

Ethics and Society

Section TR12
Room 2145 B

Instructor: A.J. Favia

Office Hours: TH 3:30- 4:30 & By Appointment, 3316 Boylan

Email: afavia@gc.cuny.edu

Office Phone: (718) 951-5570

Course Description:

Are some terrorist acts justified? Do we have an obligation to help eradicate starvation and poverty in other nations? Is it ever morally acceptable to break the law? What are the ethical implications of what we choose to eat? In this course, we will explore these and other ethical questions confronting contemporary society. We will begin by looking at several traditional ethical theories to establish the foundations needed for thoughtful analysis and evaluation of issues in social ethics. Issues we will cover include economic justice, food justice, capital punishment, civil liberties, terrorism, environmental pollution and more. We will also consider how ethical reasoning can lead decision making regarding social issues and shape social policies.

Course Objectives:

- ♦ Establish a basic understanding of several significant ethical theories
- ♦ Develop an awareness of the various ethical challenges confronting society
- ♦ To build critical thinking skills required to carefully examine and evaluate others, as well as your own, views regarding significant ethical issues that confront society
- ♦ To build skills in philosophical writing, including interpreting, analyzing, and responding to various texts

Required Texts:

Thomas A. Mappes and Jane S. Zembaty, eds., *Social Ethics: Morality and Social Policy*, 7th edition (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2006). [ISBN 978-0073125459] *Available at Campus Bookstore or you can look online for a used copy.*

All other readings will be posted on **Blackboard (B)**

Assessment:

Your Final Grade will be determined in the following manner:

Class Participation:	10%
Quiz:	10%
Papers: Assignment 1:	15%
Assignment 2:	20%
Assignment 3:	20%
Final Exam:	25%

Grading Scale:

97-100%	A+	77-79%	C+
94-96%	A	74-76%	C
90-93%	A-	70-73%	C-
87-89%	B+	67-69%	D+
84-86%	B-	65-66%	D
80-83%	B-	60-64	D-
		Below 60%	F

Course Requirements:

Class Participation will be calculated based on ATTENDANCE and PARTICIPATION in class discussions, which includes raising relevant questions and making comments that pertain to the topic being discussed and to the assigned reading. Participation also includes HOMEWORK and IN-CLASS ASSIGNMENTS. Excessive absences and consistent lateness to class will affect your grade negatively.

Attendance and Lateness Policy: Your presence in class is vital to your education. Since this class only meets once a week, each class counts as **two** regular classes. Attendance will be taken at the beginning of class *AND* after the break. Only **two** absences are allowed during the semester. Missing more than **two** classes will affect your grade negatively, as will arriving late to class or leaving early. Each additional absence will *lower* your class participation grade by *one letter grade*. More than four absences are grounds for failing the course. Being in class is not just about listening to a lecture. Class time provides you with an opportunity to ask questions and participate in discussions that help you learn the material.

Reading Assignments: You should come prepared to ask and answer questions and to discuss the readings each day. If students are not coming to class prepared, reading quizzes will be implemented.

Quiz: A short quiz that will cover ethical theories from the first part of the semester. **There are no make-up quizzes.**

Papers: In each paper, you will defend a clear and well-supported response to an article from a particular section of the class-reading list. Each paper will be approximately *1000 words* and will be turned in via email. More details will be distributed in class and available on Blackboard.

Note: Papers will be graded on *both* content and grammar. You are expected to carefully *proofread* your paper for spelling, grammar, and style. All references must be cited. Writing tutors are available at the *BC Writing Center*: Location: 1300 Boylan Hall. Phone: (718) 951-5821.

ALL assignments must be handed in ON TIME. NO LATE papers will be accepted. NO EXCEPTIONS.

Final Exam: A cumulative, short answer exam. **There are no make-up exams.**

Academic Integrity: The faculty and administration of Brooklyn College support an environment free from cheating and plagiarism. Each student is responsible for being aware of what constitutes cheating and plagiarism and for avoiding both. The complete text of the CUNY Academic Integrity Policy and the Brooklyn College procedure for implementing that policy can be found at this site: <http://www.brooklyn.cuny.edu/bc/policies>. If a faculty member suspects a violation of academic integrity and, upon investigation, confirms that violation, or if the student admits the violation, the faculty member **MUST** report the violation. **Cheating and Plagiarism will result in automatic FAILURE of the course!**

Student Disability Services: In order to receive disability-related academic accommodations students must first be registered with the Center for Student Disability Services. Students who have a documented disability or suspect they may have a disability are invited to set up an appointment with the Director of the Center for Student Disability Services, Ms. Valerie Stewart-Lovell at 718-951-5538. If you have already registered with the Center for Student Disability Services please provide your professor with the course accommodation form and discuss your specific accommodation with him/her.

Cell Phones: Turn **OFF** all cell phones and electronic devices (iPod, BlackBerry, etc.) *before* class begins. Absolutely **NO** texting or phone calls during class. Students who do not abide by this may be asked to *leave the class* and consequently counted as *absent* from class.

Contact Information: I can be contacted via email at afavia@gc.cuny.edu. *If you do not receive an acknowledgment response from me within a day of your email then I have NOT received your email. It is YOUR responsibility to make sure I have received your email.*

Class Schedule
Subject to Revision

Introduction

Week 1: *General Introduction, Theorizing about Ethics, & Reading Philosophy* (B)

Ethical Theory

Week 2: *Consequentialism*, Vallentyne (B), *Deontology*, McNaughton & Rawling (B)

Week 3: *Virtue Theory*, Hursthouse (B)

Economic Justice

Week 4: **QUIZ**, Nozick (B), Rawls (B), Neilson (384-391)

World Hunger & Poverty

Week 5: Singer (436-442), Hardin (443-449), Sen (450-456)

Week 6: Borders (465-467), United Trauma Relief (467-472), Zwolinski (472-476)

Food Justice

Week 7: Michael Pollan, *The Omnivore's Dilemma* (B), Singer, *The Ethics of What We Eat* (B)
Michael Pollan on Bill Moyer's *Journal* (B/video)

Environment & Sustainability

Week 8: **PAPER 1 DUE**

Baxter (526-531), Leopold (546-552), Rollin (552-566)

Sierra Club Chronicles: "The Day the Water Died" (B/video)

Week 9: Hawken, *A Declaration of Sustainability* (B), Naverson (531-534), Smith (534-537)
Annie Leonard and "The Story of Stuff" (B/video)

Crime and Punishment

Week 10: Primoratz (125-131), Nathanson (132-138), Pojman (132-138), Reiman (138-143)

Week 11: **NO CLASS**

Week 12: **NO CLASS**

War, Terrorism and Civil Liberties

Week 13: **PAPER 2 DUE** Nathanson (322-333), Jaggar (333-342)

Week 14: Thoreau, *Civil Disobedience* (B), Chomsky, *Notes on Anarchism* (B)

Film & Discussion: excerpts from "The Weather Underground" (in class)

Week 15: Luban (342-349), Waldron (357-369), Opinions in *Korematsu v. United States* (350-357)

Week 16: **PAPER 3 DUE** Mill (224-227) & Review for Final Exam

FINAL EXAM, 1-3pm, Room TBA