

# GES1041 / GESS1029

## Everyday Ethics in Singapore

LECTURE 1

DARYL OOI

# Overview

1. **Introduction: ethics? everyday? Singapore?**
2. Module Syllabus: readings, assessments, ethos
3. Ethical Toolbox: moral values
4. Exercise: 'Good for the poor'

## *Ethics?* Two working definitions

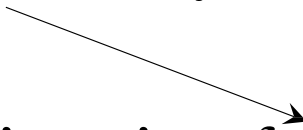
**Ethics**            ‘We think or act ethically when we care for the basic needs and legitimate expectations of others as well as our own.’ (Weston 2018)

**Morality**

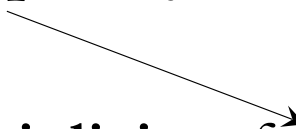
- Norms of conduct in society
- Good/bad and right/wrong
- Praise/blame and reward/punishment

# Three related aspects of ethics

1. **Normativity** of ethics



2. **Reciprocity** of norms



3. **Multiplicity** of relations

## Exercise: 'Not humans'

1. What ethical norms are significant in this dialogue?
2. How are these norms reciprocal?
3. How many relationships are involved?

## *Everyday Ethics?* Three helpful connections

1. **Individual** and **social** perspectives
2. **Ordinary** and **extraordinary** circumstances
3. **Practical** and **theoretical** approaches

Home Health Topics Countries Newsroom Emergencies

**Ethics and health**

- Global Health Ethics
- Topics
- Research Ethics Review Committee
- Global Leadership
- Publications
- About us

**Ethical issues in pandemic influenza planning**

**Background**

A number of challenging ethical issues are raised by a potential influenza pandemic. Ethical concerns associated with the planning, preparedness and responses to future pandemics are important to consider, ensuring that response efforts are not hindered in the event of a pandemic.



**Rapid policy briefing**

**NUFFIELD COUNCIL ON BIOETHICS**

**Ethical considerations in responding to the COVID-19 pandemic**

**THE CONVERSATION**  
Academic rigour, journalistic flair

COVID-19 Arts Culture Business Economy Cities Education Environment Energy Health Medicine Politics Society Science

**3 moral virtues necessary for an ethical pandemic response and reopening**

June 16, 2020 11:20pm AEST



The coronavirus crisis isn't hitting all communities equally hard, calling for not just aid like this California food bank but also justice-oriented policies to redress harms. *Photo: Shutterstock*

**HASTINGS CENTER  
BIOETHICS BRIEFINGS**  
For Journalists, Policymakers, and Educators

CONTENTS

**Pandemics: The Ethics of Mandatory and Voluntary Interventions**

**Psychology Today**

Find a Therapist Get Help Magazine Today

Find a Therapist (City or Zip)



**Michael W. Austin Ph.D.**  
Ethics for Everyone

## Ethics in a Pandemic Age

Beyond rules, rights, and responsibilities to grace, generosity, and gratitude.

Posted Mar 18, 2020

*...in Singapore?*

1. Local **concerns**
2. Local **conditions**
3. Local **constraints**



# Learning Outcomes

1. We will be able to identify and interpret *moral values* encountered every day. We will raise questions about these values and clarify conflicts between them in moral dilemmas.
2. We will be able to use basic *moral reasoning* in debates on Singapore that connect individual choices with social structures. We will analyse these debates using moral concepts.
3. We will be able to design some norms and strategies for *moral dialogue* in different settings. We will learn to negotiate moral disagreement, evasion, and compromise.
4. We will learn how to read texts closely in order to assess their arguments and assumptions critically.


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3. Ethical Toolbox: moral values
4. Exercise: 'Poor people don't like oats either'

GESS1029/GES1041

## Everyday Ethics in Singapore

[2120] 2021/2022 Semester 2

 Owner

### GENERAL

#### Module Overview

Module Settings

Module Details

Class &amp; Groups

Attendance

Task Report

### TOOLS

Announcements

Chat Room

Ov 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 R 7 8 9 10 &gt;

### Week 1: Introduction - Everyday ethics in Singapore

Mon, January 10, 2022 - Sun, January 16, 2022

Required reading:

- \*Teo You Yenn 2017. 'Poor people don't like oats either'. In *Living with Myths in Singapore*. Ethos Books.  
<https://newnaratif.com/poor-people-don't-like-oats-either/>

Supplementary resources:

- ChannelNewsAsia. 2018. 'Regardless of Class' (documentary).  
<https://www.channelnewsasia.com/watch/regardless-of/class-1535171>
- Anthony Weston 2018. *A 21st Century Ethical Toolbox*. Oxford University Press. Chapter 4 only, on 'Taking Values Seriously'.  
<http://linc.nus.edu.sg/record=b3816571>
- Bernard Gert and Joshua Gert 2016. 'The definition of morality'. *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*.  
<https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/morality-definition>



File: Teo (2017). Poor people don't like oats either.pdf (299.12 KB)

# Schedule

<b>Week 01</b>	Introduction: Everyday ethics in Singapore
<b>Week 02</b>	Do poor people like oats?
<b>Week 03</b>	Inequality in perspective
<b>Week 04</b>	Do elites deserve prizes?
<b>Week 05</b>	Meritocracy in perspective How
<b>Week 06</b>	many others in C-M-I-O?
<b>Week 07</b>	Multiculturalism in perspective
<b>Week 08</b>	Are we cosmopolitan yet?
<b>Week 09</b>	Migration in perspective
<b>Week 10</b>	Project work
<b>Week 11</b>	MCQ clinic
<b>Week 12</b>	Review: Everyday ethics in perspective

# Resources

1. **Required** readings and **supplementary** resources
2. **Social scientific** and **ethical** perspectives
3. **Dominant** and **marginalised** voices

# Assessment

20%	<b>Reading quizzes x 4</b>	5 MCQ only in Weeks 4, 6, 8, 10 LumiNUS Quiz
20%	<b>Journal entries x 4</b>	500 words in Weeks 3, 5, 7, 9 For tutorial dialogues
10%	<b>Group report</b>	Teams of 5-6 on moral dilemma 1000 words due in Week 10
20%	<b>Group presentation</b>	Dialogue on moral dilemma Recorded slide presentation at last tutorial
30%	<b>Online test</b>	MCQ only Open book

# Ethos

1. Be **creative**
2. Be **collaborative**
3. Be **compassionate**

Please do not record the module's sessions or circulate its materials without permission. Do not upload them onto databases.

# Overview

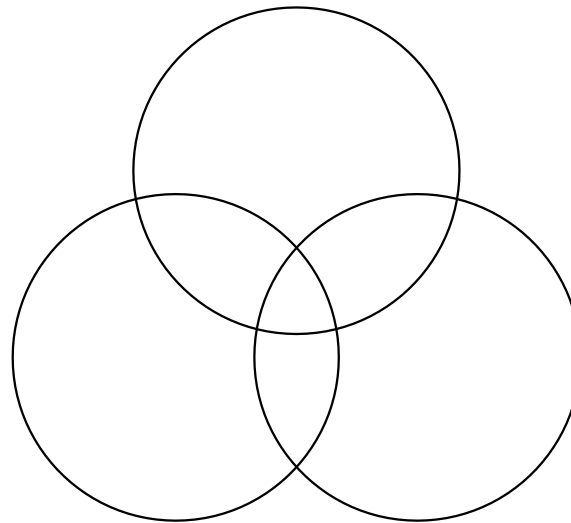
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3. **Ethical Toolbox: moral values**
4. Exercise: 'Poor people don't like oats either'



# Three moral clusters

**Person-centred values**  
 $\approx$  the good owed to a person

Calculations of **well-being**  
 $\approx$  what's good for a person



**Virtues** of character  
 $\approx$  the good in a person

# Person-centred values

‘Persons are special, precious, and have a dignity that demands respect. No one is to be reduced to a mere means to others’ ends. Social relations require fairness, justice, and equality. Human and civil rights are essential too: they secure the space in which each person is recognized and can flourish.’ (Weston 2018)

# Calculations of well-being

‘Achieve the greatest balance of happiness (well-being, satisfaction, pleasure) over suffering. Include in the great calculation the happiness of others as well as oneself, and we find ourselves looking to achieve the greatest balance of happiness over suffering in society. Ethical thinking in this family of values is quantitative and economic, concerned with trade-offs and the distribution of goods, maximizing social benefits.’ (Weston 2018)

# Virtues of character

‘Encompasses those moral values concerned with character: with traits like self-discipline, responsibility, honesty, charity, loyalty, devotion.’ (Weston 2018)

...wisdom, courage, chastity, justice...

...justice, temperance, prudence, courage...faith, hope, charity...

...tranquility, non-attachment, compassion, non-violence...

# Three uses of clusters

1. To identify **neglected values**
2. To clarify **moral conflicts**
3. To raise **new questions**

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4. **Exercise: ‘Good for the poor’**

# Exercise 1: ‘Good for the poor’

‘I know that some people may genuinely enjoy oats even as this particular community worker and I both think oats are like sawdust. I mention oats because they are often included in donated rations. For, while many people will agree with me that oats taste unpleasant, and although oats are not a particularly common part of most Singaporeans’ diets, some corporate donors have apparently deemed that they are “good for the poor.” Embedded in this “oats are good for you” orientation is an imagining of aid recipients as inherently different from donors, and as needing to be steered in certain directions. Conversely, aid givers are cast as superior in making choices, including for others. The assumption that aid recipients will not make “good” choices is embedded in donor preferences for giving food rations over vouchers, or for giving vouchers over cash. How we imagine people—their capacities, values, and moral worth—shapes how we treat them.’

(Teo 2017)

## Exercise 2: ‘The myth of self-reliance’

1. Which moral values are involved in the myth of self-reliance?
2. Which moral values are in conflict in the myth of self-reliance?



# Week 1 Online activities

1. Word cloud: Values in Singapore  
[https://PollEv.com/free\\_text\\_polls/JeNgSMXfPHxnPuS2WFrup/respond](https://PollEv.com/free_text_polls/JeNgSMXfPHxnPuS2WFrup/respond)
2. Exercise: The myth of self-reliance  
<https://PollEv.com/discourses/iNV4kJVbt4awecCTPzYav/respond>
3. Q&A dialogue: Week 2  
<https://PollEv.com/discourses/BqZTTnkdOQqQRvZvC9TyH/respond>

# Student help

1. Study From Home @ FASS  
<https://fass.nus.edu.sg/academic-matters/study-from-home/>
2. FASS Student Support  
[fasssupport@nus.edu.sg](mailto:fasssupport@nus.edu.sg)
3. University Counselling Services  
<http://www.nus.edu.sg/uhc/resources/articles/details/counselling-psychological-services>

# Thank you.

Instructor

Daryl Ooi [darylloi@nus.edu.sg](mailto:darylloi@nus.edu.sg)

Tutor

Nicholas Loo [nick.loo@nus.edu.sg](mailto:nick.loo@nus.edu.sg)

Zoom hours

Fri 1200-1400 (via LumiNUS Conferencing)