

HONORS INTRODUCTION TO ETHICAL THEORY

This course will consider a range of pressing ethical issues, such as poverty, racism, abortion, animal rights, and climate change. We will look closely at some contemporary writings on these topics, and on the larger questions they have in common. How much can morality legitimately demand of us? To what extent does the greater good outweigh the importance of respect for each person? Are there answers to moral questions at all? This course will be a chance to develop your own views on these topics through close reading, class discussion, and an emphasis on philosophical writing.

Instructor: Eugene Chislenko, chislenko@temple.edu

Office hours: Anderson Hall 750, Thursdays 1-3pm or by appointment

Course requirements: (1) Up to 80 pages of reading each week (all on course website)

(2) Attendance and participation (15%)

(3) Two 5-page papers (40%)

(4) Two peer feedback assignments (20%)

(5) Final exam (25%)

SCHEDULE OF CLASSES AND READINGS

I. Hard Problems

1. Tu 1/16: **Introduction**

2. Th 1/18: **Racism, I**

Reading: Ta-Nehisi Coates, “The Case for Reparations,” through §III (p.23).

3. Tu 1/23: **Racism, II**

Reading: Finish reading “The Case for Reparations.”

View photos and other media online at <https://www.theatlantic.com/reparations>.

4. Th 1/25: **Poverty, I**

Reading: Peter Unger, *Living High and Letting Die*, Chapter 1, through p.20

5. Tu 1/30: **Poverty, II**
Reading: *Living High and Letting Die*, Chapter 2, pp. 24-61
6. Th 2/1: **Poverty, III**
Reading: *Living High and Letting Die*, Chapter 3, pp. 75-80
7. Tu 2/6: **Abortion, I**
Reading: Judith Jarvis Thomson, "A Defense of Abortion"
8. Th 2/8: **Abortion, II**
Reading: Reread "A Defense of Abortion"
9. Tu 2/13: **Non-Human Animals**
Reading: Peter Singer, *Practical Ethics*, Chapter 3: "Equality for Animals?"
10. Th 2/15: **Climate Change, I**
Reading: Naomi Klein, *This Changes Everything*, Introduction
11. Tu 2/20: **Climate Change, II**
Reading: Naomi Klein, *This Changes Everything*, Chapter 5: "Beyond Extractivism: Confronting the Climate Denier Within"
12. Th 2/22: **No class.**
First paper due Friday, 2/23 by noon.
13. Tu 2/27: **Open discussion**
Reading: Someone's first paper. **Peer comments due Wednesday, 2/28 by noon.**
14. Th 3/1: **Writing workshop**
First paper rewrite and peer response due Friday, 3/2 by 5pm.

[No class Tu 3/6 or Th 3/8. Happy spring break!]

II. Larger Issues

15. Tu 3/13: **The Greater Good**
Reading: Jeremy Bentham, *An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation*, Chapters 1 and 4
16. Th 3/15: **Happiness and Integrity**
Reading: Bernard Williams, "A Critique of Utilitarianism" (selections)
17. Tu 3/20: **How Much can Morality Demand of Us?**
Reading: Martin Luther King, Jr., "Letter from Birmingham City Jail"
18. Th 3/22: **Making a Difference**
Reading: Jonathan Glover, "It Makes No Difference Whether or Not I Do It"
19. Tu 3/27: **Doing and Allowing**

Reading: Warren Quinn, "Actions, Intentions, and Consequences: The Doctrine of Doing and Allowing"

20. Th 3/29: **Problem Cases and Moral Intuitions**

Reading: Judith Jarvis Thomson, "The Trolley Problem"

Second paper due Friday, 3/30 by noon.

21. Tu 4/3: **Open discussion**

Reading: Someone's second paper. **Peer comments due Wednesday, 4/4 by noon.**

22. Th 4/5: **Writing workshop**

No new reading.

Second paper rewrite and peer response due Friday, 4/6 by 5pm.

III. Foundations

23. Tu 4/10: **Morality is Relative**

Reading: Gilbert Harman, "Moral Relativism" (Chapter 1 of Harman and Thomson, *Moral Relativism and Moral Objectivity*)

24. Th 4/12: **Morality is Objective**

Reading: Derek Parfit, *On What Matters*, Chapter 2: "Objective Theories"

25. Tu 4/17: **The Normative Question**

Reading: Christine Korsgaard, *The Sources of Normativity*, Lecture 1, pp.7-39

26. Th 4/19: **Constitutive Standards of Action**

Reading: Christine Korsgaard, *Self-Constitution*, Chapter 2, pp. 27-34

27. Tu 4/24: **Open discussion**

No new reading

28. Th 4/26: **Final exam review**

No new reading. Exam review questions distributed in class.

Final exam Tu 5/8, 10:30-12:30.

COURSE POLICIES

Office Hours: I encourage you to come to office hours often; talking one-on-one or in small groups is one of the best ways to get a handle on the material and methods of the course. You'll probably get more out of it if you come with specific questions, but coming to talk about the issues in a more general way is fine too. If you have friends in the class, feel free to come as a small group. If you want to meet but have a schedule conflict, let me know and we can find a different time. I'll also hold extra office hours each time a paper deadline is coming up.

Plagiarism: *All* written work for this course must be your own. Be sure to cite any works you use, including web sites, books, and articles. Presenting *anyone* else's work as your own is considered plagiarism. Please read Temple University's Policy on Academic Honesty: http://www.temple.edu/bulletin/Responsibilities_rights/responsibilities/responsibilities.shtm

Disabilities: Any student who has a need for accommodation based on the impact of a documented disability, including accommodations for access to technology resources and electronic instructional materials required for the course, should contact me privately to discuss your situation by the end of the second week of classes, or as soon as you can. If you haven't already, please contact Disability Resources and Services (DRS) in 100 Ritter Annex or 215-204-1280 to learn more about the resources available to you. I will work with DRS to coordinate reasonable accommodations for all students with documented disabilities.

Statement on Academic Freedom: Freedom to teach and freedom to learn are inseparable facets of academic freedom. Temple University has adopted a policy on Student and Faculty Academic Rights and Responsibilities (Policy # 03.70.02) which can be accessed through the following link: http://policies.temple.edu/getdoc.asp?policy_no=03.70.02