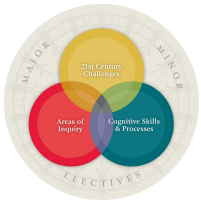
Rutgers University, New Brunswick, Spring 2021
Philosophy 105: Current Moral and Social Issues (01:730:105:90)
Online Course via ***Sakai***
Prof. Steven Kang CMSI.Kang@gmail.com / st7kang@rutgers.edu / virtual office via *BBB*

Current Moral & Social Issues

1. Course Description / Objectives

The course will be concerned with some of the moral issues of our contemporary society. The complexity and controversial nature of these issues challenge us in a uniquely comprehensive way, where we are bound to *integrate* philosophy (especially ethics) into our daily lives that we conduct along with our fellow members of the society. The contentious issues of our time (e.g., *Affirmative Action, Distributive Justice, Abortion*, etc.) demand us to engage with one another in intellectual and civilized dialogue to its utmost serious degree. (There are no prerequisites to the course, except intellectual curiosity and rigorous mindset.) The main emphases of the course will be placed not only on examining (1) intricate moral nature of the issues substantively, but also on nurturing abilities for (2) critical thinking and (3) rational discussion with others.



This course has been certified as a *Core Curriculum course*:
SAS Core Code: Philosophical or Theoretical Issues (***AHo***)

"*Examine critically philosophical and other theoretical issues concerning the nature of reality, human experience, knowledge, value, and/or cultural production*."

http://sasundergrad.rutgers.edu/academics/requirements/core?layout=blog

Through this course, students will be able to do the followings:

1. to understand how morality as a human value is distinct, individually and collectively, from other dimensions of human existence
2. to describe and contrast diverse moral theories
3. to critically evaluate and construct moral arguments through the study of informal logic
4. to apply moral theories to many contentious issues of our contemporary society
5. to discuss with fellow students of diverse views in a civilized and rational manner

2. Grade Determinants

2.1. 50% … on Pass/Fail basis

- (40%) *Individual Reports* (***IR***) … as weekly or bi-weekly assignment:
  On a weekly basis, a set of new modules opens up with *Themes* of questions, to which students will be asked to reply after absorbing the instructional contents contained therein.

- (10%) *Team Report* (***TR***) … one-time as a leader in a team:
  Each student will take turn in performing the role of leading a discussion within a 4-member team; and will be asked to submit a written report.

2.2. 50% … to be graded

- (40%) ***Online*** *Final Exam* (***FE***):
  "Online" exam during the common exam period (Date/Hour: TBA)

- (10%) *Essay* (***EY***):
  7–10 pages; to be argumentative on an issue discussed in class;
  Abstract & Bibliography (***AB***) required for approval prior to writing.

3. Reading Materials

- There is no one single official textbook; all the readings will be distributed in the form of digital files (PDF) via the course website at ***Sakai***, drawn from both classical and contemporary sources (thus, we will use our own edited collection of reading materials).

- Recommended (not required) introductory book:
  James Sterba, *Morality in Practice*, 8th ed., Cengage Learning, 2012.

4. Course Website (at *Sakai*)

Logon to ***Sakai*** with your Rutgers NetID and password at:

https://sakai.rutgers.edu/portal

Select this course:

21S CMSI (S)

NB: (S) refers to this particular section of the course.

5. Course Composition: 2 Theses & 7 Parts

The whole course as *Applied Ethics* has the two big theses, ***Theoria*** and ***Praxis***, under which there are all 7 Parts, **1** - **7** as shown below) :

1. ***Theoria***

    Part **1**. Values in Conflict
    Part **2**. Foundations of Values
    Part **3**. Moral Reasoning

2. ***Praxis***

    Part **4**. On Society as Moral Entity (***SM***)
    Part **5**. On Affirmative Action (***AA***)
    Part **6**. On Distributive Justice (***DJ***)
    Part **7**. On Abortion (***AB***)

The first 3 parts constitute the theoretical foundations of the course (***Theoria***), while the remaining 4 parts are concerned with the practical issues of society (***Praxis***). Note each of the 4 parts in ***Praxis*** is distinctively given a 2-letter abbreviation for the sake of reference (***SM***, ***AA***, ***DJ***, & ***AB***).

These 7 parts are listed on the left column of the 1st web page on the course website, each with a click-able linkage on it, respectively leading to its component modules. Each part, in turn, contains about 8 to 10 individual modules, thereby adding up to actually more than 60 modules, which are numbered *sequentially* (e.g., ***M01*** through ***M62***).

6. Course Structure: *Modus Operandi*

- ♦ After the first phase of the course, during which we will study theoretical aspects of ethics (***Theoria***) comprised of Parts **1**, **2**, & **3**, everyone will be assigned to a 4-member discussion team according to the alphabetical order of your last names.

- ♦ In the second phase of the course, i.e., practical aspects of ethics (***Praxis***), where we will examine intricate nature of moral conflicts by taking up at least four concrete issues in applied ethics (Parts 4 through 7), each team will engage in discussions among themselves, at the ending stage of each issue.

- ♦ A team will consists of 4 members; each of you will be assigned to one team, along with the issue on which you will lead a team discussion (again, according to the alphabetical order of your last name).

- The team discussions will take place through an interactive multimedia platform called *Adobe Connect* (or an alternative one called *Discussion Forum*); in due time, every one will have opportunities to familiarize oneself with them.

- Each of the four members in a team will take turn in performing the role of a leader by assuming the following 2 responsibilities:

  (a) leading the discussion (by posing the questions; gathering and sorting answers; & trying to formulate a consensus through exchanging persuasive argumentations; & also sharing differences, if inconclusive)

  (b) submitting a report on what the team thereby discussed in terms of agreements and disagreements on various aspects of the issue being discussed (this will meet the requirement of ***TR***).

- The *Individual Report* (***IR***) will be assigned on new modules of instructional contents made available on a weekly basis. ***IR*** is primarily for you to get initially knowledgeable about each issue on a self-paced basis by absorbing introductory lectures delivered in streaming video, doing the assigned readings, and replying to the *Themes* of questions posed and explained in each of the modules. It will culminate in the two ending phases, (1) *Summing Up* (where your instructor shall deliver a comprehensive lecture in video on the issue) and (2) *Team Discussion* (where students will discuss among them within a team), respectively, in the four Parts of *Praxis*. Students shall have ample opportunities to get familiar with the process.

- The *Team Report* (***TR***) will serve as a platform in which students get to realize that it is a vitally important intellectual virtue to actively engage in a dialogue with others by being able to express one's own view and also by being able to listen to others, not just passively watch others argue with one another.

- These two reports, ***IR*** and ***TR***, are designed to give you the basic (pass/fail) credits (up to 50%) in following the basic paths of the course. Therefore, you should not assume that, just by virtue of doing the routine reports, you get to know all there is to know for final exam since there will be substantive lectures on which the final exam will be based.

- All the reports should be submitted to the designated spots in the pertinent modules. Everyone should keep track of the accumulated credit points from ***IR*** and ***TR***, not to mention the instructional contents studied in each module, as they will be the basis for the final exam.

NB: Each of you will have plenty of time to get familiar with this *modus operandi*, which is reflective of the very nature of the course as *applied ethics*; as the past semesters have shown, everyone will enjoy this unique intellectual interactions with each other.

7. On IT-preparedness, Email Communications, Netiquette, etc.

- Your instructor intends to utilize the best of what IT can offer for e-Learning to convey the unique nature of Applied Ethics as a discipline that this course represents. Beyond basic computing experiences (e.g., web browsing, word processing, emailing, etc.), everyone shall have a chance to familiarize oneself with a state-of-the-art multimedia platform (called *Adobe Connect*), which will be instrumental to conduct the role of discussion leader in a team that one will be assigned to. (It is highly recommended that one's computing environment is equipped with a webcam; otherwise, the *Discussion Forum* will be implemented as the alternative platform.)

- We will get to utilize multimedia (a.k.a. *Edutainment*), which will prove to be an indispensable part of the course along with readings as the *Themes* (questions) in the ***IR*** assignments.

- Everyone is required to send the following information to instructor's email ("not to be left out of email database"):

  (1) Last Name & First Name
  (2) 2 Email Addresses (one *primary* + another for *backup*)
  (3) Major & Year (e.g., Chemistry, Junior)
  (4) brief description of reasons for taking the course
  (5) whether you have taken online course before or not

- In order for your email to be properly identified in your instructor's sea of emails, you should put the following line in the subject heading of your email:

  (***S***) Your Last Name, "Contents"
  where (***S***) signifies this course and section, 01:730:105:90

- Use the following email addresses of your instructor:

  CMSI.Kang@gmail.com (primary)
  st7kang@rutgers.edu (backup; only when needed)

- Everyone is expected to observe "Netiquette," i.e., network etiquette, as basic courtesy to one another. Your instructor shall hold anyone responsible for any misconducts which will be subject to academic discipline according to the university rules.

8. Note on IT aspect of e-Learning

The adoption of video-streaming (in 'mp4' files) for making course contents available asynchronously has been a careful choice by your instructor to utilize one of the most updated multimedia compression technologies. I have had quite satisfactory experiences with it, which I wouldn't expect anything less this time as well.

There will be always room for improvement in terms of catching up ever-changing IT; and also we have to grant that especially in terms of interactivity on the spot between instructor and students, online instructions should not be compared to in-class instructions. But from the past experiences, your instructor is totally convinced that students can learn course materials online as effectively as in-class (quite often even better than in-class). It is a *huge* advantage that course materials can be accessed from any place and time convenient for students, and as many times as necessary.

9. University Policies & Services

9.1 *On* Academic Integrity:

All the evaluations in this course work (online for-credit exercises & the final in-class exam) shall be conducted in *full* compliance with the Univ. policy on Academic Integrity.

For more info, visit:

http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/academic-integrity-policy/

9.2 *On* Disability Services:

(848) 445-6800
Lucy Stone Hall, Suite A145, Livingston Campus, 54 Joyce Kilmer Avenue, Piscataway, NJ 08854

https://ods.rutgers.edu/

The Office of Disability Services works with students with a documented disability to determine the eligibility of reasonable accommodations, facilitates and coordinates those accommodations when applicable, and lastly engages with the Rutgers community at large to provide and connect students to appropriate resources. Students with disabilities requesting accommodations must follow the procedures outlined at:

http://disabilityservices.rutgers.edu/request.html

9.3 *On* **Student-Wellness Services:**

Just In Case Web App at http://codu.co/cee05e

Access helpful mental health information and resources for yourself or a friend in a mental health crisis on your smart phone or tablet and easily contact CAPS or RUPD.

9.4 *On* **Counseling, ADAP & Psychiatric Services (CAPS):**

(848) 932-7884
17 Senior Street, New Brunswick, NJ 08901
www.rhscaps.rutgers.edu

CAPS is a University mental health support service that includes counseling, alcohol and other drug assistance, and psychiatric services staffed by a team of professional within Rutgers Health services to support students' efforts to succeed at Rutgers University. CAPS offers a variety of services that include: individual therapy, group therapy and workshops, crisis intervention, referral to specialists in the community and consultation and collaboration with campus partners.

9.5 *On* **Violence Prevention & Victim Assistance (VPVA):**

(848) 932-1181
3 Bartlett Street, New Brunswick, NJ 08901
www.vpva.rutgers.edu

The Office for Violence Prevention and Victim Assistance provides confidential crisis intervention, counseling and advocacy for victims of sexual and relationship violence and stalking to students, staff and faculty. To reach staff during office hours when the university is open or to reach an advocate after hours, call 848-932-1181.

9.6 *On* **Scarlet Listeners:**

(732) 247-5555
http://www.scarletlisteners.com/
Free and confidential peer counseling and referral hotline, providing a comforting and supportive safe space.