



Contemporary Moral Issues



Instructor: Professor Josh DiPaolo
Office Hours: Zoom By Appointment
Class: Asynchronous
Tech Support: Student Help Desk (657) 278-8888 or StudentITHelpDesk@fullerton.edu

PHIL 320: Online
 Winter 2021
Email: jdipaolo@fullerton.edu

Description

In this class, we will consider moral questions surrounding five major contemporary issues: (1) polarization and division in society; (2) climate change; (3) segregation and education; (4) meat eating; (5) poverty. In philosophy, we learn and make progress by analyzing concepts and advancing arguments. In this class, we will try to understand the problems surrounding (1)-(5) and we will consider what should be done about them by studying prominent arguments and significant concepts. You will conclude the class by choosing and analyzing arguments on a contemporary moral issue that interests you. Thus, by the end of our class, you will have advanced your thinking on six major contemporary moral issues.

Truth-Seeking

Philosophy classes differ from other kinds of classes. You will be a truth-seeker in this class, not a mere information consumer. Rather than just learning what others have thought, you will try to rationally justify your own answers to course questions.

Learning Goals

By the end of the semester, you should be able to:

1. State and explain key facts and explanations relevant to these six issues (e.g., the tobacco strategy, state of the art science on climate change, explanations of links between wealthy and educational success, facts about segregation and education, etc.).
2. Understand and explain key philosophical concepts and distinctions (e.g., echo chambers vs. bubbles, epistemic trespassing, moral patient vs. moral agent, etc.).
3. Understand and explain significant arguments surrounding six major moral issues (including divisions in society, climate change, segregation and education, meat eating, and poverty).
4. Rationally defend your own opinions on these issues.

Website

We will be using Canvas. I recommend that you log onto Canvas **5 times a week**.

Texts & Resources

All texts & resources (videos, podcasts, etc.) will be freely available on Canvas. Expect to devote 5-10 hours each week to this class.

Fully Asynchronous

The class will be fully asynchronous. Though there will be due dates, and modules will gradually open throughout the semester (rather than all being immediately available), you will **not** be expected to be online at any particular time.

Day to Day: What Will I Do in This Class?

Every week (except the last) you will do FOUR things...

1. **Log On:** Log onto Canvas and see what needs to be completed that week
2. **Content:** Study and take notes on assigned readings, podcasts, videos
3. **Reading Response:** Complete a reading response based on that material (Due last day of module)
4. **Discussion:** Complete a discussion post (Due last day of module)

During the last week, you will:

1. Complete Exam 2
2. Complete your final project.

Timing: In Online classes, some students like to complete all their work for a class in one day. I strongly recommend against this. If you want to *learn* – and of course you do! you’ve decided to attend college in this incredibly difficult time – spread the coursework out throughout the week. You will learn much better that way.

General Education (GE) Requirements and Learning Goals

All CSUF students are assigned a “Catalog Year” that determines the requirements for their degree program, including requirements in their major(s) and in General Education. You can find your catalog year on your TDA. For more information please

visit http://www.fullerton.edu/undergraduate/general_education/catalog-rights.php

- For students with a Catalog Year of Fall 2018-Spring 2019: **GE AREA C.4**
- For students with any other Catalog Year: **GE AREA C.3**

This course also satisfies the Cultural Diversity GE Requirement (**GE Areas Z**)

C.3.b Explorations in the Humanities: Courses in this subarea shall draw upon, integrate, apply, and extend knowledge and skills previously acquired in subareas C.1 and C.2. Completion of subarea C.2 shall be required as a prerequisite for all courses in C.3.b. The learning goals for subarea C.3.b include the learning goals for area C.2. In addition, students taking courses in subarea C.3.b shall i. Understand broad, unifying themes from cross-disciplinary perspectives in the humanities. ii. Understand the relevance of the humanities for the thoughtful consideration of complex contemporary problems. iii. Appreciate the complex relationship and interaction between the humanities and other fields of learning, including the natural sciences, social sciences, and arts.

Grading Policy

Grading	Reading Responses	80	(20%)
	Discussion Posts	80	(20%)
	Exams	140	(35%)
	<u>Final Project</u>	100	(25%)
		400	Points

A+	98-100%	392-400 Points
A	92-97%	368-391 Points
A-	90-91%	360-367 Points
B+	88-89%	352-359 Points
B	82-87%	328-351 Points
B-	80-81%	320-327 Points
C+	78-79%	312-319 Points
C	72-77%	288-311 Points
C-	70-71%	280-287 Points
D+	68-69%	272-279 Points
D	62-67%	248-271 Points
D-	60-61%	240-247 Points
F	0-59%	0-239 Points

In addition: Every student must complete the **Introductory Post** to pass the class.

Please ask questions about these policies if you do not understand them.

Coursework Descriptions

Introductory Post	During the first two days of class, you must complete an Introductory Post. You will introduce yourself and you will comment on at least two other people's posts
Reading Responses	20 Points Each (x4). For each module, you will write a "reading" response addressing these four questions. (Reading = reading, podcast, videos, etc. In other words, assigned resources.) First, what surprised you most in the readings this module? (Or what did you learn that was most interesting?) Second, share two discussion questions based on your current understanding of the readings? Third, how did this module's readings connect to things you've encountered previously (in your other classes, the news, the arts, your culture, etc.)? Fourth, what is your best understanding of the main point or takeaway from the readings for this module taken as a whole? Explain and support your understanding.
Discussion Posts	20 Points Each (x4). For each module, you will complete a discussion post that asks you to reflect on and evaluate the ideas you learned in that module. You will also be required to engage with peers' posts.
Exams	70 Points Each (x2). Exam 1 will test your understanding of Modules 1 and 2. Exam 2 will test your understanding of Modules 3 and 4. Exams have two parts and will require you to submit two different kinds of responses. First, there will be a multiple choice/true/false component. You will need to complete these via the Canvas Quiz tool. Second, there will be an essay component. You will submit your typed answers to essay questions via the Canvas assignment tool.
Final Project	<p>100 Points. For this project, you will do three things. First, you will choose one of the topics below and read both readings on that topic. (If you prefer a different topic, let me know ASAP and I can try to help you find appropriate readings on that topic.) Then, you will teach me the debate between those papers. Finally, you will defend your own thoughts on the debate.</p> <p>Format: You have a choice.</p> <p>Option A: Write a 5ish page (~1500 word) paper that clearly and accurately outlines the debate and rationally defends your own opinion.</p> <p>Option B: Use a creative, high quality format of your own choosing to achieve exactly the same goals: clearly and accurately outlining the debate and defending your own opinion.</p>

1. Make a high quality 2-3 minute video.
2. Write and perform a song or a poem in a video.
3. Create a high quality 5-10 minute podcast.
4. Create a comic or children's book.
5. Other?? Let me know if you have questions.

Whichever format you choose, do three things for your final project.

1. Choose one of the topics below and read the papers on that topic.
2. Teach me the debate in your chosen format.
3. Defend your own thoughts on the debate in that format.

Topics & Papers (Papers will be available on Canvas)

Euthanasia

Rachels, "The Morality of Euthanasia"
Kass, "Why Doctors Must Not Kill"

Immigration

Huemer, "Is There a Right to Immigrate?"
Miller, "Immigration: The Case for Limits"

Legalizing Drugs

de Marneffe, "Against the Legalization of Drugs"
Huemer, "America's Unjust Drug War"

Licensing Parents

LaFollette, "Licensing Parents"
Frisch, "On Licentious Licensing"

Terrorism

McPherson, "Is Terrorism Distinctively Wrong?"
Nathanson, "Can Terrorism be Morally Justified?"

Abortion

Marquis, "Why Abortion is Immoral"
Thomson, "A Defense of Abortion"

Communication

Office Hours

I will not have set office hours, but I will be MORE THAN HAPPY to setup meetings with you via Zoom whenever we can make it work. I want to help you succeed! Just email me. If it helps, you can use this script:

*"Hi Josh,
I'm in your [CLASS NAME]. I'd like to schedule an appointment with you. Do any of these times work for you [LIST THREE DIFFERENT TIMES YOU CAN MEET]?
Thanks,
[NAME]"*

Contact

You can reach me at my email address. I will usually respond within 24 hours. Feel free to get back in touch if I don't. If you have a question about the course, please check the syllabus before emailing.

You

I expect you to regularly check your email and Canvas for announcements.

Ask a Question Boards

On Canvas, there will be two "Ask a Question" discussion boards: (1) "Ask Josh a Question" and (2) "Ask Peers a Question." I will regularly check (1) and rarely check (2). You should check both often. Questions on these boards should be general. Think: "Could someone else benefit from knowing the answer to this question?" If Yes, post; if No, maybe just email me. If you have a question about the course, please check these boards before emailing.

Accommodations

I will do my very best to help students with disabilities, special needs, or learning challenges succeed in this course. Students with disabilities who need accommodations, access to technology, or information about emergency building/campus evacuation processes should contact Disability Support Services. Services are available to students with a wide range of disabilities and conditions.

Phone: (657) 278-3112

Website: www.fullerton.edu/dss

“Netiquette”: How Should You Behave Online?

Make a Good Impression Treat your interactions online as if they were happening in person. Education is a **professional environment**. One day you may want a letter of recommendation from me. You may want your peers to recommend you for some professional position. Assume you will want these things, and behave accordingly.

Discussion Posts Write as if you’re writing a paper. Proper grammar and punctuation.

Academic Integrity & Plagiarism

Statement Please only submit work that is your own. Doing otherwise is one of the worst mistakes you can make in your academic career. When students plagiarize in my classes, they receive a score of 0 points on the assignment and I refer them to the Dean of Students’ office.

Plagiarism The university defines ‘plagiarism’ as “the unacknowledged and inappropriate use of the ideas or wording of another writer” and instructs me to include the following info on my syllabus:

If plagiarism is found in your work, you will be subject to prosecution to the fullest extent of university code, which will result in a failure of the assignment and will probably result in your failure of the course. Confirmation of plagiarism precludes you from being eligible to repeat the course under the university’s course repeat and grade forgiveness policy. For complete details regarding the university’s policies about plagiarism and other forms of cheating, see

<http://www.fullerton.edu/integrity/student/AcademicIntegrityResources.asp>

[http://www.fullerton.edu/senate/publications_policies_resolutions/ups/UPS%20300/UPSPS% 20300.021.pdf](http://www.fullerton.edu/senate/publications_policies_resolutions/ups/UPS%20300/UPSPS%20300.021.pdf)

Emergencies

To be prepared for classroom emergencies, please visit: <http://prepare.fullerton.edu>

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Weekly Checklist

Week 1	<input type="checkbox"/> Viewed Josh’s Introduction Video <input type="checkbox"/> Viewed Course Overview Video <input type="checkbox"/> Took Notes on all Readings, Podcasts, Videos	<input type="checkbox"/> Completed Introductory Post (Due 12/20) <input type="checkbox"/> Completed Reading Response (Due 12/25) <input type="checkbox"/> Completed Discussion (Due 12/25) <input type="checkbox"/> Completed Peer Comments (Due 12/25)
Week 2	<input type="checkbox"/> Took Notes on all Readings, Podcasts, Videos	<input type="checkbox"/> Completed Reading Response (Due 1/1) <input type="checkbox"/> Completed Discussion (Due 1/1) <input type="checkbox"/> Completed Peer Comments (Due 1/1) <input type="checkbox"/> Completed Exam 1 (Due 1/2)
Week 3	<input type="checkbox"/> Took Notes on all Readings, Podcasts, Videos	<input type="checkbox"/> Completed Reading Response (Due 1/8) <input type="checkbox"/> Completed Discussion (Due 1/8) <input type="checkbox"/> Completed Peer Comments (Due 1/8)
Week 4	<input type="checkbox"/> Took Notes on all Readings, Podcasts, Videos	<input type="checkbox"/> Completed Reading Response (Due 1/15) <input type="checkbox"/> Completed Discussion (Due 1/15) <input type="checkbox"/> Completed Peer Comments (Due 1/15)
Week 5	<input type="checkbox"/> Studied & analyzed final project paper.	<input type="checkbox"/> Completed Exam 2 (Due 1/16) <input type="checkbox"/> Completed Final Project (Due 1/21)

Tentative Schedule

Date	Topics	Resources (R = Reading, P = Podcast, V = Video)	Learning Outcomes & Assignments (A = Assignment)
Module 0: Course Introduction			
ASAP	Course Overview	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Instructor Introduction Video Syllabus Videos 	1. Become familiar with course structure, assignments, etc. 2. Introduce yourself <input type="checkbox"/> Introductory Discussion (A) (Due 12/20)
Module 1: Polarization, Distrust, & a Divided Society			
12/19-12/25	Why can't people agree on basic facts? Why are people so divided in their worldviews? Echo chambers, bubbles Should people escape their echo chambers? Should others help them out?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hi-Phi Nation "Chamber of Facts" (P) Nguyen "Escape the Echo Chamber" (R) Lackey "True Story: Echo Chambers are Not the Problem" (R) Wodak "Fake News and Echo Chambers" (R) Hi-Phi Nation "Interview with Daniel Wodak" (P) Lecture (V) <u>Optional</u> Megan Phelps-Roper TED Talk "Conversion via Twitter" "The White Flight of Derek Black"	1. Understand the divided society problem 2. Understand the difference between epistemic bubbles & echo chambers 3. Understand post-truth idea 4. Reflect on consequences of a divided society 5. Evaluate solutions to divided society problem <input type="checkbox"/> Reading Response (A) (Due 12/25) <input type="checkbox"/> Discussion (A) (Due 12/25)
Module 2: Climate Change, Climate Denial, Who Should We Believe? What Should be Done?			
12/26-1/1	Climate Change, Climate Denial, & Identifying Experts What is climate change? Why is it a problem? Why don't people believe in climate change? The challenges of identifying experts Epistemic trespassing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Documentary: <i>Merchants of Doubt</i> (V) <i>Ezra Klein Show Podcast</i>: Choose one: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> "We live in the good place and we're screwing it up" (P) "The climate crisis is an oceans crisis" (P) Broome "Science of Climate Change" (Skim) Moellendorf "Climate Change Justice" (Skim) Boyd "Swamping, Epistemic Trespassing, and COVID" (R) Anderson "Democracy, Public Policy, and Lay Assessments of Scientific Testimony" (R) Lecture (V) 	1. Understand climate change and the state of the science on climate change 2. Understand issues of climate change and justice 3. Understand the challenge of identifying experts 4. Understand and apply the concept of epistemic trespassing 5. Understand potential solutions to challenge of identifying experts 6. Evaluate these potential solutions 7. Reflect on solutions to climate denial <input type="checkbox"/> Reading Response (A) (Due 1/1) <input type="checkbox"/> Discussion (A) (Due 1/1) <input type="checkbox"/> Exam 1 (A) (Due 1/2)
Module 3: Segregation & Education			
1/2-1/8	Historical and Contemporary Segregation's Effects on Education How does wealth affect education? Is school/residential integration an ethical imperative? Or should the connection between segregation and education be more directly severed?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>This American Life</i>: "The problem we all live with" (P) <i>Nice White Parents</i>: "The book of statuses" (P) Anderson "Why integration remains an imperative" (R) Willingham "Does family wealth affect learning?" (R) Shelby "Integration, Inequality, and Imperatives of Justice" (esp. sections VII-VIII) (R) Lecture (V) 	1. Understand history (esp. causes) of segregation in the US 2. Understand how segregation affects children's learning 3. Understand how wealth affects children's learning 4. Understand problems with "colorblindness" 5. Evaluate different proposals for solving problems of segregation <input type="checkbox"/> Reading Response (A) (Due 1/8) <input type="checkbox"/> Discussion (A) (Due 1/8)

Tentative Schedule

Module 4: Animal & Poverty Ethics			
1/9-1/15	<p>Animal ethics: Is eating meat for pleasure moral?</p> <p>What makes something worthy of moral consideration?</p> <p>Poverty: What do the affluent owe to the poor?</p> <p>How demanding is morality?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Norcross “Puppies, Pigs, and People” (R) • Frey “Moral Standing, The Value of Lives, and Speciesism” (R) • Lecture (V) • Singer “Famine, Affluence, & Morality” (R) • Arthur “Famine Relief and the Ideal Moral Code” (R) • Lecture (V) 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Understand facts about factory farming 2. Understand basic arguments surrounding eating meat for pleasure 3. Understand the difference between “moral patient” and “moral agent” 4. Understand problems with common defenses of meat eating 5. Understand basic arguments surrounding poverty 6. Evaluate arguments surrounding meat eating and poverty 7. Reflect on how demanding/easy morality is <input type="checkbox"/> Reading Response (A) (Due 1/15) <input type="checkbox"/> Discussion (A) (Due 1/15)
Module 5: Exam 2 & Final Project			
1/16-1/22	Your choice!		<input type="checkbox"/> Exam 2 (A) (Due 1/16) <input type="checkbox"/> Final Project (A) (Due 1/21)