

# GLOBAL ETHICS

PHIL 2304 – SUMMER I, 2015 – CRN: 61793

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*international issues  
and moral philosophy*

## CONTENT AND FORMAT

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This class discusses important issues that we face every day as citizens of a wealthy country like the U.S., whose political choices and commercial habits have wide-ranging global repercussions. These issues include **racism and sexism, labor and slavery, economic development, human rights, cultural perception, globalization**, and others.

Our world is plagued by deep structural injustices, the lasting legacy of 500 years of colonial domination. These unjust structures must be studied carefully before we can suggest how to resolve them. Courses such as this one aim to achieve a detailed understanding of who benefits from how the world works, who suffers, and who profits.

This class favors breadth over depth and adopts a multidisciplinary approach centered on moral philosophy. We will read texts from philosophers, critical theorists, sociologists, novelists, and others. Whatever your field of study is, I encourage you to integrate it in your work, especially when you participate in the online discussion forums.

**The course is conducted entirely on Scholar, but I will be in Blacksburg. If you need to talk in person, e-mail me and we will set up a meeting in my office or via Skype.**

## POLICIES

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**Accommodation.** Please inform me by **May 29** of any health concerns or documented disabilities. I am here to help!

**Honor Code.** I take it seriously, even in the summer. Suspected violations will be reported to the Honor Court.

## MATERIAL

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**Required book:** Kwame A. Appiah. *Cosmopolitanism: Ethics in a World of Strangers*. ISBN 9780393329339.

**You must complete the weekly readings by each Friday**, and ideally earlier so you may discuss them on the Scholar Forums. All readings are on Scholar or on the Internet, except for Appiah's book.

**Appiah's book must be finished by the last week.** You will discuss it on the Forums and it will be a major part of the final exam. If you need help, refer to the reading guide and/or ask me or your classmates.

**Each Monday I will post a video lecture on YouTube.** Do the readings first, because the videos explain them only partially. All exams and all assignments include all lectures and all readings assigned until that point.

## PARTICIPATION

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**You participate by posting on the Scholar forums. Participation is worth up to 20% of your total grade.**

When you participate, try to both make your own point and discuss what others have said. Do not talk to yourself or be rude. Converse, ask questions, answer someone else's, criticize or defend a reading, propose alternative ways of interpreting a reading, relate the material to the news or your studies, etc. You have ample freedom of choice.

The quantity and length of your posts are irrelevant, and there is no weekly minimum or maximum. What matters is how **thoughtful, intelligent, interesting, and respectful** your posts are. I want you to participate only when you are seriously intentioned to discuss the material with the rest of us. If grades are your only incentive, your posts will be mediocre and your participation score will be low—yes, even if you post a lot.

Every two weeks I will let you know, in private, what I think of your participation in the Scholar Forums, along with suggestions on how you can do better, what you should change, etc.

**IN SHORT: QUALITY > QUANTITY. TAKE DISCUSSION SERIOUSLY AND YOU WILL BE FINE.**

## ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING

Everything is “take-home” and due on Scholar. Do the exams under **Tests & Quizzes**, turn in the outlines under **Assignments**, and participate under **Forums**. All assignments are due by midnight unless otherwise specified.

<i>First exam</i>	<b>15%</b>	Multiple choice and online research. Includes material from the first two weeks.
<i>Second exam</i>	<b>20%</b>	Multiple choice and fill-in-the-blank. Includes material from the first four weeks.
<i>Third exam</i>	<b>25%</b>	Multiple choice and essay questions. Includes material from the entire course.
<i>Outlines</i>	<b>20%</b>	Bullet-point summaries of one reading per week. About a half-page each.
<i>Participation</i>	<b>20%</b>	Post regularly to the Scholar Forums. Quality matters more than quantity.


### HOW I GRADE

**A = excellent**, above and beyond the requirements: this grade is reserved only for top students and is **very rare**  
**B = standard**, meeting all requirements satisfactorily but not exceptionally: this grade is the **most common**  
**C = substandard**, meeting some requirements but not others: this grade is for passable to mediocre work  
**D = unsatisfactory**, meeting few requirements, and poorly: this grade is for those who do all-around badly  
**F = failure** to meet all or most requirements: I have never failed anyone and I don't intend to start now

Typically, my classes average a “B” at the end. That being said, I do not use a curve: if all get an A, all the better.








If you have issues with a grade, e-mail me. Say what you think the right grade should have been and why, including specific examples that you think I have under-evaluated. You will receive a response in up to three days' time.

### SCHEDULE AND DUE DATES

Readings are on Scholar (go to Resources) or on the internet (click the links  in the syllabus).

Ideally, you should complete the readings in the order they are listed here, but that is not required.

Video lectures will be uploaded to [my YouTube channel](#). 

TOPICS	LECTURES AND READINGS	ASSIGNMENTS DUE
Week 1: May 25 – 31 <b>Ethics</b>	<b>D’Amato – Rachels</b> Video lecture #1 available Monday 5/25	nothing
Week 2: June 1 – 7 <b>Poverty</b>	<b>Le Guin – Nagel – Pogge – <u>The End of Poverty?</u></b>  Video lecture #2 available Monday 6/1	F 6/5 <b>first exam</b>
Week 3: June 8 – 14 <b>Colonialism</b>	<b>Fanon – Said – Mills</b> Video lecture #3 available Monday 6/8	nothing
Week 4: June 15 – 21 <b>Global Culture</b>	<b><u>Newitz</u></b>  – <b><u>Cole</u></b>  – <b><u>Nsabimana</u></b>  – <b><u>Kapoor</u></b>  Video lecture #4 available Monday 6/15	F 6/19 <b>second exam</b>
Week 5: June 22 – 28 <b>Global Capitalism</b>	<b>Dunaway – Marcos – Torres – <u>Stiglitz</u></b>  Video lecture #5 available Monday 6/22	nothing
Week 6: June 29 – July 5 <b>Cosmopolitanism</b>	<b><u>Barber</u></b>  – Taylor – Appiah (finish book) Video lecture #6 available Monday 6/29	F 7/3 <b>outlines</b>
<b>THIRD AND FINAL EXAM: turn in on Scholar by Sunday, July 5<sup>th</sup> at 11:59 p.m. ET</b>		

**NB** — Some video lectures reference news and events that are no longer current, such as the 2014 World Cup. This is because they were recorded last year. Sorry about that. Also, the week 4 lecture includes some material about world maps that I no longer assign, while it does not cover the Nsabimana and Kapoor readings, which are new. But these are short and easy and I would not have covered them in a lecture anyway, so I do not think that you will have problems.

**Let me know if you need help with any of the material! I will be glad to upload additional lectures to YouTube.**

## RELATED LINKS

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### General

- [Why study philosophy?](#)
- [How to e-mail a professor](#)
- [A sample philosophy paper](#) (interactive presentation)

### Race, racism, and racial perception

- Jamie Utt: “[Are whites disadvantaged by affirmative action?](#)”
- Henry Louis Gates, Jr.: “[Tarantino Unchained: white saviors](#)”
- Harvey Young: “[The challenges of talking about race](#)”
- [The Racial Dot Map: one dot per person for the entire U.S.](#)
- [Photos challenge the way we see race](#)
- [Challenging the one-drop rule](#) (same topic)
- [World of Averages](#) (for a condensed version, see [here](#))
- [Gurl Goes to Africa](#) (why “voluntourism” is racist)

### Wealth, inequality, and development

- Graeme Wearden: “[85 people as rich as half the world](#)”
- Helena Lee: “[Why Finnish babies sleep in cardboard boxes](#)”
- Simon Kuper: “[Apartheid, just less black and white](#)”
- Nigel Warburton: “[Cosmopolitans](#)”
- Malala Yousafzai: “[I have the right](#)”
- Anup Shah: “[The arms trade is big business](#)”

### Data, statistics, and media

- [Slavery Footprint](#) (how many slaves work for you?)
- [Gapminder World](#) (a great social sciences tool)
- [The world as 100 people](#) (basic statistics)
- [The world of 100](#) (a different data set)
- [Follow the Money](#) (political campaign contributions)
- [10x10](#) (news trends in pictures)
- [Worldometers](#) (real-time global statistics)

### Culture and cultural imperialism

- [40 maps that will help you make sense of the world](#)
- [Public Shaming: tweets of privilege](#)
- [How powerful is your passport?](#)
- Nina Paley: “[This Land Is Mine](#)” (music video)
- Gayle Sulik: “[Pink ribbon blues: how breast cancer culture undermines women’s health](#)”
- George Monbiot: “[US mass child killings are tragedies. In Pakistan, mere bug splats](#)”
- Stella Young: “[I’m not your inspiration, thank you very much](#)”
- George Simons: “[World maps and intercultural debate](#)”
- Nick Danforth: “[How the north ended up on top of the map](#)”
- Sara Frykenberg: “[‘Abraham’s Daughter’ by Arcade Fire](#)”

### Music videos and documentaries

- “[The Great Imperialist State](#)” (song by Simone White about exploiting cheap foreign labor)
- “[We Are the World](#)” (all-star charity single from the 1980s; also check out the 2014 version)
- “[The Third World](#)” (music video by Chilean-American rapper Immortal Technique)
- “[Behind the Swoosh](#)” (short documentary about slavery in Nike sweatshops)

### Movies of philosophical interest

1927	<i>Metropolis</i>
1940	<i>The Great Dictator</i>
1964	<i>Dr. Strangelove</i>
1968	<i>2001: A Space Odyssey</i>
1978	<i>The China Syndrome</i>
1979	<i>Apocalypse Now</i>
1982	<i>Gandhi</i>
1982	<i>Blade Runner</i>
1984	<i>Dune</i>
1984	<i>2010: The Year We Make Contact</i>
1988	<i>Grave of the Fireflies</i>
1997	<i>Contact</i>
1998	<i>The Truman Show</i>
1998	<i>The Thin Red Line</i>
1999	<i>Snow Falling on Cedars</i>
1999	<i>The Matrix</i> trilogy
2004	<i>Primer</i>
2004	<i>Hotel Rwanda</i>
2004	<i>Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless...</i>
2005	<i>Lord of War</i>
2005	<i>The New World</i>
2005	<i>V for Vendetta</i>
2006	<i>Apocalypto</i>
2006	<i>The Fountain</i>
2006	<i>The Last King of Scotland</i>
2006	<i>An Inconvenient Truth</i>
2009	<i>Avatar</i>
2009	<i>District 9</i>
2011	<i>The Tree of Life</i>
2012	<i>The Hunger Games</i> trilogy
2014	<i>Boyhood</i>
2014	<i>Interstellar</i>