

## PHIL 6230: Ethical Issues in Policy Arguments

Fall 2014: T 6:10-8:00

Phillips 511

**Course description:** This course is meant to serve three goals. First, it aims to introduce you those theories of normative ethics most dominant in the Western philosophical tradition. Second, this course will acquaint you with theories of democracy, the common good, and rational choice so that you can engage in ethical analysis of policy questions in contemporary American life, as opposed to ethical analysis of applied topics most generally. Third, this course will survey several areas where philosophers have much to contribute to public policy discussions, including: systems of taxation, race policy, campaign finance reform, and contemporary debates regarding corporate personhood and the social responsibility of corporations.

**Instructor:** Prof. Laura Papish (LauraPapish@gwu.edu)

Office Hours: Thursdays 4:30-6:30pm in 525A Phillips Hall

Office number: (202) 994-4168

**Goals and Learning Outcomes:** By the end of this course, students will:

1. Be able to analyze, evaluate and construct philosophical arguments.
2. Have good working familiarity with the background ethical, political, and generally practical theories needed to engage in policy debates, such as deontology, utilitarianism, deliberative conceptions of democracy, or liberal paternalism.
3. Recall and summarize landmark positions regarding the philosophical dimensions of policy debates.

**Required course texts:** All of your readings will be available as a PDF on Blackboard. You **must** bring a hard copy of each reading to class.

### Expectations and Policies:

**The syllabus:** The syllabus is like the law; ignorance of it is no excuse. I also reserve, and will likely exercise, the right to change the syllabus as the class proceeds.

**Our roles:** While I will act as a facilitator, the course will be driven by **your** concerns, questions, and powers of philosophical reflection. As such, respectful discussion and diligent preparation constitute the lifeblood of this class. It is imperative that you come to class with the material read, a willingness to speak your mind and listen to your classmates, and, of course, a strong work ethic.

**Extensions:** I will not under any circumstance grant an extension after the fact. If you cannot be in class, or cannot turn in an assignment for a valid but completely unforeseeable reason (e.g. sudden and grave illness, a death in the family), then call my office immediately. If you cannot reach me, call our executive aide Amanda McLaughlin (202-994-6265) and then send me an email. The important thing is to tell me the situation in advance, and we will handle issues concerning the documentation of the absence later.

However, if I do not receive complete documentation, you should expect the heaviest penalty possible on the given assignment (i.e., don't waste my time, or your time, with phony excuses).

**Missing work and late work:** Please note that you will receive a grade of 0% - not 50% - for any unsubmitted assignments (i.e., presentations and papers). Given this, failure to submit work will dramatically lower your overall grade. As for late papers, if your paper is within an hour late, you will receive a deduction of 1/3 of a letter grade (e.g., A to A-). After the first hour, the deduction will become a full letter grade, and an additional full letter grade will then be deducted for every 24 hours that I do not have your paper.

**Drafts:** I am happy to read drafts of any and all written work. Draft deadlines will be announced and will generally be about 7 days before the final deadline.

**Email:** Email is, of course, helpful and indispensable, but it is also the scourge of every working person's existence. In hopes of ameliorating the negative effects of email on your life, and mine, here are a few guidelines:

- I will not reply to emails that can be answered by just reading the syllabus.
- If you have a question that is not especially time-sensitive, please come chat with me after class. Similarly, if I get an email from you and will be seeing you in class shortly, expect that I'd rather wait until we see each other in person to address your question.
- Please try to not get into a position where you feel you must email an extremely time-sensitive question. I don't have a smart phone and I try not to stay hooked up to my computer, so I often cannot address last minute questions.
- If you have an unexcused absence, you should ask a fellow classmate what we covered that day. In the third week of class – i.e., after drop/add is over – you will be paired with another classmate to serve as one another's bureaucratic buddy. Ask that person what happened if you missed class and what reading is due. Please take this task seriously, as it impacts your participation grade.
- Bear in mind that email works best as a formal or semi-formal mode of communication. So if you would like a reply to your email, please make sure you have included the proper salutation (e.g., Hi Laura, Dear Laura, etc.).

**University Policy on Religious Holidays:** Students should notify faculty during the first week of the semester of their intention to be absent from class on their day(s) of religious observance.

**Academic Integrity:** I personally support the GW Code of Academic Integrity. It states: "Academic dishonesty is defined as cheating of any kind, including misrepresenting one's own work, taking credit for the work of others without crediting them and without appropriate authorization, and the fabrication of information." For the remainder of the code, see: <http://www.gwu.edu/~ntegrity/code.html>

## **Support for Students Outside the Classroom:**

### *Disability Support Services (DSS) 202-994-8250*

Any student who may need an accommodation based on the potential impact of a disability should contact the Disability Support Services office in the Marvin Center, Suite 242, to establish eligibility and to coordinate reasonable accommodations. For additional information please refer to: <http://gwired.gwu.edu/dss/>

### *University Counseling Center (UCC) 202-994-5300*

The University Counseling Center (UCC) offers 24/7 assistance and referral to address students' personal, social, career, and study skills problems. Services for students include:

- Crisis and emergency mental health consultations
- Confidential assessment, counseling services (individual and small group), and referrals
- Visit: <http://gwired.gwu.edu/counsel/CounselingServices/AcademicSupportServices>

## **Security**

In the case of an emergency, if at all possible, the class should shelter in place. If the building that the class is in is affected, follow the evacuation procedures for the building. After evacuation, seek shelter at a predetermined rendezvous location.

## **Evaluation:**

1. **Weekly summaries and critical responses.** The first of these will be turned in during our third week of class. You will write weekly summaries of the readings, covering (briefly) each reading for the day and raising a critical question concerning at least one of those readings. We will rely on these summaries to guide class discussion. You may miss two summaries, or, if you turn in all twelve, I will count only your ten highest. These will be graded on a check plus, check, check minus, zero scale. Please note that I also give “slash grades.” **30% of your final grade.**
2. **Attendance:** In short, you are expected to attend every class. For each unexcused absence beyond the first, I will shave **1% off your total grade.**
3. **Participation:** You are expected to be a kind, engaged, prepared and thoughtful contributor to our class discussions. **10% of your final grade.**
4. **Presentation:** You will lead class discussion on a day of your choice. You will be in charge of getting us through the readings, raising critical questions about them, and bringing your own policy interests to bear on the class. **15% of your final grade.**
5. **Final Research Paper:** On a topic of your choice, though it must be cleared with me in advance. **45% of your final grade.**

## Very Rough Reading Schedule

### Moral Theory

Week 1: Moral theory basics

### Who makes policy in a democracy, and how should they make it? Democracy, the Common Good, and the Ethics of Public Service

Week 2: Max Weber, selections from “Politics as a Vocation”  
Joseph Schumpeter, selections from *Capitalism, Socialism, and Democracy*  
Dennis Thompson, “Legislative Ethics”  
William Galston, “An Old Debate Renewed: The Politics of the Public Interest”  
Barry Bozeman, selections from *Public Values and Public Interest*

### Rational Choice, Paternalism, Dirty Hands

Week 3: Cass Sunstein and Richard Thaler, “Preferences, Paternalism, and Liberty”  
Steven Rhoads, “Economists on Tastes and Preferences”  
Dennis Thompson, “Democratic Dirty Hands”

### Redistribution, Taxation, and Equal Opportunity

Week 4: Robert Nozick, selections from *Anarchy, State and Utopia*. (Note that in Nozick, you may skip the brief section titled “Sen’s Argument.”)  
John Rawls, selections from *A Theory of Justice*  
Linda Sugin, “Theories of Distributive Justice and Limitations on Taxation: What Rawls Demands from Tax”

Week 5: Rawlsian Tax Policy; Critiques of Rawls

Edward McCaffery, “The Political Liberal Case Against the Estate Tax”  
Richard Arneson, “Against Formal Equality of Opportunity”  
John Schaar, “Equality of Opportunity, and Beyond”

### Transition: Rawls and Nozick as they Relate to Race Policy

Week 6: Ta-Nehisi Coates, “The Case for Reparations”  
Richard Fullinwider, “The Case for Reparations”  
Tommie Shelby, “Justice, Deviance, and the Dark Ghetto”

## **Race and Public Policy (Profiling; Affirmative Action and Integration in schools, Colorblind policy)**

Week 7: Mathias Risse and Richard Zeckhauser, "Racial Profiling,"  
Claude Steele, "Thin Ice" (on stereotype threats)  
Glenn Loury, selections from *Anatomy of Racial Inequality* on racial stigma  
(pp. 23-34; 57-95)

Week 8: Colorblind policy

John Roberts, selections from the Plurality Decision in *Community Schools vs. Seattle* (pp.7-15 and 23-5)  
Tim Wise, Ch.1 of *Colorblind*  
Iris Marion Young, "The Politics of Difference"  
Elizabeth Anderson, "The Folly and Incoherence of Color Blindness"

Week 9: Affirmative Action and Integration

Amy Gutmann, selections from *Color Conscious*  
Pojman, "The Case Against Affirmative Action"  
Richard Kahlenberg, "From All Walks of Life"  
Elizabeth Anderson, selections from *The Imperative of Integration* (pp. 7-13 on Opportunity Hoarding, pp. 27-43 on how segregation causes inequality, pp. 69-84 on the alleged moral innocence of segregation)  
Derrick Bell, "Serving Two Masters" and selections *Silent Covenants*

## **Corporate Social Responsibility, Corporate Interests, and Public Policy**

Week 10: CSR

Case Study: "Viking Air Compressor"  
Case Study: "Tennessee Coal and Iron"  
Jane Nelson, "CSR and Public Policy"  
Peterson and Pfitzer, "Lobbying for Good"  
Ward, "Public Sector Roles in Strengthening Corporate Social Responsibility: Taking Stock," pp.1-10  
Friedman, "The Social Responsibility of Business is to Increase its Profits"

Week 11: Markets and the Public Good

Adam Smith, selections from *Wealth of Nations*  
Kenneth Arrow, "Social Responsibility and Economic Efficiency"  
Amartya Sen, selections from *Development as Freedom* (along with selections from the Commission on the Measurement of Economic Performance and Social Progress)  
Francis Fukuyama, selections from *Trust*

Week 12: Corporate Personhood (expect schedule changes here)

Virgina Harper Ho, "Theories of Corporate Groups: Corporate Identity Reconceived," pp.891-7

Rita Manning, "Corporate Responsibility and Corporate Personhood"

Christian List and Philip Petit, *Group Agency Group Agency: The Possibility, Design, and Status of Corporate Agents*, selections

Justice Kennedy, Majority Decision in *Citizens United*

Week 13: Capitalism and Democracy

Robert Heilbroner, "The Triumph of Capitalism"

Robert Reich, selections from *Supercapitalism*

Week 14: Campaign Finance Reform

Daniel Ortiz, "Paradox of Campaign finance reform"

Jon Mahoney, "Democratic Equality and Corporate Political Speech"

Anne Tucker, "Flawed Assumptions: Corporate Law Analysis of Citizens United"

NPR, "What's the future of campaign finance reform?"