

# DePaul University



## School of Continuing and Professional Studies

**COURSE: CCA/AI 322**

**COURSE TITLE: PROBLEMS AND ISSUES IN  
CONTEMPORARY ETHICS**

*WINTER 2021*

### INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION

Name: David Simpson

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Course Dates: January 4, 2021 – March 21, 2021

Course Location and Delivery Format: Online

### COURSE DESCRIPTION

Syllabus, AI\_322\_701

An introduction to moral philosophy with emphasis on the important differences between realist and relativist theories and comparing consequentialist, deontological, ethics of care, pluralist, contractarian, and virtue approaches. During the course you will be introduced to classic theories and leading figures in the history of ethics, from Aristotle and Aquinas, and Immanuel Kant and John Stuart Mill, to Peter Singer and John Rawls. Course content will focus on issues (e.g., wealth and poverty, privacy, healthcare, capital punishment, euthanasia and physician-assisted suicide, biomedical research, animal rights, etc.) at the center of contemporary ethical debate in the United States and throughout the world.

## LEARNING OUTCOMES:

After completing this course, SCPS students will be able to:

- Define and apply basic critical concepts and vocabulary terms relating to philosophy and ethical theory.
- Identify and compare key figures, texts, and ideas in the history of moral philosophy.
- Identify and describe at least four major ethical theories or moral principles and apply them to contemporary issues.
- Apply insights and theories from moral philosophy to personal ethical decisions.
- Apply concepts and theories from moral philosophy to analyze issues and resolve disputes in the contemporary workplace.

After completing the course, Liberal Studies students will be able to:

- Critically think about and analyze philosophical questions and problems.
- Evaluate philosophical questions, issues and/or problems using informed judgment.
- Analyze and interpret the methods used by philosophers in addressing philosophical questions, issues, and/or problems.
- Engage with philosophical topics and figures in their historical context.
- Confront and interpret primary texts from the philosophical tradition.
- Write an analytic essay treating a philosophical question, issue and/or problem that forwards an identifiable thesis, argument, and conclusion.

### **Writing Expectations:**

The expectation of the Philosophical Inquiry Liberal Studies Learning Domain is that students taking courses in this domain will write at least 10 pages per quarter. This writing will take the form of short essays, longer essays, and discussion submissions.

## LEARNING STRATEGIES & RESOURCES

Learning resources for the course include a textbook, recommended videos, diagnostic quizzes, websites (especially the [Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy](#) and the [Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy](#)), and a long list of supplementary resources and texts (see below). In addition, students can earn bonus credit by tracking down helpful new resources and sharing them with classmates.

### **Required texts**

Timmons, Mark. *Moral Theory: An Introduction*. 2<sup>nd</sup> edition. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2013.

Singer, Peter, ed. *Ethics* (Oxford Readers). Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1994.

### **Electronic Reserves**

Rachels, James and Stuart Rachels. "The Idea of a Social Contract." *In Elements of Moral Philosophy*, 6<sup>th</sup> edition. New York: McGraw-Hill, 2010. p. 80-93.

### **Recommended texts**

Rachels, James and Stuart Rachels (eds.). *The Right Thing to Do: Basic Readings in Moral Philosophy*. 5<sup>th</sup> edition. Hightstown, NJ: McGraw Hill, 2009.

Rachels, James and Stuart Rachels. *Elements of Moral Philosophy*. 7<sup>th</sup> Edition. New York: McGraw-Hill, 2011.

### **Dictionaries and Encyclopedias**

Audi, Robert, ed. *The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999.

Blackburn, Simon, ed. *Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994.

### **Additional resources**

Aristotle. *Nicomachean Ethics*. New York: Penguin, 1976.

<http://classics.mit.edu/Aristotle/nicomachaen.html>

Attfield, Adam. *Environmental Ethics: An Overview for the Twenty-First Century*. Cambridge, UK:

Blackwell Publishing, 2003.

Beccaria, Cesare. *An Essay on Crimes and Punishments*. Boston: International Pocket Library, 1983.

Bentham, Jeremy. *Benthamiana, or, select extracts from the works of Jeremy Bentham: with an outline of his opinions on the principal subjects discussed in his works*. Edited by John Hill Burton. Holmes Beach, FL.: Gaunt, 1998.

Binmore, K.G. *Game Theory and the Social Contract: Playing Fair*. MIT Press, 1994.

Cooper, David E., ed. *Ethics: The Classic Readings*. Blackwell Publishing.

Dewey, John and James Hayden Tufts. *Ethics*. New York: Holt and Company, 1909.

[http://books.google.com/books?id=5wwwAAAAAYAAJ&printsec=frontcover&dq=Dewey+%2B+ethics&ei=jOr\\_SbW6LJusMr7fhesD](http://books.google.com/books?id=5wwwAAAAAYAAJ&printsec=frontcover&dq=Dewey+%2B+ethics&ei=jOr_SbW6LJusMr7fhesD)

Donaldson, Thomas and Patricia Werhane. *Ethical Issues in Business: A Philosophical Approach*. (8<sup>th</sup> edition). Prentice Hall, 2007.

Gautier, David. *Morals by Agreement*. Oxford, UK: The Clarendon Press, 1986.

Gill, Robin, ed. *The Cambridge Companion to Christian Ethics*. Cambridge University Press, 2001.

Gilligan, Carol. *In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1982.

Habermas, Jurgen. *Moral Consciousness and Communicative Action*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2001.

Harman, Gilbert, et. al., ed. *Moral Relativism and Moral Objectivity*. Blackwell, 1996.

Held, Virginia. *Justice and Care: Essential Readings in Feminist Ethics*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1995.

Hobbes, Thomas. *Leviathan*. New York: Penguin, 2009.

Jaggar, Alison M. and Iris Young, eds. *A Companion to Feminist Philosophy*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1998.

James, William. *Pragmatism*. <http://www.gutenberg.org/etext/5116>

Kant, Immanuel. *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*. Cambridge Univ. Press, 1988.

----- *Introduction to a Metaphysic of Morals*. <https://ebooks.adelaide.edu.au/k/kant/immanuel/k16m/>

Levinas, Emmanuel. *Basic Philosophical Writings*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1996.

MacIntyre, Alasdair. *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory*. 3<sup>rd</sup> edition. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2007.

Marx, Karl. *The Marx-Engels Reader*. Robert C. Tucker, ed. W.W. Norton, 1978.

Mill, John Stuart. *Utilitarianism. On Liberty. Considerations on Representative Government*. New York: Everyman, 1913.

----- *Utilitarianism*. <https://www.utilitarianism.com/mill1.htm>

Moore, G.E. *Principia Ethica*. (1903.) New York: Prometheus Books, 1988.

Moser, Paul, K. (ed.) *Moral Relativism: A Reader*. New York, Oxford University Press, 2000.

Noddings, Nel. *Caring: A Feminine Approach to Ethics and Moral Education*. 2<sup>nd</sup> edition. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003.

Putnam, Hilary. *Ethics without Ontology*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004.

Rawls, John. *Lectures on the History of Moral Philosophy*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000.

----- *Justice as Fairness*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001.

----- *A Theory of Justice*. <http://www.univpgri-palembang.ac.id/perpus-fkip/Perpustakaan/American%20Phylosophy/John%20Rawls%20-%20A%20Theory%20of%20Justice~%20Revised%20Edition.pdf>

Ross, WD. *The Right and the Good*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2002.

Rousseau, Jean-Jacques. *The Essential Rousseau*. Lowell Blair, ed. New American Library, 1991.

Scruton, Roger. *Kant*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982.

----- *A Short History of Modern Philosophy*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. London: Routledge, 1995.

Singer, Peter. *Animal Liberation*. Rev. ed. Avon/Hearst, 1991.

----- *Practical Ethics*. Cambridge University Press, 1993.

----. *One World: The Ethics of Globalization*. 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed. New Haven, CN: Yale University, 2004.

Tronto, Joan. *Moral Boundaries: A Political Argument for an Ethics of Care*. New York: Routledge, 1994.

### **Web resources**

Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy. <http://www.iep.utm.edu/>

Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy. <http://plato.stanford.edu/>

Wikipedia. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Main\\_Page](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Main_Page)

### **Recommended Films:**

Blood Diamond (2006)  
 The Constant Gardener (2003)  
 Dead Man Walking (1995)  
 Dirty Pretty Things (2002)  
 Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind (2004)  
 The Fifth Estate (2013)  
 Food, Inc. (2009)  
 The Fountainhead (1949)  
 Gandhi (1982)  
 Gattaca (1997)  
 Girl, Interrupted (1999)  
 The Handmaid's Tale (1990)  
 The Hours (2002)  
 The Insider (1999)  
 Let Him Have It (1991)  
 Lifeboat (1944)  
 Lord of the Flies (1963)  
 A Man for All Seasons (1966)  
 Minority Report (2002)  
 Seven Pounds (2008)  
 Speciesism: The Movie (2013)  
 Sullivan's Travels (1941)  
 Talk to Her (2002)  
 Whose Life Is It Anyway? (1981)  
 Wit (2001)  
 Zero Dark Thirty (2012)

## LEARNING DELIVERABLES (GRADED EVIDENCES OF LEARNING)

The course consists of 14 graded assignments and 10 required discussions. Assignments typically consist of two or three short essay-discussion questions. (In most cases, questions can be adequately covered in 2-3 paragraphs and in nearly all cases in 3-4.) Assignments are due on the date specified and are not accepted for credit if they are more than two weeks late. (See “Assessment Criteria” directly below.) Discussions are not formally graded. Instead, students receive credit for participating as long as they do so in a substantive way. (See “Assessment Criteria for Online Discussions” below.) Discussions remain open for student posts for a period of two weeks.

Student essays, especially for the last 4 modules, are evaluated both for form and content. Essays should consist of a minimum of three to four paragraphs (about 250 words) and are expected to have a clear thesis statement, a body of supportive argument and evidence, and a logically consistent and clearly stated conclusion. Content will be graded mainly for accuracy of information, but style and correctness matter. All submissions should be properly documented.

### Course Structure

This course consists of a series of ten *modules* (several of which are sub-divided into smaller sections called *units*). It is organized into two main parts. The first part (modules 1-7) is largely introductory and preparatory. Its purpose is to introduce you to the main normative theories in use in moral philosophy today and give you instruction and practice in their basic principles and rules of operation.

The second part of the course (modules 8-10) will require you to apply the various theories, principles, and philosophical insights that you learned in modules 1-7 to a range of contemporary social and moral issues – from euthanasia and stem cell research to capital punishment and animal rights.

It is assumed that no student in the course will have had much, if any, previous experience studying philosophy. This means that many of you may find the first seven course modules – where you will be introduced to technical terms like *deontology*, *consequentialism*, *prima facie duties*, and *contractarianism* slow-going and possibly even a little intimidating. Unfortunately, this is largely unavoidable, since even introductory moral philosophy involves material that can be a bit rugged and difficult. Nevertheless, the hope here is that the modules will present this material in a way that you’ll find convenient, stimulating, and relatively painless.

You’ll probably find the final part of the course (modules 8-10) more engaging and less of a grind. That’s mostly because the emphasis in these modules shifts from theory to practice – that is, from acquiring a base of new knowledge and technical information to applying that knowledge to real-life moral issues. You probably already have your own views on many of these issues (e.g., capital punishment, suicide) and, armed with new philosophical insights, should enjoy presenting those views in written form and

debating them with fellow class members.

### Course Modules

- Module One: Introduction to Moral Philosophy. Relativism and Realism; Consequentialism and Deontology.
- Module Two: Divine Command Theory and Natural Law Theory.
- Module Three: Utilitarianism.
- Module Four: Kantian Ethics.
- Module Five: Moral Pluralism and Prima Facie Duties.
- Module Six: Virtue Ethics and Ethics of Care.
- Module Seven: Social Contract Theory.
- Module Eight: Capital Punishment. Euthanasia and Suicide.
- Module Nine: Wealth and Poverty.
- Module Ten: Business and Professional Ethics.

### COURSE MAP

The following table provides a rough estimate of the time it will probably take you to complete each of the required learning activities, assignments, or forum posts. Obviously, it may take you a little less time if you're a fast worker; a bit longer if you tend to read or write at a slower pace. Overall, the total time you're likely to need to devote to your coursework is somewhere between 70 and 90 hours.

As you review the table and begin planning your own work schedule, please note the following schedule requirements and grading policies:

- You are expected to complete one module per week and to keep pace with the activities and assignments as arranged in the "Schedule" (see Column 1 below).
- If for some reason you find yourself falling behind or unable to complete an assignment on schedule you should ***immediately*** notify the instructor.

Schedule (Hrs.)	Module, Unit, Assignment #, or Forum #	Estimated Completion Time
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Week 1	Module 1, Unit 1	2 ½ hours
(7 hrs.)	Assignment 1.1 (10 points)	1 hour
	Module 1, Unit 2	2 hours
	Assignment 1.2 (7 points)	1 hour
	Discussion Forum 1.3 (2 points)	30 minutes
Week 2	Module 2, Unit 1	2 hours
(8 hrs.)	Assignment 2.1 (6 points)	1 hour
	Module 2, Unit 2	2 ½ hours
	Assignment 2.2 (10 points)	1 hour
	Discussion Forum 2.3 (2 points)	1 hour
Week 3	Module 3	3 ½ hours
(6 hrs.)	Assignment 3.1 (10 points)	1 hour
	Discussion Forum 3.2 (2 points)	1 hour
Week 4	Module 4	2 ½ hours
(6 hours)	Assignment 4.1 (7 points)	2 hours
	Discussion Forum 4.2 (2 points)	1 hour
Week 5	Module 5	2 ½ hours
(6 hrs.)	Assignment 5.1 (6 points)	2 hours
	Discussion Forum 5.2 (3 points)	1 hour
Week 6	Module 6, Unit 1	2 hours

(9 hrs.)	Assignment 6.1 (8 points)	2 hours
	Module 6, Unit 2	2 ½ hours
	Assignment 6.2 (7 points)	2 hours
	Discussion Forum 6.3 (3 points)	1 hour
Week 7	Module 7	3 ½ hours
(7 hrs.)	Assignment 7.1 (7 points)	2 hours
	Discussion Forum 7.2 (3 points)	1 hour
Week 8	Module 8, Unit 1	2 hours
(9 hrs.)	Assignment 8.1 (10 points)	2 hours
	Module 8, Unit 2	2 hours
	Assignment 8.2 (10 points)	2 hours
	Discussion Forum 8.3 (3 points)	1 hour
Week 9	Module 9	2 hours
(5 hrs.)	Assignment 9.1 (10 points)	2 hours
	Discussion Forum 9.2 (3 points)	1 hour
Week 10	Module 10	2 hours
(5 hrs.)	Assignment 10.1 (10 points)	2 hours
	Forum 10.2 (3 points)	1 hour
		<b>Total: 67 - 90 hours</b>

**Note:** For exact dates of module time frames and assignment due dates, consult the course Calendar or Q&A discussion forum.

### **Assessment of Student Learning**

#### **Grading Criteria**

Assignments are graded largely on content – that is, on accuracy of information and depth and persuasiveness of argument. Please try to keep your answers clear and concise and, where appropriate, provide illustrative examples.

In addition to these criteria, assignments will also be evaluated for overall correctness (including spelling, punctuation, and grammar); clarity, succinctness, and force of expression; and grace and readability of style. You must of course always cite your sources.

**Note:** Forum discussions 1 – 4 are worth 2 points each. Forum discussions 5-10 are worth 3 points.

You may also use the forum to raise your own questions and issues. You can earn up to 5 bonus points in the course by initiating or contributing to an original discussion thread or by contributing posts of exceptional quality. (See “Assessment Criteria for Online Discussions” below).

Assignment due dates are published in the Course Calendar and in the Q&A Discussion Forum.

- Assignments that are 2-4 days late may be penalized one point.
- Assignments that are 5-7 days late may be penalized up to 20%.
- Assignments that are 8-14 days late may be penalized up to 40%.
- Assignments that are more than two weeks late will receive a grade of zero.

### **COURSE GRADING SCALE (BASED ON 144 POSSIBLE POINTS)**

## PASS/FAIL GRADE POLICY

Students interested in taking a course on a Pass/Fail grade basis need to contact their academic advisor to request the option by the end of the second week of the course. SCPS students can email their requests to their advisors and include the course number, quarter, and student ID number. Non-SCPS students need to contact their home college for instructions on submitting these requests. Please review the P/F guidelines, course restrictions and GPA implications in the [University catalog](#) before making your request. A grade of Pass represents a D or better standard and therefore will not meet requirements that have a minimum standard of C- or better. For further clarification of the P/F option for SCPS students beyond the university guidelines, please refer to the [SCPS catalog](#).

## MINIMUM SCPS GRADE POLICY

SCPS degree programs with majors (BAPSBA, BAPSC, BAHA, BADA, BANM, and BALS) require a grade of C- or better in courses taken at DePaul or transfer work applied to course requirements in the Major and in the LL 261: Essay Writing course in the College Core. All other course requirements in these programs can be completed with a grade of D or better. SCPS degree completion major programs (BAABS and BALS) require a C- or better in all courses taken at DePaul applied to those programs. SCPS competence-based programs (BAIFA, BAC, BAGB and BAECE) require a D or better in courses taken at DePaul or transfer work applied to competence requirements

A = 133 to 144	A- = 129.5 to 132.5	B+ = 126 to 129
B = 118.5 to 125.5	B- = 115 to 118	C+ = 111.5 to 114.5
C = 104 to 111	C- = 100 to 103.5	D = 86 to 99.5
F = 85.5 or below		

## INCOMPLETE (IN) GRADE

This process follows university [policy](#).

A student who encounters an unusual or unforeseeable circumstance that prevents her/him from completing the course requirements by the end of the term may request a time extension to complete the work.

- The student must formally initiate the request by submitting the [Contract for Issuance of Incomplete Grade form](#) (via email, word doc), no later than week 10 (or prior to the final week of a shorter-term course).
- *The instructor has discretion* to approve or not approve the student's request for an IN grade.
- *The instructor has discretion* to set the deadline for completion of the work, which may be earlier but no later than two quarters (not counting Summer term).
- The instructor *may not* enter an IN grade on behalf of a student without a completed and agreed upon contract.
- The student is alerted that IN grades are not considered by Financial Aid as evidence of satisfactory academic progress.

## COURSE SCHEDULE

The schedule for all assignments and discussions is published in the Course Calendar and is also accessible in the Q&A discussion forum. Unless otherwise noted, assignments for each weekly module are due on Monday evenings (11:30 PM CT). Posts to weekly required discussions should be made no later than 11:30 PM every Sunday. Web discussions for each module remain open for posting for a period of two weeks, after which they become read-only.

## COURSE POLICIES

### **Grade of Incomplete (IN)**

Students in this course should consider a grade of IN to be a last resort and a decidedly unattractive option. The grade is an option available only in rare special circumstances. Normally, it is offered only to students who have successfully completed the first eight modules, but who, due to illness or special complications, are unable to complete the last two assignments and discussions by the final deadline. To qualify, students must also submit a formal request for a grade of IN before the final week of the term.

### Assessment Criteria for Online Discussions

Participation in online discussions is a course requirement and an integral part of the online learning experience. However, to reduce performance pressure and to promote an active, yet comfortable discussion environment, posts are not assessed in the same way as weekly assignments. Instead, students earn two points for each weekly contribution so long as posts are substantive and relevant. (“Substantive” here basically means a good-faith, meaningful contribution and not just something like “I agree with so-and-so” or “me too.”) In addition, students can earn bonus points (up to five points for the term) for introducing or contributing to new, unassigned topics or by furnishing posts that are judged to be of particularly high quality. In general, exemplary posts will accomplish at least one of the following:

- Provide new ideas or links to useful resources.
- Raise challenging or pertinent questions.
- Provide supporting arguments or explanations for a view.
- Reflect on and re-evaluate an important idea relating to the discussion topic or course module.
- Offer a polite critique, challenging, dissenting from, or expanding on the ideas of others.
- Provide helpful interpretations, definitions, and meanings.
- Succinctly summarize previous contributions and offer a new insight or raise a new question or topic.

*THIS COURSE INCLUDES AND ADHERES TO THE COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY POLICIES DESCRIBED IN THE LINKS BELOW:*

[APA citation format](#) (GRAD) [Academic Integrity Policy](#) (GRAD)

[Academic Integrity Policy](#) (UGRAD)

[Incomplete \(IN\) and Research \(R\) Grades Expiration Policy](#)

[Withdrawal/Drop Policy](#) and [Withdrawal Tuition](#)

[Accommodations Based on the Impact of a Disability](#)

Students are also invited to contact me privately to discuss your challenges and how I may assist in facilitating the accommodations you will use during this course. This is best done early in the term and our conversation will remain confidential.

[Protection of Human Research Participants](#)

### OTHER RESOURCES FOR STUDENTS

[University Center for Writing-based Learning](#)

[Dean of Students Office](#)

## INSTRUCTOR BRIEF BIO

David Simpson received a BA in psychology from Indiana University and a PhD in English Literature from Columbia University. He has served on the faculties of Columbia, Northwestern, Robert Morris, and DePaul, teaching courses and lecturing on Western civilization and intellectual history, Renaissance and 17th-century literature and drama, expository writing, American literature, history of technology, and moral philosophy. He has published articles on Lucretius, Pascal, Albert Camus, Sir Francis Bacon, and WD Ross, and on general topics ranging from electronic media and medieval poetry to nicknames and slang. His interest in philosophy began as an undergraduate specializing in the study of psycholinguistics and the philosophy of mind. He has taught undergraduate courses on ethics and on the thought of Plato, Aristotle, Hobbes, and Machiavelli. His interest in business ethics stems from his experience as a trader and market maker on the Chicago Board Options Exchange.