizzes, as well as attendance. The same applies to leaving class early. If students have a legitimate reason for being late or leaving early, they should notify me ahead of time, take a seat near the door, and enter or exit the classroom as unobtrusively as possible. ***Students who enter class late or leave early may not be marked as present (see 6.1 above). It is the student's responsibility to verify with me that they have been marked present if they enter class late,***

**and this must be done on the same day** (i.e., students cannot claim to have been present in classes weeks earlier). **Students who enter class more than 15 minutes late or leave class more than 15 minutes early without a valid excuse will be marked as absent.**

**6.3 Electronics:** During class, all cell phones should be turned off and put away. When students are in class, they are expected to participate for the entire class period. **If students are seen using a cell phone in class, they will be given one warning. Each further offense will result in a 5% reduction of their final grade.** If special circumstances require the use of such devices, students must clear this with me in advance and provide the relevant documentation.

Many students use laptops to take notes. Although psychological research has suggested that students learn better by hand writing notes rather than typing them (see Blackboard), I do not ban laptops in my classroom. Nevertheless, laptops can be a temptation for distraction in class. If a student is seen using a laptop for any purpose other than taking notes, the student and the class will be given one warning. **Any further infractions will result in a general no laptop policy. Students who violate the policy will receive a 5% reduction in their final grade.** If special circumstances require the use of a laptop, students must clear this with me and provide the relevant documentation.

**6.4 Respect and Civility During Discussion:** Many of the topics we discuss in this class are sensitive, and students may have strong opinions regarding policy issues. Students are expected to show their fellow classmates and me the utmost respect. **This means, at the very least, not jeering or interrupting or carrying on private conversations while another person is speaking.** If a student has a response to another student's comment or question, they should offer it in a calm and respectful manner. We are here to share ideas and learn from each other, and these goals cannot be achieved in a hostile environment. Disrespect will not be tolerated.

To facilitate class discussion, we will use the following conventions: **Students wishing to introduce new information (ask a question, answer a question, make a comment, etc.) who have not yet spoken during that class session should raise their hand. Students wishing to introduce new information who have already spoken during that class session should raise their fist. Students wishing to directly follow up on something another student has said or is saying should raise one finger.**

## 7. COURSE SCHEDULE (subject to change)

Students are responsible for carefully completing each reading assignment **before** coming to class. If we deviate from the schedule below, it is the student's responsibility to stay informed of schedule changes, which will be announced in class. **All readings or videos are posted to Blackboard under "Course Library" as either PDFs or links.** Readings marked "Recommended Background" are not required, since this would be an unreasonable amount of reading for you. Nevertheless, the information in those readings may be helpful in class discussion, so I recommend at least skimming it before class. If you are writing a paper or presenting on the topic, you likely want to read it more carefully.

	Reading	Assignment
<b>Introduction to Ethics</b>		
1	M 8.26	-Introduction
2	W 8.28	-Kwame Anthony Appiah, "What Will Future Generations Condemn Us For?" (op ed) -Hugh LaFollette, "Reading Philosophy" -Mark Timmons, "A Moral Theory Primer" (1-6)

## Public Reason

- 3 F 8.30 -Leif Wenar, SEP Entry on "John Rawls" (§3)  
-Edward Langerak, "Religion in the Public Square"

### **NO CLASS: LABOR DAY (9.2)**

- 4 W 9.4 -Doug McConnell and Robert Card, "Public Reason in Justifications of Conscientious Objection in Health Care"
- 5 F 9.6 **NO CLASS: SENATOR LOTT RECEPTION**

## Moral Theories and the Values That Inform Policies

- 6 M 9.9 -Mark Timmons, "A Moral Theory Primer" 2A (6-11)
- 7 W 9.11 -Peter Singer, "The Life You Can Save" Short Writing  
Assignment 1 due
- 8 F 9.13 -Mark Timmons, "A Moral Theory Primer" 2C (15-20) and 2F (26-29)  
-David McNaughton and Piers Rawling, "Deontology"
- 9 M 9.16 -Carol Steiker, "The Death Penalty and Deontology"
- 10 W 9.18 -Mark Timmons, "A Moral Theory Primer" 2D (20-25)  
-George Rainbolt, "Rights"
- 11 F 9.20 NO CLASS**
- 12 M 9.23 -Michael Huemer, "Is There a Right to Own a Gun?"
- 13 W 9.25 -Mark Timmons, "A Moral Theory Primer" 2G (29-31)  
-John Rawls, "A Theory of Justice"
- 14 F 9.27 -Derrick Darby, "Reparations and Racial Inequality"  
-*Recommended Background: Ta-Nehisi Coates, "The Case for Reparations"*
- 15 M 9.30 -Mark Timmons, "A Moral Theory Primer" 2E (25-26)  
-Mark Timmons, "Coping With Many Moral Theories" (31-35)
- 16 W 10.2 **Exam**

## WHO COUNTS IN POLICY MAKING?

## Abortion, Animals, and the Environment

- 17 F 10.4 -Nathan Nobis and Kristina Grob, "Common Arguments About Abortion" and "Better (Philosophical) Arguments About Abortion"
- 18 M 10.7 -Amy Berg, "Abortion and Miscarriage"
- 19 W 10.9 -Perry Hendricks, "Even If the Fetus is Not a Person, Abortion is Immoral: The Impairment Argument"
- 20 F 10.11 -Alastair Norcross, "Puppies, Pigs, and People: Eating Meat and Marginal Cases"  
-Will Kymlicka and Sue Donaldson, "Locating Animals in Political Philosophy"

-Recommended Background: Animal Welfare Notes  
 -Recommended Background: Mark Rowland, "Fellow Passengers"  
 -Recommended Background: Jessica Pierce, "Do Animals Experience Grief?"  
 -Recommended Background: David Brown, "A New Model of Empathy: The Rat"

- 21 M 10.14 -John Basl and Gina Schouten, "Can We Use Social Policy to Enhance Compliance with Moral Obligations to Animals?"
- 22 W 10.16 -Lingxi Chenyang, "Is Meat the New Tobacco? Regulating Food Demand in the Age of Climate Change"
- 23 F 10.18 -Sujatha Byravan and Sudhir Chella Rajan, "The Ethical Implications of Sea-Level Rise Due to Climate Change"
- 24 M 10.21 **Case Study Day 1: Animal or Environmental Policy**

*FAIRNESS AND JUSTICE*

**Immigration**

- 25 W 10.23 -David Miller, "Immigration: The Case for Limits" Short Writing Assignment 2 due  
 -Recommended Background: Sarah Fine, "The Ethics of Immigration: Self-Determination and the Right to Exclude"
- 26 F 10.25 -Javier Hidalgo, "Self-Determination, Immigration Restrictions, and the Problem of Compatriot Deportation"
- S 10.26** **Essay Outline due (midnight)**
- 27 M 10.28 -Matthew Lister, "'Dreamers' and Others: Immigration Protests, Enforcement, and Civil Disobedience"  
 -Jose Jorge Mendoza, "The Contradiction of Crimmigration"  
 -Stephanie J. Silverman, "Under the Umbrella of Administrative Law: Immigration Detention and the Challenges of Producing Just Immigration Law"

**Case Study Day 2: Immigration Policy**

**Punishment**

- 29 F 11.1 -Bryan Stevenson, "Brief But Spectacular" (video, 3:23)  
 -Elizabeth Anderson, "Outlaws"
- 30 M 11.4 -Richard Lippke "Prison Labor: Its Control, Facilitation, and Terms"  
 -Michelle Alexander, "The War on Drugs and the New Jim Crow"

**Case Study Day 3: Punishment Policy**

**Health Care**

- 32 F 11.8 -Lewis Vaughn, "Economic Justice: Health Care"  
 -"Cruz, Sanders Debate Obamacare in 90 seconds" (video, 1:30)  
 -Efrat Ram-Tiktin, "The Right to Health Care as a Right to Basic Human"

Functional Capabilities”

S 11.9

Essay due  
(midnight)

33 M 11.11 -H. Tristram Engelhardt, Jr., “Rights to Health Care, Social Justice, and Fairness in Health Care Allocations: Frustrations in the Face of Finitude”

34 W 11.13 **Case Study Day 4: Health Care Policy**

*TECHNOLOGY, POLICY, AND PHILOSOPHY*

### Gene Editing

35 F 11.15 **NO CLASS**

36 M 11.18 -Christopher Gyngell, Thomas Douglas, and Julian Savulescu, “The Ethics of Germline Gene Editing”  
-*Recommended Background: Marilyn Marchione, “Chinese Researcher Claims First Gene-Edited Babies” (news article)*

37 W 11.20 -Bill McKibben, “Designer Genes”

### Big Data and Privacy

38 F 11.22 -Alan Rubel, “Privacy, Transparency, and Accountability in the NSA’s Bulk Metadata Program”  
-*Recommended Background: Edward Snowden interview explaining government programs and their surveillance capabilities on citizens (video, ~5:00)*  
-*Recommended Background: Olga Khazan, “Actually, Most Countries Are Increasingly Spying on Their Citizens, the UN Says (news article)*

### **NO CLASS: THANKSGIVING BREAK (11.23-12.1)**

39 M 12.2 -Daniel Susser, “Notice After Notice-and-Consent: Why Privacy Disclosures are Valuable Even if Consent Frameworks Aren’t”  
-*Recommended Background: Andrej Zwitter, “Big Data and International Relations” (esp. the section ‘What is Big Data?’ on pp. 2-5)*  
-*Recommended Background: Hillary Grigonis, “Facebook: Yes, We Track Your Calls and Texts, But You Told Us We Could” (news article)*

40 W 12.4 -Maria Brincker, “Privacy in Public and the Contextual Conditions of Agency”  
-*Recommended Background: Mikael Thalen, “Facebook Lawyer Says Users ‘Have No Expectation of Privacy’” (news article)*

41 F 12.6 **Case Study Day 5: Technology and Policy**

**Op-Ed due by Monday, December 9 at 11:59pm on Blackboard**