

PHIL 2304: GLOBAL ETHICS

Spring 2017 – War Memorial 219 – MWF 9:05-9:55

Course website on [Canvas](#) 

Claudio D'Amato, instructor

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at the Newman Library Café

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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 lives of 21st-century global citizens like you and me. At the end of PHIL 2304, which is an Area 2 or Area 7 course, 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, gender, and class—still determine many moral and ethical features of contemporary public life.

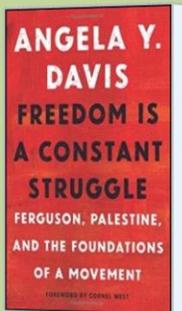
REQUIRED MATERIALS

- (1) **Daily readings.** These are usually 5-10 pages long, but some are longer. Each day I will call on someone to summarize the assigned readings. Failure to be prepared when called upon affects your participation grade.
- (2) **Seven movies.** These can be rented for free from Newman Library, streamed from paid online services, or watched on the Canvas website under “Files” (the latter only on weekends before a movie is due).
- (3) **Three books.** Any edition is fine. Read on your own by the due dates.

Angela Davis

*Freedom Is
A Constant
Struggle*

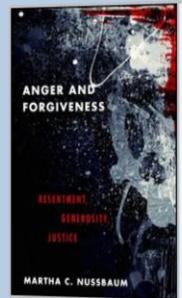
ISBN number:
9781608465644



Martha
Nussbaum

*Anger and
Forgiveness*

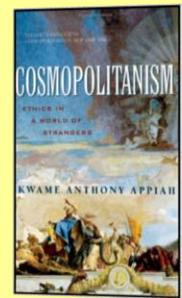
ISBN number:
9780199335879



Kwame Appiah

*Cosmopolitanism:
Ethics in a World
of Strangers*

ISBN number:
9780393329339



HOW TO DO WELL IN THIS COURSE

FORMAT In a typical class, I will call upon two students to briefly summarize the readings, then lecture for 25-30 minutes, and finally open the floor for discussion. You may interrupt me at any time to ask for clarification! However, please hold other questions and objections for the Q&A.

DIFFICULTY **This class is hard.** It demands engagement, patience, courage, and nuanced understanding. Skimming, guessing, and ballparking are insufficient. See my grade policies on the next page.

PARTICIPATION In addition to answering my questions and engaging your colleagues in person, you may also post to the online forums. On **March 12** I will give you a temporary participation grade, along with comments on your attendance and discussion quality thus far.

DROP NOW IF... You are usually quiet in class, you dislike being called upon, you expect an easy A, or you are set in your ways and do not care to learn new ideas (but then why are you in college?).

ASSIGNMENTS

Read this section as well as the **Assignments Guide** on Canvas before asking questions about the assignments!

THREE MANDATORY ASSIGNMENTS		
due 3/5: midterm (25%) <i>multiple choice and essay, online</i>	reading outlines (20%) <i>two per week, ½ to 1 page each</i>	attendance and participation (15%) <i>in-class activity plus forum posts</i>

TWO CHOICE ASSIGNMENTS. 20% each. Pick from different groups by March 12.		
due 4/7: second exam <i>multiple choice and essay, online</i>	due 4/28: movie <u>or</u> book review <i>5-6 pages plus citations</i>	due 5/7: art or community project <i>music, poetry, activism, volunteer, etc.</i> <i>subject to prior approval: see me</i>

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

- Each outline is due by class time of the day the reading is due. I must see it on Canvas *before* class starts.
- You will turn in a total of 22 outlines. That's two a week for eleven weeks, **from January 30 to April 21**.
- You **must** submit two outlines a week. On weeks with only two assigned readings, those will be your outlines; on weeks with 3+ assigned readings, you may pick which two to outline. Book chapters may be used, too.
- **Missed outlines cannot be made up.** The purpose of this assignment is for you to keep up with the readings on a regular basis and to write a bit every week, so late work is pointless and will not be accepted.
- Each of the 22 outlines gets a plus or a minus. Reasons for a minus include outlines that are incomplete, bad, late, or missed. You are allowed two "free" minuses. After that: 20 pluses = A, 19 = A-, 18 = B+ 11 = F.
- **Read the "Assignments Guide" PDF file on Canvas** for more details on what makes a good outline.

GRADES

I do not curve grades. "B" often ends up being the mean and mode in my classes, and it is also my go-to grade. Do not expect to receive an "A" just because you did all the work.

- A = exceptional**, above and beyond the requirements: this grade is reserved only for top students and is **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.

All grades are final. I reject all requests for grade changes based on your subjective opinion without evidence of a demonstrable mistake on my part (e.g., an adding error). I will, however, always answer your questions.

POLICIES

- HONOR SYSTEM** I believe in our [Honor System Constitution](#). Read it fully to learn how to avoid plagiarism, cheating, and falsification. Suspected violations will be reported to the Honor Court.
- COMMUNITY** Be punctual, articulate, and polite. Abide by the [Virginia Tech Principles of Community](#)!
- ACCOMMODATION** Present your [SSD documentation](#) by **January 27** for me to sign: let's talk in person and we will figure out the best arrangements for tests, exams, etc. Note-takers are welcome!
- TIMELINESS** I do not take formal attendance, but if you are absent often I will notice. Frequent lateness is treated as frequent absence. If I am 10+ minutes late, you may leave. Late assignments are penalized one letter grade per day, unless you can prove a debilitating illness.
- IMPORTANT!** **Keep an open mind, but not so open that your brain falls out.**

THE BASICS: Morality and ethics, justice and freedom

W 1/18	No reading: class introduction
F 1/20	<p><i>What is morality?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Claudio D'Amato: Basics of morality and justice
M 1/23	<p><i>What is freedom?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ian Carter: Positive and negative liberty (read only part 1) • Amartya Sen: Realizations, lives, and capabilities
W 1/25	<p><i>What is freedom for conservatives and anarchists?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Roger Scruton: Why I became a conservative (read only pages 8-12) • Emma Goldman: Anarchism: what it really stands for
F 1/27	<p><i>What is freedom for liberals?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • John Rawls: <i>A Theory of Justice</i> + role-playing card game in class

THEORY 1: Class, labor, social mobility, and global poverty

M 1/30	<p><i>What is economic inequality?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Larry Elliott: Richest 62 people as wealthy as half of world's population 	<p><i>The End of Poverty?</i></p> <p>Click on one of these links to watch this week's movie:</p>  
W 2/1	<p><i>Is economic inequality unfair?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thomas Nagel: Poverty and food: why charity is not enough 	
F 2/3	<p><i>How does capitalism contribute to inequality?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Angela Davis, <i>Freedom</i>, chapter 1: Insidious capitalist individualism 	

THEORY 2: Racism and institutionalized racial injustice

M 2/6	<p><i>What is racial inequality?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Harvey Young: The challenges of talking about race • Michael Vavrus: Color consciousness and color blindness (pp. 52-58) 	<p>13th</p> <p>Watch here:</p> 
W 2/8	<p><i>What is systemic racism?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gordon Hodson: Be anti-racist, not non-racist + Marlon James video 	
F 2/10	<p><i>Why is America still racist?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Angela Davis, <i>Freedom</i>, chapter 6: The racist state of America persists • Angela Davis, <i>Freedom</i>, chapter 7: Violence in America 	

THEORY 3: Gender, sex, and feminist theory

M 2/13	<p><i>What is feminism?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anne Fausto-Sterling: How many sexes are there? • Sally Haslanger et al.: Topics in feminism (sections 2.1 and 2.2) 	<p><i>Beyoncé's Lemonade</i></p> <p>Watch here:</p>    <p>+ Formation</p> <p>+ read the lyrics</p>
W 2/15	<p><i>How does feminism relate to politics?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Catharine MacKinnon: Toward a feminist theory of the State 	
F 2/17	<p><i>How does feminism relate to racism?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Angela Davis, <i>Freedom</i>, chapter 8: Feminism and abolition • Devaksha Vallabhjee: Beyoncé and intersectionality 	

BOOK: "Anger and Forgiveness" by Martha C. Nussbaum

M 2/20	Martha Nussbaum: <i>Anger and Forgiveness</i> , chapters 1-2	<b style="color: red;">Prof. Nussbaum will speak about her book on Friday 2/24 at 4 pm in Squires Haymarket Theatre! Free & open.
W 2/22	Martha Nussbaum: <i>Anger and Forgiveness</i> , chapters 4-5	
F 2/24	Martha Nussbaum: <i>Anger and Forgiveness</i> , chapter 6	

THEORY 4: (Dis)ability in an intersectional context

M 2/27	<i>How should we relate to disability?</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stella Young: I'm not your inspiration, thank you very much • Alice Hewitt: Lack of representation in fiction 	<b style="color: red;">Children of a Lesser God Watch here:
W 3/1	<i>What is disability?</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disabled World: Definitions of the Models of Disability 	
F 3/3	<i>Why is disability a political issue?</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Liat Ben-Moshe & Sally Magaña: Race, gender, and disability 	
S 3/5	Mandatory midterm exam due under "Quizzes" on Canvas by midnight	

PRACTICE 1: Multicultural communities

M 3/13	<i>What is multiculturalism?</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Claudio D'Amato: Why (not) multiculturalism? 	<b style="color: red;">Zootopia Watch here:
W 3/15	<i>Do all cultures share some common values?</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Michael Walzer: Moral minimalism 	
F 3/17	<i>Does multiculturalism threaten democracy?</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Benjamin Barber: Jihad vs. McWorld 	

PRACTICE 2: Rights and duties

M 3/20	<i>What are duties?</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • David Miller: Distributing responsibilities
W 3/22	<i>What are rights?</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leif Wenar: Rights (read from section 1 to section 2.1)
F 3/24	<i>Are there "human" rights?</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Charles Taylor: Conditions of an unforced consensus on human rights

PRACTICE 3: Development and humanitarianism

M 3/27	<i>What is development?</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • World Bank: What is development?
W 3/29	<i>How does development relate to charity?</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Abby Stoddard, et al.: The state of the humanitarian system (18-29; only skim 24-25) • Ilan Kapoor: Celebrity humanitarianism: the ideology of global charity
F 3/31	<i>Is development best understood as capabilities?</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Amartya Sen: The concept of development • Martha Nussbaum: Central human functional capabilities (78-80; skim the rest)

PRACTICE 4: Migrants and refugees

M 4/3	<i>Do countries have a right to limit immigration?</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Joseph Carens: Aliens and citizens: the case for open borders
W 4/5	<i>What are the rights of refugees?</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alexander Betts: The normative terrain of the global refugee regime
F 4/7	Assignment. Find and read <u>two</u> articles from reputable sources about refugee crises <u>currently</u> happening in the U.S. or abroad. Be prepared to brief the class about these crises if you are called upon.
F 4/7	Second exam (if chosen) due under “Quizzes” on Canvas 🎯 by midnight

PRACTICE 5: Environment and climate change

M 4/10	<i>How does climate change affect people?</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • John Broome: The ethics of climate change 	An Inconvenient Truth Watch here: 
W 4/12	<i>Who should be allowed to pollute?</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Henry Shue: Luxury emissions and subsistence emissions 	
F 4/14	Virginia Tech Remembrance Day 2017. We will discuss the 2007 massacre, mass violence in the U.S., and how to make the best of the weekend's events.	

PRACTICE 6: Activism! Protest! Revolution!

M 4/17	<i>What is the right way to protest?</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Martin Luther King Jr.: Letter from a Birmingham Jail 	Selma Watch here: 
W 4/19	<i>Contemporary activism</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Angela Davis, <i>Freedom</i>, chapter 9: Political activism and protest • Alicia Garza: A herstory of the #BlackLivesMatter Movement 🗣️ 	
F 4/21	<i>How are revolution and insurgency justified?</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Camilo Torres: Message to Christians and Message to Communists • Frantz Fanon: On violence (read only pages 1-4; rest is optional) 	

BOOK: “Cosmopolitanism” by Kwame Anthony Appiah

M 4/24	Kwame Appiah: <i>Cosmopolitanism</i> , chapters 2-3-4	Prof. Appiah may be able to Skype in with us on Friday! Bring a question for him.
W 4/26	Kwame Appiah: <i>Cosmopolitanism</i> , chapters 5-6-7	
F 4/28	Kwame Appiah: <i>Cosmopolitanism</i> , chapters 8-9-10	
F 4/28	Movie <u>or</u> book review (if chosen) due under “Assignments” on Canvas 🎯 by midnight	

CONCLUSION: Who belongs to our moral community?

M 5/1	<i>What are you willing to do to make a difference?</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Richard Rorty: Who are we? Moral universalism and economic triage • Ursula Le Guin: The ones who walk away from Omelas
W 5/3	Final discussion in lieu of a final exam. Usual time and place. MANDATORY ATTENDANCE.
S 5/7	Art or community project (if chosen) due under “Assignments” on Canvas 🎯 by midnight

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.

MOVIES OF PHILOSOPHICAL INTEREST—FEEL FREE TO SUGGEST MORE!

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	The Purge
Hotel Rwanda	The West Wing (TV)

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	District 9
2010	Interstellar
Contact	Arrival (2016)

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

Bioshock – consumerism, egoism, individualism, surveillance state, predestination, freedom
Braid – feminist ethics, free will, predestination, nature of reality, nature of time, individualism
Deus Ex – transhumanism, surveillance state, technological singularity, freedom and justice
Dishonored – class, labor and union solidarity, wealth and poverty, nonviolence, equality, family
Mass Effect – artificial intelligence, genocide, genetic engineering, militarism, transhumanism
Portal saga – existentialism, consciousness, nature of reality, meaning of life, artificial intelligence
The Last of Us – feminist ethics, toxic masculinity, family unit, survivalism, human exceptionalism
The Stanley Parable – free will, determinism, business ethics, post-capitalism, individualism
The Vanishing of Ethan Carter – creativity, art, aesthetics, paranoia, homophobia, child abuse