

Public Policy and Ethics

PPL 300, Section 2

Spring 2022

T/R 9:30am–10:45am

Lott 213

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Office Hours: T/R 11:00am–12:30pm
or by appt. (Zoom optional)

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, etc.), 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: While PPL 212 is not a prerequisite for this course, we will be relying on some skills and concepts that are discussed and practiced at length in that course. Students who have not had PPL 212 should let me know and should plan to meet with me more often during office hours so that I can help them with papers and readings. Additionally, this course is different from most of your other PPL courses because it focuses on more abstract philosophical concepts. It's natural to feel confused and even unsatisfied with the lack of agreement on clear answers. There is value in even asking the questions in the first place. I ask that you approach these questions with humility and an open mind so that after this course, you will better appreciate the complexity of moral issues and can empathize with those who hold contradictory views to your own, even if you don't agree with them.

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

* 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 on Blackboard.

3. COURSE FORMAT AND COVID-19

This course will be taught in person. In light of the continuing COVID-19 pandemic, however, students must observe university protocols regarding COVID-19. Current university protocols can be found at <https://coronavirus.olemiss.edu/>. Students should follow these protocols carefully to protect themselves and respect their fellow students and the instructor.

Currently, masks are required in the classroom and all university buildings for both vaccinated and unvaccinated students. Please note that single-layer bandanas and neck gaiters do not meet CDC standards. Current best practices recommend KN95 or N95 masks for protection: <https://www.wsj.com/articles/cloth-face-mask-omicron-11640984082>. (Note that transmission will occur within 27 minutes if everyone is wearing only a cloth mask, or within 60 minutes if everyone is wearing only a surgical mask.) **If you do not have access to a higher quality mask, I strongly recommend wearing two masks to protect yourself and those around you.**

Masks must cover both your nose and your mouth and must be worn at all times in the classroom. Do not remove your mask or pull your mask down to talk, for instance. If you do not have a mask, you can get one from the PPL main office. Anyone who refuses to wear a mask in class will be asked to leave and will be subject to consequences as outline in the University policy: <https://conflictresolution.olemiss.edu/covidupdates/>.

Do not come to class if you feel sick or have a fever. If you are quarantined, sick, or have been otherwise approved and you feel well enough, you should attend class remotely via the Zoom link available on Blackboard. However, students should, whenever possible, get my prior approval to attend remotely. They should also keep their camera on during class and remain engaged.

If students test positive for COVID-19 at any health care facility, they must contact the Student Health Center at 662.915.7274. Students with COVID-19 should seek medical attention and let the instructor know they will be missing class. Students who are exposed to someone with COVID-19 should contact the Student Health Center to **get tested 3-5 days following exposure** and follow quarantine protocols found at <https://coronavirus.olemiss.edu/students/>.

The University Counseling Center is a professional facility offered by the University of Mississippi to assist students with many types of life stressors that interrupt day-to-day functioning, including the stressors associated with the COVID-19 pandemic. They offer individual counseling, couple's counseling, group counseling, stress management, crisis intervention, assessments and referrals, outreach programs, consultations, and substance abuse services. There is no fee for currently enrolled University students and everything you say to your counselor is confidential. You can contact the Counseling Center for information about mental health issues at <https://counseling.olemiss.edu>. You can schedule an appointment or get information about appointments by calling the UCC at 662.915.3784.

4. COURSE REQUIREMENTS

4.1 Participation: Students are expected to participate in class. To receive full participation, students should offer a substantial contribution in 16 class meetings. A substantial contribution can be: (1) A critical or reflective question (not a basic, surface-level question that is easily answered in a few words (though these are welcome too—but not for credit)), (2) A reflective or insightful response to another’s question, (3) A reflective or insightful response to my question, etc. Students can earn partial participation credit through discussion with me in email or office hours.

4.2 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.

4.3 Reading Quizzes: Because the course is driven by discussion of concepts and arguments found in the readings, it is imperative that students read course material. To incentivize reading, there are reading quizzes on Blackboard. Students should complete the relevant reading quiz *before* coming to class for discussion. You are allowed to consult the readings when completing these quizzes. There are 19 reading quizzes, but I will drop the lowest four quiz grades and average only the best 15.

4.4 Exam: We will have one exam over the material covered in the first 7 weeks of the course. Anything covered in either the reading or in-class discussions may be included on the exam. Further details about the exam will be given in class.

4.5 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 a group presentation on some recent policy related to the topic under discussion. The group will (i) summarize the policy and (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.). Then the group will field questions from their peers in a class discussion.

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.

4.6 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. It 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. Detailed instructions for the outline, as well as a rubric and an example outline from a student, are available on Blackboard.

4.7 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. Essays should be 1000-1200 words. Detailed instructions and a rubric for the essay are posted on Blackboard.

4.8 Op-Ed: Rather than a final exam, students should write and submit a 500-word version of their essay. This version of the essay 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, but further details, instructions, examples, and a rubric are available on Blackboard.

5. GRADING POLICIES

5.1 Grade Distribution: The course requirements contribute to your final grade as follows:

Participation:	10%	Group Presentation:	15%
Reading Quizzes:	10%	Essay Outline	5%
Short Assignment 1:	5%	Essay:	20%
Short Assignment 2:	5%	Op-ed:	10%
Exam:	20%		

5.2 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

5.3 Late or Missed Assignments: In general, assignments handed in late without a legitimate excuse will be penalized 1 point (out of 10) for each day late, including weekends. Late assignments will be accepted up to four days after the due date. *After four days, assignments will not be accepted and will receive an automatic 0.* If a student is unable to meet an assignment's deadline, they should contact the instructor **before** the deadline. **Excuses for lateness given after the fact will almost never be honored.**

6. UNIVERSITY POLICIES

6.1 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. Students can also learn more, and take certification quizzes, at the following link: <https://plagiarism.iu.edu/tutorials/>. **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.

Please also keep in mind that the course materials (lecture slides, exams, instructions, rubrics, etc.) are my intellectual property and must not be shared with others, including students outside the class or

uploaded to “tutoring” sites. Students who share such materials or who consult such materials from others will be guilty of academic misconduct and will be disciplined accordingly.

6.2 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. *Students with diagnosed health concerns that may affect their compliance with COVID-19 health requirements should contact UM’s Student Disability Services (SDS) Office (<https://sds.olemiss.edu>) to see if they are eligible for an SDS accommodation as soon as possible.*

7. CLASSROOM POLICIES

7.1 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>.

I will take attendance at the beginning of every class meeting. Students are expected to attend all class meetings (unless the absence is excused). Students will not receive any points for attending class. Instead, they will lose points from their final grade if too many classes are missed without justification. **Students may miss two class meetings without penalty. After the third unexcused absence, the student’s final grade will be lowered by 2% for each absence.** Students are expected to act professionally and to be respectful of the time of both the instructor and their fellow students.

Students with a legitimate excuse (illness, internet problems, etc.) should notify me as soon as possible and, if they are able, should provide some documentation of the excuse. For instance, if you have tested positive for COVID-19, you may send a picture of your test result. *However, please do not seek documentation if it will put you or others at risk. **If you or someone you live with has been exposed to COVID-19, do not come to class until you have tested negative.***

7.2 Punctuality and Attention: Please enter the classroom on time to minimize distractions. Once in the room, you are expected to fully participate in the discussion and to minimize distractions that are within your control. This means no cell phones, outside chats, etc. Students are also expected to remain in class for the entire discussion. If students have a legitimate reason for being late or leaving early, they should notify me ahead of time. ***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. Students who habitually come to class late will also be marked as absent.***

7.3 Respect and Civility During Discussion: 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.

8. COURSE SCHEDULE (subject to change)

Students are responsible for carefully completing each reading assignment and reading quiz **before** coming to a discussion session. 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 and posted on Blackboard. **All readings or videos are posted to Blackboard in the relevant learning module.** Readings marked “Recommended” are not required, but the information in those readings may be helpful in class discussion or if you are writing on that topic. **Additional readings on topics are available on Blackboard for students who want to read about the topic more or who are looking for sources for paper topics.**

	Readings	Assignments
ETHICAL FRAMEWORKS		
1 T 1.18	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Introduction Kwame Anthony Appiah, “What Will Future Generations Condemn Us For?” 	Getting to Know You Survey (Bb)
2 R 1.20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mark Timmons, “A Moral Theory Primer” (1-6) Lewis Vaughn, “On Religion and Relativism” <i>Recommended: Hugh LaFollette, “Reading Philosophy” (4 pgs)</i> 	Reading Quiz 1 (Bb)
<i>Public Reason</i>		
3 T 1.25	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Leif Wenar, SEP Entry on “John Rawls” (§3) 	Reading Quiz 2 (Bb)
<i>Consequentialism</i>		
4 R 1.27	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mark Timmons, “A Moral Theory Primer” 2A Bernard Williams, “George, Jim, and Utilitarianism” 	Reading Quiz 3 (Bb)
5 T 2.1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Peter Singer, “The Life You Can Save” 	Short Writing Assignment 1
6 R 2.3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NO CLASS: PPE Conference 	
<i>Deontology</i>		
7 T 2.8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> David McNaughton and Piers Rawling, “Deontology” 	Reading Quiz 4 (Bb)
8 R 2.10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Jason Brennan, “Should Employers Pay a Living Wage?” 	Reading Quiz 5 (Bb)
<i>Rights</i>		
9 T 2.15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> George Rainbolt, “Rights” 	Reading Quiz 6 (Bb)
10 R 2.17	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Merten Reglitz, “The Human Right to Free Internet Access” 	Reading Quiz 7 (Bb)

<i>Contractualism and Justice</i>		
11 T 2.22	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> John Rawls, "A Theory of Justice" <i>Recommended:</i> Mark Timmons, "A Moral Theory Primer" 2G 	Reading Quiz 8 (Bb)
12 R 2.24	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Derrick Darby, "Reparations and Racial Inequality" YouTube video, Ta-Nehisi Coates debating Coleman Hughes on Reparations During a June 2019 Congressional Hearing (25:00) <i>Recommended Background (Helpful to skim, at least, for details about redlining):</i> Ta-Nehisi Coates, "The Case for Reparations" (58 pgs) 	Reading Quiz 9 (Bb)
<i>Putting it All Together</i>		
13 T 3.1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fall 2021 Regional Ethics Bowl Cases (Case 9: Giving in to the DarkSide, and Case 14: Living and Dying in Skid Row) 	Exam available after class
APPLICATION: WHO COUNTS IN POLICY MAKING?		
<i>Abortion</i>		
14 R 3.3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Judith Jarvis Thomson, "A Defense of Abortion" 	Reading Quiz 10 (Bb)
S 3.5		Exam due by 11:59pm
15 T 3.8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Perry Hendricks, "Even If the Fetus is Not a Person, Abortion is Immoral: The Impairment Argument" 	Reading Quiz 11 (Bb)
16 R 3.10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Kyle Fritz, "Unjustified Asymmetry: Positive Claims of Conscience and Heartbeat Bills" 	Reading Quiz 12 (Bb)
F 3.11		Short Writing Assignment 2 due by 11:59pm
NO CLASS: SPRING BREAK (3.12-3.20)		
<i>Animals and the Environment</i>		
17 T 3.22	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Spencer Case, "Senator Booker is Right about Factory Farming" Lingxi Chenyang, "Is Meat the New Tobacco? Regulating Food Demand in the Age of Climate Change" 	Reading Quiz 13 (Bb)
18 R 3.24	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sujatha Byravan and Sudhir Chella Rajan, "The Ethical Implications of Sea-Level Rise Due to Climate Change" 	Reading Quiz 14 (Bb)
19 T 3.29	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No reading 	Group 1 Presentation
APPLICATION: FAIRNESS AND JUSTICE		
<i>Immigration</i>		

20	R	3.31	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Matthew Lister, "Enforcing Immigration Law" 	Reading Quiz 15 (Bb)
	S	4.2		Essay Outline Due by 11:59pm
21	T	4.5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Jose Jorge Mendoza, "The Contradiction of Crimmigration" YouTube video, "Beto O'Rourke and Julian Castro Spar Over Immigration Policy" (2:10) 	Reading Quiz 16 (Bb)
22	R	4.7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No reading 	Group 2 Presentation
<i>Criminal Justice</i>				
23	T	4.12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> YouTube video, Bryan Stevenson, "Brief But Spectacular" (3:23) Angela Davis, "Let's Make a Deal: The Power of the Plea Bargain" (skip the "Plea Bargaining with the Snitch" section) Michelle Alexander, "Go to Trial: Crash the Justice System" 	Reading Quiz 17 (Bb)
24	R	4.14	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NO CLASS: Pacific APA 	
	S	4.16		Essay Due by 11:59pm
25	T	4.19	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Michael Gentzel, "Biased Face Recognition Technology Used by Government: A Problem for Liberal Democracy" 	Reading Quiz 18 (Bb)
26	R	4.21	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No reading 	Group 3 Presentation
APPLICATION: UNCHARTED TERRITORY				
<i>Technology and the Future</i>				
27	T	4.26	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bill Robertson, "How Do Self-Driving Cars Work?" YouTube video, "The Ethical Dilemma of Self-Driving Cars" (4:15) Sven Nyholm, "The Ethics of Crashes With Self-Driving Cars: A Roadmap, I" 	Reading Quiz 19 (Bb)
28	R	4.28	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No reading 	Group 4 Presentation

Op-Ed due Tuesday, May 5 by noon