



Philosophy 1304: Morality and Justice (Fall, 2016)

Professor:

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Office Hours: Monday and Wednesday 1:20–2:20 pm & by appointment

Teaching assistants:

Kaetlin Taylor Email: kaetlin@vt.edu Office: 208 MWH
Office Hours: Wednesday, 1.30–2.30 pm & by appointment

Dillon Bak Email: dbak1@vt.edu Office: 212 MWH
Office Hours: Tuesday, 3.30–4.30 pm & by appointment

Dominick Cooper Email: drc327a@vt.edu Office: 210 MWH
Office Hours: Wednesday, 1.30-2.30 pm & by appointment

Lindsay Whittaker Email: lmwhitta@vt.edu Office: 210 MWH
Office Hours: Monday, 2-3 pm & by appointment

Course Description:

We face philosophical questions about morality and justice in our everyday lives. Are you morally obligated to give away a large portion of your income to charity, or to stop eating meat? Is it morally permissible to abort fetuses? Should the state stop redistributing wealth from the rich to the poor? And sometimes, when we reflect philosophically, we realize that we assume certain views without knowing whether they are true, or why. Should we live in a democracy? Should we vote? Should we have elections?

These are some of the questions we will consider in this course. We will also consider prominent theories that seek to systematize and justify our reflective judgments about these issues by appealing to *utility* or *rights*.

This course also aims to teach you how to understand, evaluate, and develop philosophical arguments, so that you can see whether and how particular views about morality and justice can be justified.

You may well find that you start out with strong commitments that do not stand up to critical scrutiny. You may also find that it hard to reconcile your answers to what seem at first glance to be quite separate questions. This is all part of the challenge (and the fun!) of philosophy. Our central goal is not to reach a consensus or to settle any of these matters decisively; it is to better understand some of the central questions in moral philosophy, and learn how to use philosophical tools to address them.

Meeting times

Lecture: Monday and Wednesday, 12:20 pm – 1:10 pm, MCB 100

Section:

86559	Friday	11:15 AM - 12:05 PM	Kaetlin Taylor
86560	Friday	12:20 - 1:10 PM	Kaetlin Taylor
86561	Friday	12:20 - 1:10 PM	Dillon Bak
86562	Friday	8 - 8:50 AM	Dominick Cooper
86563	Friday	10:10 - 11 AM	Kaetlin Taylor
86564	Friday	9:05 - 9:55 AM	Dominick Cooper
86566	Friday	2:30 - 3:20 PM	Lindsay Whittaker
86568	Friday	1:25 - 2:15 PM	Lindsay Whittaker
86569	Friday	10:10 - 11 AM	Dominick Cooper
86570	Friday	10:10 - 11 AM	Dillon Bak
86571	Friday	12:20 - 1:10 PM	Lindsay Whittaker
86572	Thursday	3:30 - 4:20 PM	Dillon Bak

Prerequisites: This course is open to all students.

Required text: All readings are available as PDFs on Canvas.

Liberal Education information: Three credits. Satisfies CLE Area 2: Ideas, Cultural Traditions and Values.

Expectations for Classroom Conduct:

Students are expected to be charitable, sensitive, impersonal, and humble. This class will discuss some very controversial issues, and within each section there will be a wide variety of moral, political, and religious commitments, some of which may be radically opposed to your own views. Questions we discuss may have special personal significance to someone in the class: perhaps they, or a loved one, faced a similar dilemma in the past. And especially since philosophers and your fellow students are also intelligent and thoughtful people, be open to the possibility that when you disagree with their views you may well be the one who's wrong. So always frame your comments in ways that:

1. Charitable – take the most plausible and sympathetic interpretation of classmates' (and authors') comments, positions, or arguments.
2. Sensitive – respect that the issues we discuss could have a special political, religious or personal significance to others in the room.
3. Impersonal – evaluate positions and arguments, not people.
4. Humble – are open to the possibility that you are wrong.

i>clicker:

I will use the i>clicker student response system in class this term. i>clicker allows everyone to register their views about issues easily and anonymously, and allows me to gauge your understanding of the texts. I will use i>clicker to keep track of attendance. You will not be graded on whether you answer questions correctly; just answer questions honestly. You will need to purchase and register (on Canvas) your i>clicker. Further information about i>clickers will be provided separately.

Assessments:

Due Date	Assessment	% of Grade
Ongoing	Class participation	10
Ongoing	5 x short writing tasks	10
October 2	Short essay	15
October 30	Long essay	25
November 9	In-class exam	15
Exam Week (Dec 9 – 15)	Final exam	25

Before you submit your first assessment you are strongly encouraged to read Jim Pryor's 'Guidelines on Reading Philosophy' and 'Guidelines on Writing a Philosophy Paper':

www.jimpryor.net/teaching/guidelines/reading.html and
www.jimpryor.net/teaching/guidelines/writing.html.

Class Participation

You are expected to attend both lecture and section. Accommodations will be made for students with out of town athletic events, for medical reasons, or on other reasonable grounds at the TA's discretion. In all cases, appropriate documentation will be required.

You are expected to come to section with the course text and your notes, ready to discuss the week's material, and actively participate in discussion.

Short Writing Tasks

You are expected to complete five short (300 word) writing tasks, which will be focused on specific philosophical skills, applied to the issues and texts considered in the course. These skills include: analyzing and understanding philosophical arguments; developing objections to arguments; and composing arguments that defend your own views.

Seven options for writing tasks will be offered during the course. They will be spaced two weeks apart. You must complete at least five. Your best five of the seven writing tasks will be considered for your final grade.

Short Essay

You are expected to write a 1,000-word essay analyzing and evaluating an argument from one of the texts that we consider in the first five weeks of the course.

Long Essay

You are expected to write a 1,500-word essay defending a position on one of the philosophical issues that we consider in the first nine weeks of the course. You will be expected to compose a valid argument for your position, defend its premises, and consider and respond to objections.

In-class Exam

The in-class exam will test your mastery of the ideas and skills discussed in the readings and in class, especially weeks 10-12. The exams will be a mix of true and false, multiple choice, and short answer questions.

Final Exam

The final exam will be in the same format as the in-class exam, though it will be longer, and will cover material from the entire course.

Submitting Assessments:

All assessments will be submitted on Canvas by 5 pm on the listed due date. Each assessment should be submitted with (a) your student number and word count on the front page, and (b) your name and honor pledge on a separate page at the very end of your assessment. *Please do not write your name anywhere else on your assessment.* This is for the purpose of allowing TAs to grade your assessments anonymously, which will significantly reduce the effects that implicit biases may otherwise have on grading.

Honor Code Procedures:

The Undergraduate Honor Code pledge that each member of the university community agrees to abide by states:

“As a Hokie, I will conduct myself with honor and integrity at all times. I will not lie, cheat, or steal, nor will I accept the actions of those who do.”

Students enrolled in this course are responsible for abiding by the Honor Code. A student who has doubts about how the Honor Code applies to any assignment is responsible for obtaining specific guidance from the course instructor before submitting the assignment for evaluation. Ignorance of the rules does not exclude any member of the University community from the requirements and expectations of the Honor Code.

The Virginia Tech honor pledge for assignments is as follows: “I have neither given nor received unauthorized assistance on this assignment.”

The pledge is to be written out on all graded assignments at the university and signed by the student. The honor pledge represents both an expression of the student’s support of the honor code and an unambiguous acknowledgment that the student has, on the assignment in question, abided by the obligation that the Honor Code entails. In the absence of a written honor pledge, the Honor Code still applies to an assignment.

Any of the following acts constitute academic misconduct: cheating, plagiarism, falsification, fabrication, multiple submissions, complicity, or violation of university, college, department, program, course, or faculty rules. Misuse of i>clickers can also constitute academic misconduct. If you have questions or are unclear about what constitutes academic misconduct on an assignment, please speak with me. I take the Honor Code very seriously in this course. The normal sanction I will recommend for a violation of the Honor Code is an **F*** sanction as your final course grade. The F represents failure in the course. The “*” is intended to identify a student who has failed to uphold the values of academic integrity at Virginia Tech. A student who receives a sanction of **F*** as their final course grade shall have it documented on their transcript with the notation “FAILURE DUE TO ACADEMIC HONOR CODE VIOLATION.” You would be required to complete an education program administered by the Honor System in order to have the “*” and notation “FAILURE DUE TO ACADEMIC HONOR CODE VIOLATION” removed from your

transcript. The “F” however would be permanently on your transcript.

For additional information about the Honor Code, please visit:

<https://www.honorsystem.vt.edu/>

To pre-register for one of the “Understanding the Virginia Tech Honor Code” sessions that are held in August, or to complete the Academic Integrity Module, please email honorsys@vt.edu.

Other Administrative Issues:

Electronics Policy

Students are also expected to not use electronic equipment in class (including phones and laptops), except for i-clicker activities. Please bring printed copies of the applicable readings to lectures and sections.

Lateness Policy

Late assessments will be penalized at the rate of 5% per day, unless (a) you have a documented illness or other extenuating circumstance, and (b) you have the explicit authorization to hand in the assignment late, from your TA or the Professor, to be granted at their discretion. If you foresee a conflict between an exam date or due date and another commitment, please email your TA well in advance so that he or she can provide a fair alternative. We reserve the right to deny otherwise reasonable requests for accommodation if requested at the last minute without good reason.

Absences

“Students who miss class due to circumstances beyond their control can request to have the absence verified. Each faculty member will make the final determination in allowing the request to make-up missed academic work. Verification of absence does not override the authority of a faculty member. For family or personal emergencies, contact the Dean of Students Office (109 East Eggleston Hall, 231-3787). For absence related to mental health, contact Cook Counseling Center (McComas Hall, 231-6557). For absence related to physical health, contact Schiffert Health

Center (McComas Hall, 231-6444). Please note, Schiffert Health Center will only verify absences resulting from prolonged illness (at least 5 days). In addition, Schiffert does not notify faculty of one-time student appointments in the Health Center. Relevant documentation is required for any verification of absence. The Dean of Students office does not verify absences related to religious and ethnic holidays.”

Disabilities

I wholeheartedly endorse Tech’s policy and practice of creating inclusive learning environments for all students, including students with disabilities. If aspects of this course – such as time limited exams or inaccessible web content – result in barriers to your inclusion or your ability to meet course requirements please notify your TA as soon as possible. We will adapt methods, materials or testing in order to offer fair terms of participation. You are also encouraged to contact the Services for Students with Disabilities office to discuss and arrange reasonable accommodations. Please call 540-231-0858 or visit their website at www.ssd.vt.edu/students.htm for more information.

Schedule:

All readings are available on Canvas.

Please bring printed copies of the relevant readings to class.

Week 1		Introduction to moral philosophy
M	August 22	Do We Have a Duty to Vote?
	Reading: (Optional)	Loren Lomasky & Geoffrey Brennan, 'Is There a Duty to Vote?'; John Halle and Noam Chomsky, 'An Eight Point Brief for Lesser Evil Voting'
W	August 24	Do We Have a Duty to Not Eat Animals?
	Reading:	Alastair Norcross, 'Puppies, Pigs, and People'
F	August 26	Section
Week 2		Charity
M	August 29	Do We Have a Duty to Give to Charity?
	Reading:	Peter Singer, 'Famine, Affluence, and Morality'
W	August 31	Do We Have a Duty to Give to the Best Charity?
	Reading:	William MacAskill, <i>Doing Good Better</i> , pp. 1–10, 29–42. [Please also look at www.givewell.org .]
F	September 2	Section
Week 3		Utilitarianism
M	September 5	~~LABOR DAY (NO CLASS)~~
W	September 7	Utilitarianism & Options

	Reading:	Shelly Kagan, <i>The Limits of Morality</i> , pp. 1-4; Amia Srinivasan, 'Stop the Robot Apocalypse'; Bernard Williams, 'A Critique of Utilitarianism'.
F	September 9	Section
Week 4		Rights
M	September 12	Rights as Constraints
	Reading:	Judith Jarvis Thomson, 'The Trolley Problem'
W	September 14	Rights Conflicts
	Reading:	Frederick Douglass, 'Is it Right and Wise to Kill a Kidnapper?'
F	September 16	Section
Week 5		Abortion
M	September 19	Pro-life Views
	Reading:	Don Marquis, 'Why Abortion is Immoral'
W	September 21	Pro-choice Views
	Reading:	Judith Jarvis Thomson, 'A Defense of Abortion'
F	September 23	Section
Week 6		Liberalism
M	September 26	Justice as Fairness

Reading: John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, pp. 10–19, 52–56, 118–121.

W September 28 Disability

Reading: Christie Hartley, ‘Disability and Justice’

F September 30 Section

Week 7 Libertarianism

M October 3 The Entitlement Theory

Reading: Robert Nozick, *Anarchy, State, Utopia*, pp. 149–64, 174–60, 178–80

W October 5 Historical Injustices

Reading: Bernard Boxill, ‘A Lockean Argument for Black Reparations’

F October 7 Section

Week 8 Free Speech

M October 10 A Free Market Place of Ideas

Reading: John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty*, ch. 2.

W October 12 Pornography

Reading: Rae Langton & Caroline West, ‘Scorekeeping in a Pornographic Language Game’

~~FALL BREAK (OCT 14-16)~~

Week 9 Epistemic Injustice

M October 17 Testimonial Injustice

Reading: Miranda Fricker, *Epistemic Injustice*, ch. 1

W October 19 Hermeneutic Injustice

Reading: Miranda Fricker, *Epistemic Injustice*, ch. 7

F October 21 Section

Week 10 Why Democracy?

M October 24 Non-Instrumental Justifications

Reading: Alvin Goldman, ‘What is Democracy (and What is Its Raison D’Etre?)’; Robert Nozick, *Anarchy, State, and Utopia*, pp. 290-292

W October 26 Instrumental Justifications

Reading: Helene Landemore, ‘Why the Many are Smarter than the Few and Why it Matters’

F October 28 Section

Week 11 Who Should Vote?

M October 31 Restricted Voting

Reading: Claudio Lopez-Guerra, ‘Disenfranchisement on the Basis of Ignorance’

W November 2 Compulsory Voting

Reading: William Galston, ‘Telling Americans to Vote, or

Else'; Jill Sheppard, 'Compulsory voting results in more evenly distributed political knowledge'

F November 4 Section

Week 12 Elections

M November 7 Should We Have Elections?
 Reading: Alexander Guerrero, 'The Lottocracy'

W November 9 In-class exam

F November 11 Section

Week 13 Borders

M November 14 Open Borders
 Reading: Joseph Carens, 'The Case for Open Borders'

W November 16 Closed Borders
 Reading: Jonathan Seglow, 'The Ethics of Immigration'

F November 18 Section

~~ THANKSGIVING BREAK (NOV 19-27)~~

Week 14 Responsibility

M November 28 Incompatibilism
 Reading: Peter van Inwagen, 'The Incompatibility of Free

Will and Determinism'

W November 30 Compatibilism
 Reading: Peter Strawson, 'Freedom and Resentment'

F December 2 Section

Week 15 Punishment

M December 5 Punishment and the Urban Poor
 Reading: Tommie Shelby, 'Justice, Deviance and the Dark Ghetto'

W December 7 Course Overview

This syllabus is subject to change.
 Changes will be announced in class and posted on Canvas.