

PHIL 2304: GLOBAL ETHICS

Spring 2016 – TORG 1040 – MW 5:30-6:45 p.m.

Course website on [Canvas](#) 

Claudio D'Amato, instructor

office hours: Tue-Thu 9-11 a.m.
at the Next Door Bake Shop

e-mail: claudio1@vt.edu

OVERVIEW AND GOALS

“How can I behave justly in a globalized, multicultural world where so many people disagree with me?”

“How do my moral and political beliefs affect the lives and deaths of distant strangers?”

This course discusses these and other questions that matter (or *should* matter) in the everyday life of 21st-century global citizens like you and me. At the end of PHIL 2304 you will:

- Learn ethical and political theories from the Anglo-American, European, and East-Asian traditions and refine your grasp of the concepts of morality, rights, duties, freedom, power, oppression, and justice.
- Be able to interpret ideas and events through the lens of moral philosophy, including social media, news, books, music, movies, TV shows, and documentaries.
- Understand how historical power relations—especially of race, sex, and class—still determine many moral and ethical features of contemporary public life.
- Develop analytical skills that will be useful later in your studies or in the workplace.
- Fulfill the Area 2 or Area 7 requirement in VT’s Curriculum for Liberal Education.

REQUIRED MATERIALS

- (1) **Daily readings.** These are usually 4-5 pages long, though some are longer. Each class period I will call on a few students to summarize the assigned article(s). It is okay if you did not understand everything: explain the gist and we will take it from there. **Failure to be prepared when called upon affects your participation grade.**
- (2) **Eight movies.** These can be rented for free at Newman, streamed from paid online services, or watched on the Canvas website under “Files” (the latter only on weekends before a movie is due). **Read this.** →
- (3) **Two books.** Read on your own by the due dates. Any edition is fine.
 - *Things Fall Apart* – Chinua Achebe – ISBN 9780385474542
 - *Cosmopolitanism* – Kwame Appiah – ISBN 9780393329339

If you watch a movie on Canvas, you must stream it (click on *View*) but not download it. As per Title 17 US Code 1-110, it is illegal to download movies that are made available for education. Canvas events are logged with your VT ID, so if you download a full film you will fail the class and **be reported**.

HOW TO DO WELL IN THIS COURSE

DIFFICULTY This is a **hard class** where I demand strong personal engagement and nuanced comprehension. Skimming, guessing, approximating, and general BS are insufficient, so you should drop this course if you are looking for an easy A. See more about my grading policies on the next page. **You are not penalized for not understanding, but you are for not trying hard enough.**

PARTICIPATION Discussion relates the readings to one another, to the movies, and to yourself. There are many ways to participate: ask questions, answer questions, defend opinions, criticize others’ opinions, defend an old idea in a new way, etc. **On March 14th I will let each of you know individually (via e-mail) how you are doing discussion-wise.** You may ask me at any other time during the term. Use this feedback to improve your attendance and participation as needed.

ONLINE FORUMS Those who find in-class participation too challenging may also discuss the material on the Canvas forums, to be found under “Discussions.” However, online posts are insufficient: you should still talk in class to take full advantage of the experience and earn full participation credit. **Talk to me if you want tips on overcoming shyness and stage fright!** I have been there and I can help.

ASSIGNMENT CHOICES

Two assignments are mandatory for everyone: attendance and participation (**20%**) and a final exam (**20%**).

The rest of your grade is up to you to determine. You must choose a total of three assignments (**20%** each) from these option groups. No more than two assignments may come from the same group. See the guide on Canvas for details.

You must choose by **February 15th**. Your choice is final. Feel free to discuss your options with me!

TESTS	WRITING	PROJECTS
due 2/19: first exam <i>objective, timed, online</i>	due 4/22: research paper <i>on approved topic (10-12 pages)</i>	due each Friday: reading notes <i>bullet-point notes of two readings per week, to be turned in each Friday</i>
due 3/25: second exam <i>objective, timed, online</i>	due 3/25 & 5/6: two book reviews <i>class books only (5-6 pages each)</i>	due 4/22: art project <i>blog, poetry, skit, music, etc.; in group or individually; consult me first!</i>
due 5/6: double-weight final <i>if you feel adventurous...</i>	due 3/25 & 4/22: two movie reviews <i>class movies only (5-6 pages each)</i>	due 4/22: community project <i>surveys, activism, volunteering, etc.; in group or individually; consult me first!</i>

Your three choices (**60%**) + final exam (**20%**) + discussion (**20%**) = **100%**. No retakes or do-overs.

Extra-credit assignments will be announced in class. A mandatory, ungraded syllabus quiz is due on Jan 29th.

GRADES

A = exceptional, 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 most or all requirements: I have never failed anyone in this class so far.

Typically, my classes average a “B” at the end, with most students scoring 85-88%. However, I do not curve grades.

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

LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

ACCOMMODATION Please inform me of health concerns or physical, mental, or learning disabilities by Friday, Jan. 29th. We will work together to help you succeed according to your abilities!

COMMUNITY By working together, you and I agree to abide by the Virginia Tech Principles of Community. [Read the full Principles here.](#) 🗨️

HONESTY We are bound at all times by the [VT Honor System Constitution](#). 🗨️ I take it seriously and I assume you do too. Cheating is unfair to yourself and a scam that you perpetrate on others, so be honest with yourself, your classmates, and me. Suspected Honor System violations will be reported to the Honor Court and pursued.

FIVE SIMPLE RULES OF CONDUCT

(1) **I don’t take attendance.** You want to be there.

(2) **Be punctual, articulate, and polite.** At all times.

(3) **No late assignments.** Except for real emergencies.

(4) **E-mail is the best way to talk to me.** Use it.

(5) **The Philosophy Golden Rule:** “Keep an open mind, but not so open that your brain falls out.”

READING SCHEDULE AND DUE DATES

Some readings are online: click on the [links](#) to open them. The rest are on Canvas under Files → Readings.

This schedule is also available as a calendar for your VT Google Apps: accept my e-mail invitation on 1-27 to see it.

	READ THESE ARTICLES	WATCH THESE MOVIES	
MORALITY JUSTICE	No reading: class introduction		W 1/20
	D'Amato: Basics of morality and justice + watch these three short videos: 1 , 2 , 3	<i>V for Vendetta</i>	M 1/25
	Goldman: Anarchism: what it really stands for Scruton: Why I became a conservative	     F 1/22	W 1/27
	Mandatory, ungraded syllabus quiz due under “Quizzes” on Canvas  by 5:00 p.m.		F 1/29
	Rawls: <i>A Theory of Justice</i> + card game in class		M 2/1
	Sen: The capability approach (intro + section 2)		W 2/3
POVERTY LABOR ECONOMICS	Wearden: 85 people as wealthy as half the world Nagel: Poverty and food: why charity is not enough	<i>The End of Poverty?</i>  F 2/5 – Canvas only!	M 2/8 W 2/10
	Nsabimana: #TheBullshitFiles Kapoor: Celebrity humanitarianism McGoey: The philanthropy hustle (skim) + video		
	Griswold: Trading tyranny for freedom Herman: “Free” trade	<i>Inside Job</i>      F 2/12	M 2/15 W 2/17
	Nike Sweatshops: Behind the Swoosh + videos 1, 2 Greenhouse: Apparel factory defies stereotypes, but...		
	First exam due under “Quizzes” on Canvas  by 5:00 p.m.		F 2/19
RACISM IMPERIALISM	Newitz: White people and movies like Avatar Cole: The white-savior industrial complex		M 2/22 W 2/24
	Young: Talking about race The Racial Dot Map Mills: The Racial Contract + video		
	Achebe: <i>Things Fall Apart</i> (finish book)	<i>Apocalypto</i>  F 2/26 – Canvas only!	M 2/29 W 3/2
	No reading: continue discussing <i>Apocalypto</i> and <i>TFA</i>		

SPRING BREAK: MARCH 5-13

GLOBAL FEMINISM	Fausto-Sterling: The five sexes		M 3/14 W 3/16
	MacKinnon: Toward a feminist theory of the State		
	Jaggarr: “Saving” Amina: global justice for women	<i>The West Wing (episode)</i>	M 3/21
	Dunaway: Women’s labor and nature	 F 3/18	W 3/23
ASSIGNMENT	Second exam due under “Quizzes” on Canvas  by 5:00 p.m.		F 3/25
	First movie or book review due under “Assignments” on Canvas  by 5:00 p.m.		

CLIMATE	Broome: The ethics of climate change	<i>An Inconvenient Truth</i>	M 3/28
	Shue: Luxury emissions and subsistence emissions	    F 3/25	W 3/30
WAR VIOLENCE TERRORISM	Shah: The arms trade is big business 	<i>Lord of War</i>	M 4/4
	Rosenberg: The fears of fearless white men 	    F 4/1	W 4/6
	Walzer: Terrorism and just war McPherson: Is terrorism <i>distinctively</i> wrong?		M 4/11
	<i>Collegiate Times</i> , Letters to the Editor from April 2007	<i>Massacre at VT</i>  (optional)	W 4/13
	Levinson: Mad, bad, sad: soldiers and moral injury 	<i>The Thin Red Line</i>	M 4/18
	Soldiers at war  Fight or flight 	    F 4/15	W 4/20
ASSIGNMENT	Art and/or community project due under “Assignments” on Canvas  by 5:00 p.m.		F 4/22
	Second movie review due under “Assignments” on Canvas  by 5:00 p.m.		
	Research paper due under “Assignments” on Canvas  by 5:00 p.m.		
LIBERTY COMMUNITY	Appiah: <i>Cosmopolitanism</i> (finish book)		M 4/25
	No reading: continue discussing <i>Cosmopolitanism</i>		W 4/27
	Walzer: Moral minimalism		M 5/2
	Rorty: Who are we? Le Guin: The ones who walk away from Omelas		W 5/4
ASSIGNMENT	Second book review due under “Assignments” on Canvas  by 5:00 p.m.		F 5/6
FINAL EXAM	Bring pen and cheat sheet. Meet in our usual classroom. 7:00-9:00 p.m.		F 5/6

RESOURCES

Why study philosophy? 	How to e-mail a professor 	Claudio’s website 
To be successful and make \$\$\$. Surprised? Read this article.	So you don’t sound like an idiot by addressing me as “dude” or “hey.”	More links to music, videos, and readings of interest for this class.

More movies of philosophical interest—and feel free to suggest your favorites to add!

<u>1927</u> Metropolis	<u>1984</u> 2010	<u>2005</u> The New World
<u>1940</u> The Great Dictator	<u>1988</u> Grave of the Fireflies	<u>2006</u> The Fountain
<u>1964</u> Dr. Strangelove	<u>1997</u> Contact	<u>2006</u> The Last King of Scotland
<u>1968</u> 2001: A Space Odyssey	<u>1998</u> The Truman Show	<u>2008</u> Zeitgeist: Addendum
<u>1971</u> THX 1138	<u>1999</u> The Matrix trilogy	<u>2009</u> District 9
<u>1978</u> The China Syndrome	<u>2004</u> Primer	<u>2011</u> The Tree of Life
<u>1979</u> Apocalypse Now	<u>2004</u> Hotel Rwanda	<u>2012</u> Inception
<u>1982</u> Gandhi	<u>2004</u> Eternal Sunshine of the	<u>2014</u> Boyhood
<u>1982</u> Blade Runner	Spotless Mind	<u>2014</u> Interstellar