

PHIL 2304: GLOBAL ETHICS

Fall 2016 – War Memorial 219 – MWF 10:10-11:00

Course website on [Canvas](#) 

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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 5-10 pages long, but some are longer. Each class period I will call on a few students to summarize the assigned reading. It is okay if you did not understand all of it: explain the gist and we will take it from there. **Failure to be prepared when called upon affects your participation grade.**
- (2) **Seven 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. You will be tested on both books in class and on the final exam.
 - *Cosmopolitanism* – Kwame Appiah – ISBN 9780393329339
 - *Utopia for Realists* – Rutger Bregman – ISBN 9789082520309

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, and general BS are insufficient, so you should drop this course if you are looking for an easy A. I rarely give As in general: see 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 October 14 I will e-mail each of you individually to let you know 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.

ASSIGNMENTS

Read the **Assignments Guide** on Canvas for more details. Do not ask me about assignments until after you read it.

THREE MANDATORY ASSIGNMENTS		
final exam in class (20%)	weekly reading outlines (20%)	attendance and participation (20%)
TWO CHOICE ASSIGNMENTS. 20% each. Pick two from different groups.		
due 10/9: first exam <i>objective, timed, online</i>	due 11/20: research paper <i>on an approved topic (10-12 pages)</i>	due 11/28: art project <i>blog, poetry, skit, music, etc.</i> <i>subject to prior approval: see me</i>
due 11/20: second exam <i>objective, timed, online</i>	due 10/9 and 11/20: movie reviews <i>two class movies (5-6 pages each)</i>	due 11/28: community project <i>survey, activism, volunteering, etc.</i> <i>subject to prior approval: see me</i>

You must commit to your two choice assignments by **September 26**. Your choice is final.

Extra-credit assignments will be announced in class. A mandatory, ungraded syllabus quiz is due on **September 2**.

WEEKLY READING OUTLINES. Each week, you will turn in brief outlines of two readings from that week.

- Each outline is due by class time of the day the reading is due. I must see the outline on Canvas *before* class.
- You will turn in 22 outlines. That's 2 each week for 11 weeks, from September 5 to Thanksgiving break.
- The two lowest grades will be dropped at the end of the semester, and the remaining 20 grades will count.
- You must submit two outlines per week, and you may not submit more than two. On weeks with only two readings, those will be your two outlines. On weeks with 3+ readings, you may pick which two you will outline.
- **Read the Assignments Guide on Canvas for more details. Do not ask questions about what I expect to see in these outlines until after you have read the guide.**

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.

POLICIES

HONOR SYSTEM I believe in our [Honor System Constitution](#) 📄. Read it thoroughly to learn how to avoid cheating, plagiarism, and falsification. Suspected violations will be reported to the Honor Court.

COMMUNITY Be punctual, articulate, and polite. Always abide by the [Virginia Tech Principles of Community!](#) 📄

ACCOMMODATION Present your [SSD documentation](#) 📄 by **August 26**. Talk to me about it and we'll figure it out!

GRADING B is the typical average in my classes and also my go-to grade. Do not expect to receive an A just because you did everything right. **All grades are final:** I reject all requests for grade changes based on your opinion (but I will always answer your questions). I do not curve grades.

TIMELINESS I do not take attendance, but if you are absent often I will notice. Frequent lateness will be treated as an absence. If I am more than 10 minutes late to class, you may leave. Late assignments are penalized one letter grade per day, unless you can prove a documented and debilitating illness.

IMPORTANT! **Keep an open mind, but not so open that your brain falls out.**

READING SCHEDULE AND DUE DATES

Readings must be completed by the day for which they are assigned, and they will be discussed in class on that day. Some readings are on the internet: 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 **August 29**. **All readings, books, movies, video clips, and class discussions are included in all exams and assignments.**

	READ THESE ARTICLES	WATCH THESE MOVIES	
INTRODUCTION <i>Ethics</i> <i>Politics</i> <i>Ideologies</i> <i>Rights</i> <i>Duties</i>	No reading: class introduction		M 8/22
	D’Amato : Basics of morality and justice		W 8/24
	Rachels : The challenge of cultural relativism		F 8/26
	Ball & Dagger : Ideology and ideologies		M 8/29
	Rawls : <i>A Theory of Justice</i> + card game in class	<i>V for Vendetta</i> VT 📺 V 🍏 a N 🎮	W 8/31
	2016 Election: issue analysis and candidates review		F 9/2
	Mandatory, ungraded syllabus quiz due under “Quizzes” on Canvas 🎮 by midnight		F 9/2
	Labor Day. No class.		M 9/5
	Miller : Distributing responsibilities		W 9/7
Taylor : Conditions of a consensus on human rights		F 9/9	
CLASS <i>Poverty</i> <i>Wealth</i> <i>Labor</i> <i>Trade</i>	Elliott : Richest 62 people as wealthy as half the world 📄		M 9/12
	What happens when you don’t own the land 📄		W 9/14
	Nagel : Poverty and food: why charity is not enough		F 9/16
	Nike Sweatshops : Behind the Swoosh 📄 (recommended)		M 9/19
	Greenhouse : Apparel factory defies stereotypes 📄	<i>The End of Poverty?</i> 📺 🎮	W 9/21
	Nsabimana : #TheBullshitFiles 📄 Kapoor : Celebrity humanitarianism 📄		F 9/23
ASSIGNMENT	Commit to two choice assignments: fill out the survey on Canvas 🎮 by midnight		M 9/26
RACE <i>Anti-racism</i> <i>Imperialism</i> <i>Colonialism</i>	Young : The challenges of talking about race 📄 The Racial Dot Map 📄 (look at Blacksburg)		M 9/26
	Hodson : Being anti-racist, not non-racist 📄 + video 📄		W 9/28
	Garza : A herstory of #BlackLivesMatter 📄		F 9/30
	Fanon : On violence		M 10/3
	Mills : <i>The Racial Contract</i> + video 📄	<i>Apocalypto</i> 🎮 <i>Canvas only!</i>	W 10/5
	Vallabhjee : Beyoncé and intersectionality 📄		F 10/7
ASSIGNMENT	First exam due under “Quizzes” on Canvas 🎮 by midnight		Sunday
	First movie review due under “Assignments” on Canvas 🎮 by midnight		10/9

GENDER Sexism Feminism Gender equality	Fausto-Sterling: How many sexes are there? 📖 W.H.O.: Gender and genetics 📖 (skim)		M 10/10
	Reade: Debunking the wage gap myth 📖 Pearson: The gender pay gap isn't a myth 📖		W 10/12
	Fall Break. No class.		F 10/14
	MacKinnon: Toward a feminist theory of the State		M 10/17
	Valoy: Transnational feminism 📖 Jaggart: "Saving" Amina: global justice for women	The West Wing (episode) N 🌐	W 10/19
	Dunaway: Women's labor and nature		F 10/21
CASE #1 Multiculturalism	Appiah: Cosmopolitanism (finish book)		M 10/24
	Appiah: Cosmopolitanism (continue discussion)		W 10/26
	Appiah: Cosmopolitanism (continue discussion)		F 10/28
	D'Amato: Why (not) multiculturalism?		M 10/31
	Walzer: Moral minimalism	Zootopia VT 📺 V 🍏 a 📺 🌐	W 11/2
	Barber: Jihad vs. McWorld 📖		F 11/4
CASE #2 Development	World Bank: What is development?		M 11/7
	Sen: The concept of development		W 11/9
	Nussbaum: Capabilities and human rights		F 11/11
CASE #3 War & Violence	Levinson: Mad, bad, sad: soldiers and moral injury 📖		M 11/14
	Richtel: Please don't thank me for my service 📖 Salaita: Stop saying "Support the troops" 📖	The Thin Red Line VT 📺 V 🍏 a 📺 🌐	W 11/16
	Rosenberg: The fears of fearless white men 📖		F 11/18
ASSIGNMENT	Second exam due under "Quizzes" on Canvas 🌐 by midnight		Sunday 11/20
	Second movie review due under "Assignments" on Canvas 🌐 by midnight		
	Research paper due under "Assignments" on Canvas 🌐 by midnight		

THANKSGIVING BREAK: NOVEMBER 19-27

ASSIGNMENT	Art or community project due under "Assignments" on Canvas 🌐 by midnight		M 11/28
THE FUTURE Utopia Realism Choice	Bregman: Utopia for Realists (finish book)		M 11/28
	Bregman: Utopia for Realists (continue discussion)	Zeitgeist: Addendum	W 11/30
	Bregman: Utopia for Realists (continue discussion)	📺 N 🌐 (65:48 to 92:40)	F 12/2
	Rorty: Who are we? Le Guin: The ones who walk away from Omelas		M 12/5
	Last day: review and ask any question you want		W 12/7
FINAL EXAM	Bring pen and cheat sheet. Meet in our usual classroom. 3:25-5:25 p.m.		T 12/13

RESOURCES

Why study philosophy? 📄

To be successful and make \$\$\$.
Surprised? Read this article.

How to e-mail a professor 📄

So you don't sound like an idiot by
addressing me as "dude" or "hey."

Claudio's website 📄

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!

MEANING OF LIFE

The Seventh Seal	Lord of the Rings saga
I Heart Huckabees	The Tree of Life
The Fountain	The Leftovers (TV)

NATURE OF REALITY

The Truman Show	Waking Life
Dark City	Inception
The Matrix trilogy	

SOCIAL JUSTICE

Metropolis	GATTACA
Fahrenheit 451	Boys Don't Cry
Gandhi	Crash
American History X	X-Men saga

POLITICAL JUSTICE

The Great Dictator	V for Vendetta
Rashomon	The Dark Knight
The Laramie Project	Watchmen
Hotel Rwanda	The Purge

VIOLENCE AND WAR

A Clockwork Orange	Crimson Tide
Dr. Strangelove	The Thin Red Line
Apocalypse Now	Lord of War
Grave of the Fireflies	Apocalypto
Starship Troopers	Ender's Game

MIND, MEMORY, AND MADNESS

THX 1138	Memento
Solaris (1972 and 2002)	Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind
Videodrome	A Scanner Darkly
The Naked Lunch	Enemy
Fight Club	

ALIEN CONTACT

2001: A Space Odyssey	Contact
2010: The Year We Make Contact	District 9
	Interstellar

LEGAL AND MEDIA ETHICS

Rope	Rollerball
12 Angry Men	Minority Report
The China Syndrome	Black Mirror (TV)

TIME TRAVEL

Groundhog Day	Donnie Darko
Terminator 2	Primer
Star Trek IV	Looper
12 Monkeys	

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

Blade Runner	Battlestar Galactica (TV)
Ghost in the Shell	Rise of the Planet of the Apes
Bicentennial Man	Ex Machina
A.I. Artificial Intelligence	

VIDEO GAMES WITH VALUABLE PHILOSOPHICAL THEMES

Mass Effect – artificial intelligence, genocide, genetic engineering, militarism, transhumanism

The Last of Us – feminist ethics, crisis of masculinity, family unit, survivalism, human exceptionalism

Braid – feminist ethics, free will, predestination, nature of reality, nature of time, individualism

Deus Ex – transhumanism, surveillance state, technological singularity, freedom and justice

Bioshock – consumerism, egoism, individualism, surveillance state, predestination, freedom

The Stanley Parable – free will, determinism, business ethics, post-capitalism, individualism

The Vanishing of Ethan Carter – creativity, art, aesthetics, paranoia, homophobia, child abuse

Portal saga – existentialism, consciousness, nature of reality, meaning of life, artificial intelligence