



Ethics & Society

Spring 2021

PHI 221

“A concept is a brick. It can be used to build a courthouse of reason. Or it can be thrown through the window.”

Gilles Deleuze



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Student Hours: Mondays 12-1:00 pm,
Tuesday 4-5:00 pm ET, by appointment

Introduction

Philosophy affords us the time and space to think more slowly and carefully about matters that already impress themselves on our minds (at least in passing) throughout our lives.



In our everyday lives, we each have ethical commitments, but the study of academic ethics gives us the opportunity to reflect on whether our collective beliefs and values deserve their role as arbiters in our lives, or whether we find that we don't wholly endorse some of those things we've taken for granted.

This semester we'll focus on developing five skills in our investigations of applications of ethical theories and arguments to concrete challenges. The course assignments aim to help students learn to:

- *1: Interpret, explain, and compare significant systems and theories of human ethics and/or values.*
- *2: Analyze ethical debates in terms of their underlying assumptions and implications.*
- *3: Recognize the ethical values at stake in practical, concrete, and/or everyday situations.*
- *4: Apply ethical reasoning toward solving practical problems.*
- *5: Formulate, communicate, and evaluate effective ethical arguments.*

Along the way my hope is that you'll find it helpful to pause and reflect on some of these topics through a new lens. I'm looking forward to our semester together -- welcome to the class!

"We lose ourselves in what we read, only to return to ourselves, transformed and part of a more expansive world" - Judith Butler

Course Schedule



All readings for the class will be provided on Moodle.

There are no required books for the class.

01

Bioethics and Public Health

F 2/19: Roger Higgs, "On Telling Patients the Truth"

M 2/22: Ethics Methodology Slideshow, and Richard Yettell Chappel and Peter Singer, "Pandemic Ethics: The Case for Risky Research"

F 2/26: Julian Savulescu, "Good Reasons to Vaccinate: Mandatory or Payment for Risk?"

02

Ethics of Intimacy and Relationships

M-F 3/1-3/5 Philosopher's On Love, Relationships, Jealousy, Autonomy, Respect, Affairs, Desire, & More (6 Groups) (students assigned to one essay for the week, student responses due at the start of class 3/1).

03

Ethics of Technology

M 3/8: [Film Viewing in Class] "Be Right Back" from Black Mirror & Massimiliano L. Cappuccio, Anco Peeters, William McDonald, "Sympathy for Dolores: Moral Consideration for Robots Based on Virtue and Recognition"

F 3/12: Alexis Elder, "Conversations from Beyond the Grave? A Neo-Confucian Ethics of Chatbots of the Dead"

M 3/15: Elena Esposito, "The Right to Be Forgotten"

F 3/19: Renee Souris, "Parents, Privacy, and Facebook: Legal and Social Responses to the Problem of "Over-Sharing""

04 Environmental and Research Ethics

M 3/22: Eric A. Posner and Cass R. Sunstein, "Climate Change Justice"

F 3/26: Walter Sinnott-Armstrong: "It's Not My Fault: Global Warming and Individual Moral Obligations" & Alex Rosenberg, "What Kind of Problem is Climate Change?"

M 3/29: Tom Regan, "Empty Cages: Animal Rights and Vivisection"

F 4/2: R.G. Frey, "Animals and Their Medical Use"

05 Ethics of Reproduction, Markets, and Sexuality

M 4/5: Debra Satz, "Markets for Women's Reproductive Labor"

F 4/9: Jennifer Parks, "Care Ethics and the Global Practice of Commercial Surrogacy"

M 4/12: Elizabeth Anderson, "Value and the Gift of Sexuality"

F 4/16: Martha Nussbaum, "Taking Money for Bodily Services"

06 Ethics of Racial Justice

M 4/19: Anthony Appiah, "Racisms"

F 4/23: Elizabeth Anderson, "The Future of Racial Integration"

M 4/26: J. Angelo Corlett, "Reparations to Native Americans"

F 4/30: Nashon Perez, "Must We Provide Material Redress for Past Wrongs?"

07 Ethical Significance of Protest

M-F 5/3-5/7: Philosophers On The Art of the Morally Troubling Artists (students assigned to one essay for the week, student responses due at the start of class 5/3)

Assignments & Evaluation



“In the midst of **winter**, I found there was, within me, an invincible summer.” -
Albert Camus

	Prep Work and Class Work	15% Weekly message and methods reflections on the readings, best 15 out of 17 count (200 words). 10% Class activities	25%
	1st Blog Response	Due 3/1-3/5 (500-750 words, plus comments).	10%
	Essay 1	Concerning a topic from Topic 3 (due March 27th) or Part 4 (due April 10th) (1250-1500 words).	25%
	Essay 2	Concerning a topic from Part 5 (due April 23rd), Part 6 (due May 13th) (1250-1500 words).	25%
	2nd Blog Response	Due 5/2-5/7 (750-1000 words, plus comments).	15%



Guidelines & Policies

This section describes class requirements, but please feel free to reach out for clarification or questions.

☐ **Class Attendance.**

Students should attend all classes on time, prepared to participate in class discussions. Students should obtain notes from a class when absent. Students who miss class will need to submit make-up work.

☐ **Use of Moodle**

Course materials and updates will be posted to Moodle. It's important that you check the email linked to Moodle regularly.

☐ **Disability Services**

Students should work with the Office of Disability Services at College Hall 104 early in the semester to establish appropriate accommodations and keep open lines of communication with me to help me ensure a supportive learning environment.

☐ **Late Assignments.**

All deadlines are firm, but each student is allotted four deadline extension days to be used at your discretion (split up or combined). Late blog responses and essays are penalized 1/3 letter grade for each day (or partial day) after the extensions are exhausted, and only accepted up to six days late. Late prep work assignments aren't accepted except by use of one of the four extensions.

☐ **Student Appointments**

My student hours are Mondays 12:00-1:00 pm and Tuesdays 4:00-5:00 pm ET. Students will need to sign up for an appointment slot during those times using Calendly, and will receive a link to a Google Hangout appointment. <https://calendly.com/myates-3>



Melissa Yates

I'm a social and political philosopher. I earned my Ph.D. at Northwestern University. I grew up in California and am relatively new to Western Mass. I have a daughter in first grade and a spouse who loves sneakers. I use she/her/hers pronouns.

WEBSITE

Myates@smith.edu

Dewey Hall 211 -- Forum Office Hour

Student Appointments: M 12-1, T 4-5

SCHEDULE