

Current Moral and Social Issues: Sections with Prof. Derstine

Janelle Derstine, Ph.D (Rutgers)

Contact: janellederstine@gmail.com -- Put your **LAST NAME** and **CMSI** in subject line!

Wednesdays 9.50—11.10 in Scott

Fridays (usually)—online (to be discussed) First Friday (Jan) of class is ON CAMPUS

Office hours: Wednesdays 12.30–2pm, at Philosophy Dept. (106 Somerset St. 5th flr.) Office # 541 (Ruth Chang's office) EMAIL me in advance if you are planning on coming in.

Required Text: Russ Shafer-Landau — *Fundamentals of Ethics* (FE) **4th edition**

Core Requirement: This course meets the AHo core requirement

Overview:

What is the aim of punishment? When is it Justified? How ought we to punish criminals? Ought we to be concerned about what happens in other areas of the US, e.g., the lead found in the water of Flint, MI? 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 normative and applied ethical issues regarding Justice, Morality, and Punishment in the US. We will investigate and discuss, among other topics, whether there are mitigating factors (e.g., economically disadvantaged citizens, members of historically marginalized group) we ought to take into account when assessing the justification of punishment or crime. 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 contemporary and classical Ethical Theory and Justice Studies.

2. Critically examine how these theories pertain to current 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:

All participants in the course are expected to:

1. Commit to attending each class session, or completing each Lesson on Sakai.
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 a CTAAR (teaching evaluation) at the end of the course

Assessment:

10%: Attendance, Participation in class discussion (including active listening), and Pro-activeness (See student expectations)

30%: Weekly Written HW, which are sets of approx. 10 structured study questions based on the readings. These are typically at least 800—1200 words *total* (I.e., not each question), though some students write more. HW may also include things like Forum Posts on Sakai regarding current events or videos, or short response pieces on current moral issues, or some other short assignments where written work will be due.

20% Media Blog: For this project you will choose a current moral/social issue and write a blog post on it. Specifics about this are on Sakai/Resources. You will prepare a document at the end of the semester that showcases your favorite blog posts (out of the ones you did) and your favorite responses (that you made). Blogs and responses are done 4x each.

15% Group Project/Presentation: You will prepare a short group presentation on a topic related to our class. The project has three components: a group topic proposal due Monday, March 28 (on Sakai), an oral presentation on either Wednesday, May 4 or Monday, May 9, and an individual paper (see below)

25%: Final Essay (take home, 4-6 pages) Submitted via Sakai (and checked for academic integrity via *Turn-it-in*) on the last day of class.

Other Requirements

Attendance is mandatory. Missing more than 2 classes will affect your final grade, regardless of the situation. Exemptions include religious holidays, hospitalizations, and death. Doctor's notes are not acceptable— that's what your 2 freebies are for.

No texting, browsing, leaving class for prolonged periods, or disruptive whispering to surrounding classmates will be tolerated. It is discourteous to both your fellow classmates and me. If you must use your phone or text, please wait until break time or step outside class. I used to allow students to use electronic devices to take notes but that hasn't worked.

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>.