

Philosophy 2930-01: Global Justice

**Spring 2014
MWF 2:00-2:50
Newcomb 308**

Course overview: In this course we examine issues in moral philosophy of an international nature. Although questions about justice have been considered within philosophy for millennia, only recently--a result of technological advances and greater cultural awareness--have philosophers begun addressing justice among different states and peoples. (One exception here is just war theory, which is well developed.) In this course we study three prominent problems of global justice, and in doing so engage with the three major theories of normative ethics: consequentialism, deontology, and virtue ethics.

First, we investigate the moral obligations, if any, generated by the fact of world poverty. 1.3 billion persons live in conditions of extreme poverty, and thousands of children die every day owing to malnutrition and poverty-related disease. These numbers could be significantly reduced if the governments and citizens of richer countries distributed some of their wealth to the cause. Are we morally obligated to do so? Or do we perhaps have a special obligation to the welfare of our countrymen, or of ourselves, first? Is equality among persons even morally desirable at all?

Second, we study just war theory. We study *jus ad bellum*--the conditions, if any, under which a state may justly undertake military action against another state--as well as *jus in bello*--what constitutes morally proper conduct while waging war. We review these issues with a special eye toward the changing face of warfare in the 21st century.

Third, we examine the apparent problems related to the internationalization of liberal values. The U.S. and other Western countries share core values: individual freedom, equality among persons, democracy. These values are not esteemed in other cultures. Do we have the right to impose our values abroad? Are we justified in intervening, for example, in cases of human rights abuse when that abuse takes place within a culture that finds it less offensive than we do?

Instructor: Thomas Mulligan



Office hours: By appointment. I have a flexible schedule and am available to meet, with a few exceptions, at your convenience. I encourage you to take advantage of office hours, which can be used to get clarification on issues raised during lecture, talk about philosophy relevant to the course, and discuss administrative matters like grading.

Learning objectives:

(1) Rigorously engage with arguments about global justice, develop your own views, and advance them in speech and writing.

(2) Understand and apply the three principal theories of normative ethics: consequentialism, deontology, and virtue ethics.

(3) Learn basic philosophical concepts and techniques (*e.g.* argumentative soundness, counterexamples, thought experiments, contingent and necessary truth).

(4) Develop your core philosophical skills (life skills, really) of critically reading texts and considering others' arguments; conducting rigorous analyses of complex problems; and arguing forcefully for your views.

Attendance policy: Attendance at lectures is required. The occasional absence, taken for good reason (*e.g.* a medical appointment), will not be penalized. But a significant portion of your grade (30%) is given for participation, and it will suffer if you do not regularly attend class.

Grading: Your grade is computed as follows:

(1) You will write three short essays (each about 5 pages long). The first paper is due at 5pm on 28 February and is worth 10% of your grade. The second paper is due at 5pm on 11 April and is worth 20% of your grade. The third paper is due at 5pm on 10 May and is worth 40% of your grade. These papers should be submitted to me via e-mail.

(2) Class participation is worth 30% of your grade. Class participation consists in regularly attending class (*cf.* the attendance policy, above) and asking questions/making interesting comments, especially with regard to the assigned reading.

(3) I reserve the right to elevate individual students' grades up a notch (*e.g.* from B- to B) for effort and improvement over the course.

Guidance for writing papers: At the 2000-level you are developing your philosophical skills of analysis and argument. I expect you to make mistakes, both in content and in language. What I want to see is a *developing* ability to rigorously consider an ethical problem and then argue persuasively for a position on it. The worth to your final grade of the papers increases as the semester goes on (*i.e.* the first paper is only worth 10%; the third, 40%). This is so your final grade can benefit from improvement in your work over the course of the semester.

Each paper should have a straightforward and unambiguous thesis. In fact, it's fine to start a paper like this: "In this paper I shall argue that *p*", where *p* is a narrow point related to an issue of global justice that we have discussed in class. Examples of *p*: (1) The "last resort" requirement for just war is inappropriate; (2) Singer's "drowning child" thought experiment is a bad analogy; (3) Kymlicka's argument for cultural rights fails because . . . ; (4) Kant can get around the "murderer-at-the-door" objection by Note that these four theses are all fairly narrow. Although you can write a paper with a broader thesis (*e.g.* "there are no just wars"), generally the more focused your thesis is the better your argument will be. In any case, you can select whatever thesis you like, so long as it is clear and you can make one or two good arguments in support. Textual interpretation is not permitted. I am not interested here in what some other author believes. I am interested in what you believe.

It is far more important that your arguments be logically valid and argumentatively compelling than that they be stylistically excellent. You can write a dull, plodding essay and still get an "A".

But you cannot get an "A" if your essay suffers from serious logical flaws like big gaps in argument or obvious counterexamples.

Some excellent advice on writing philosophy papers is given by Jim Pryor, here: <http://www.jimpryor.net/teaching/guidelines/writing.html> .

Keys to success in this course: There are two. (1) Do the reading, and do it well. I have kept the amount of reading for each class low; 10-15 pages typically. This is so you can, over no more than an hour or so, read the selection carefully, consider the authors' arguments, and develop your own ideas about how they succeed or fail. (2) Come to class and participate. If you do (1) and (2), then you will write good papers and get a good grade.

Academic honesty: All students should be aware of their responsibilities under the Code of Academic Conduct. I take violations of academic honesty seriously. Any evidence of dishonesty will be brought to the attention of the Honor Board for investigation and adjudication.

Changes to syllabus: I reserve the right to make changes to the syllabus at any time. This will almost certainly happen in the case of the reading schedule, depending on which topics we find interesting and which we do not, but it also extends to the grading policy. Any changes will be announced in class or via e-mail.

Tentative reading schedule:

Unit One--Global Poverty and Equality for All Persons // Consequentialism

13 January:	Introduction
15, 17:	"Famine, Affluence, and Morality", Peter Singer
22:	<i>An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and</i>
<i>Legislation,</i>	Bentham, Chapters I and IV
24:	<i>Utilitarianism</i> , J. S. Mill, 2.1-2.10, 2.15-2.19 [2.1, e.g., means Chapter 2, Paragraph 1]
27:	<i>Utilitarianism</i> , J. S. Mill, 5.1-5.15
29, 31:	"Against Global Egalitarianism", David Miller
3 February, 5:	"Ethical Egoism", James Rachels
7, 10:	"Equality as a Moral Ideal", Harry Frankfurt
12, 14:	"The Problem of Global Justice", Thomas Nagel

Unit Two--Just War Theory // Virtue Ethics

17, 19:	Excerpts from <i>Summa Theologica</i> , Thomas Aquinas
21, 24:	Excerpt #1 from <i>Just and Unjust Wars</i> , Michael Walzer
26, 28:	Excerpt #2 from <i>Just and Unjust Wars</i> , Michael Walzer
10 March:	<i>No Reading</i>
12, 14:	"Non-Relative Virtues: An Aristotelean Approach", Martha

- Nussbaum
- 17, 19: "What's Wrong with Torture?", David Sussman
21, 24: "The Ethics of Pacifism", Paul Weiss
26, 28: "War and Massacre", Nagel

Unit Three--Liberalism, Multiculturalism, and the Limits of Tolerance // Deontology

- 31, 2 April, 4: Excerpts from *The Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, Kant; "The Golden Rule Rationalized", Alan Gewirth
- 7, 9: "Are There Any Cultural Rights?", Chandran Kukathas
11, 14: "The Rights of Minority Cultures", Will Kymlicka
16, 23: Excerpts from *Two Treatises of Government*, Locke; the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*
25, 28: "Is Multiculturalism Bad for Women?", Susan Moller Okin