

Current Moral and Social Issues: Sections with Prof. Derstine

Janelle Derstine, Ph.D. (Rutgers)

Contact: ceridwen@rutgers.edu -- Put your **LAST NAME** and **CMSI** in subject line!

Fall 2020: Asynchronous Class, meetings will be recorded and linked to from Sakai within approx. 24—48 hours. Meetings (for now, at least) are Wednesdays 4pm and Fridays TBD

Office hours: Make an appointment via email *first*. Let me know at least 2-3 times/days you are available. LMK if you prefer Zoom, WebEx, Facetime, or Phone. Allow at least 24 hours for me to get back to you.

WebEx: <https://rutgers.webex.com/meet/ceridwen> 791940766

Required Text: Russ Shafer-Landau—*A Concise Intro to Ethics* ISBN: 9780190058173.

Core Requirement: This course meets the AHo core requirement

Overview:

What makes an action morally right or wrong? When do persons deserve to be punished for wrongdoing? For example, what is the aim of imprisonment? Is this how we ought to punish non-violent offenders? What about institutional wrongdoing? Should we be concerned about the lead found in the water of Flint, MI, even if it doesn't affect *us*? What about natural gas pipelines and drilling, like DAPL? Is this fair to the First Nations? What about campus sexual assault? Is it reasonable to make sure the alleged perpetrator has due process in a fair system? In this course, we critically examine a host of hotbed issues in the US today: gun rights, sexual assault, free speech, voting rights, over-incarceration, through the lens of moral philosophy and normative ethical theories. We will investigate and discuss, among other topics, whether there are mitigating factors (e.g., economically disadvantaged citizens, childhood trauma, members of historically marginalized group) we ought to take into account when assessing the normative claims we typically make about others. We will be taking on some very controversial topics this semester. Get ready!

Undergraduate Learning Outcomes:

As a result of fully participating in this class, students will be able to:

1. Understand the key theories and concepts involved in 6 different normative ethical theories.
2. Critically examine how these theories pertain to current moral debates in contemporary society and media.
3. Summarize, write and verbalize key theories and concepts studied.
4. Articulate a number of policy changes or reforms that may guide legislators in ameliorating contemporary moral issues in US

Expectations for All Students:

1. Commit to attending each class, or completing each Lesson on Sakai (for online class)
2. Check email or Sakai DAILY for any announcements or updates

3. Be prepared to discuss assigned readings and engage positively in class activities;
4. Be willing to examine and share your own assumptions and experiences;
5. Be respectful of different perspectives offered by classmates and professor
6. Complete assignments (you will be asked to drop if you miss too many)
7. Submit an anonymous teaching evaluation at the end of the course

Assessment:

25% 3 short papers (1 page)

25% blog comments and VSAs (to be explained)

25% midterm (short answer, online open book and notes but no internet or phone access)

25% final take home essay

NO FINAL EXAM

Important Requirements and Advice

1. Blog comments are required & your final grade will go down an entire grade (e.g., B+ downgraded to C+) if you miss too many
2. I will not accept late work without a verified note from Dean
3. No makeups for missed exams, you will receive a ZERO if you miss an exam (unless note from Dean)
4. In exceptional cases, for outstanding circumstances, I may choose to accept late work deducted 25% each day.
5. All written work shall be in PDF format when uploaded online or I will not read it.
6. I do not write recommendation letters.

Disability Services

Rutgers University welcomes students with disabilities into all of the University's educational programs. In order to receive consideration for reasonable accommodations, a student with a disability must contact the appropriate disability services office at the campus where you are officially enrolled, participate in an intake interview, and provide documentation: <https://ods.rutgers.edu/students/documentation-guidelines>. If the documentation supports your request for reasonable accommodations, your campus's disability services office will provide you with a Letter of Accommodations. Please share this letter with your instructors and discuss the accommodations with them as early in your courses as possible. To begin this process, please complete the Registration form on the ODS web site at: <https://ods.rutgers.edu/students/registration-form>.

The following is the schedule from Spring 2020. FALL 2020 will have their own schedule by Friday September 6 on Sakai Resources (announcement will be made).

For now, read Introductory Chapter (NOT CHAPTER 1) and then Chapter 19. HW 1 is due Sunday 5pm.

You may look at the following to see what yours will roughly look like...

Date	Subject	Readings: to be done <i>prior</i> to class
Sept 2	Introduction to Course; Syllabus; Scope and Goals of Class	Syllabus
Sept 4	Applied Ethics Introduction Introductory Concepts	Chapter 1 (CI)
Sept 8	Consequentialism Introduction	Chapter 6 Consequentialism (CI)
Sept 10	Consequentialism	The Rhino Hunter (Sakai Podcasts LH Sidebar) Online reading on Utilitarianism
Sept	Blog Post Due on Rhino Hunter	Please work ahead—a lot of material for Wednesday
Sept	Kantianism	Ch 7 Kantianism (CI) Podcast on Blame (Sakai Sidebar Podcasts—52 min)
Sept	Blog post on Blame podcast	
Sept		
Sept	Ethics of Care Gilligan and Kohlberg	Selections from CH 11 Attachment theory video from Gendler TBA (online)
Oct	Moral Reasoning: Arguments Necessary and Sufficient Conditions	Chapter 2 (CI) pages 18–27 only HW assignment: end of chapter questions A-F
Oct	Skepticism about Morality	Chapter 3
Oct	Moral Reasoning Part II: informal fallacies	Chapter 2 pages 28–34 and HW Assignment, end of chapter questions O–T & bring hard copy (typed) to class with questions!
Oct	The Is/Ought Gap Blog Post on Skepticism Chapter 3	Hume reading on Sakai (excerpt)

Oct	Midterm Exam mid October	Short answer (1-3 sentences) 20 questions on Concepts, theories, arguments, principles
Oct	Blog Post on Sandel	Blog post (optional) Sandel Video on What's a Fair Start? (online link)
Oct	Ethics of Big Data: Algorithms and Privacy in Genetics and Information Technology Blog Post on Data Privacy	Article on Data Privacy (BB) Surveillance Capitalism Data & Society Podcast (Sakai Podcasts) or SCL and Cambridge Analytica DNA profiling (ABC Big Ideas TV) Podcast
Oct	Evolutionary Ethics	Nietzsche on Right and Wrong as Amoral Concepts on Sakai The Grandmother Hypothesis (Sakai TBA)
Nov	The Vaccine Detectives Ebola in the DRC and Anti-vaxxers in 'merica Blog Post on COVID and vaccination	Vaccine Detectives Podcast (Sakai Podcasts) BBC on DRC Ebola Violence (Podcast) Vaccine Hesitancy (short article Sakai)
Nov	Social Contract Theory	Ch 8 Social Contract Theory Nozick reading on Entitlement (Sakai)
Nov	Bioethics	Podcast Genetic Experiments on Human Embryos (e.g., Practical Ethics Bites)
Nov	The Good Life	Chapter 4 (CI) Miranda Fricker on Epistemic Injustice (philosopher's pipe podcast)
Nov	Virtue Ethics	Selections from Aristotle (Sakai Resources) Stoic Sportsman article on Sakai
Nov	TBD	
Nov	Sexual Violence and Assault	Rape as a Spectator Sport article on Sakai The kids aren't alright (Sakai Podcast) "Man Up" hidden brain Podcast (sakai)
Dec	Who's getting rich off student debt?	Sakai Podcast

Dec	Gun violence, control, and the 2 nd Amendment	Where criminals get their guns (Sakai Podcast) Has the 2 nd amendment lost its usefulness? (Online video debate)
	TBD	
December 20	Wrap up; conclusions	Final Essay Exam Due (1500 words/6 pages)