

PHIL 1304: MORALITY & JUSTICE

Virginia Tech. Spring 2018. CRN: 16997.

War Memorial Hall 124. **MWF 9:05-9:55.**

Course website on [Canvas](#)  (click link)

Dr. Claudio D'Amato

office hours: **Tue-Thu 9:30-12** at the *Next Door Bake Shop* (behind Surge)

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OVERVIEW

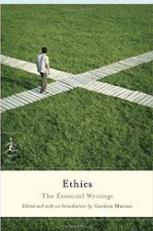
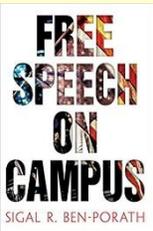
This course surveys two areas of value theory: **moral philosophy** (the study of ethics and good behavior) and **political philosophy** (the study of the idea of justice), with a focus on applied issues and contemporary social justice movements in the U.S. and abroad. Topics will include:

- What is the Good? How do rival moral theories differ in their definition of a Good Life?
- What is a Just society? Which forms of government are most conducive to justice and why?
- Whose definitions of "Good" and "Just" should we listen to? Are all definitions equally good?
- How do class, gender, race, and (dis)ability influence the power structures that affect our lives?
- A survey of contemporary controversial moral issues, such as free speech and gun violence.

PHIL 1304 is a CLE **Area 2 or Area 7** class. It teaches analytical argumentation and it demands meticulous work. As such, the critical thinking skills that you learn here are highly transferable to other fields.

READINGS	1-2 readings are assigned for each class day. You must finish each reading before coming to class on the day it is assigned for. Readings include articles for general audiences as well as scholarly papers written for philosophers. Most readings are about 5-10 pages long .	MATERIALS
MOVIES	You will watch four movies at home on your own and discuss them in class. You may rent some from Newman Library circulation desk or stream them online from paid services. They will also stream for free on our Canvas site, but only on weekends before they are due. Read the movie guides on Canvas before watching. Movies are included on exams.	
BOOKS	Alternative editions and electronic versions of the required books are acceptable. Whatever you buy, you must have the book with you whenever we discuss it in class. I will check.	

REQUIRED TEXTBOOKS

	<p>Gordon Marino, ed.</p> <p><i>Ethics: The Essential Writings</i></p> <p>ISBN: 0812977785</p>		<p>Sigal Ben-Porath</p> <p><i>Free Speech on Campus</i></p> <p>ISBN: 0812250079</p>
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ASSIGNMENTS	TESTS: 45%	Three, online, timed. Multiple-choice and other objective questions. 15% each.
	RESPONSES: 15%	For each class day you must turn in <u>either</u> a half-page bulleted outline of the assigned reading <u>or</u> two 50-word discussion questions to bring up in class.
	FINAL EXAM: 20%	Online, take-home, mostly essay-based. You may use your books and notes.
	DISCUSSION: 20%	Both frequency and quality count. Your attendance is factored in as well.

RESPONSES	Each class day you will turn in a reading response. This may be <u>either a half-page outline or instead two discussion questions</u> (50+ words each). Read the Response Guide on Canvas under “Files.”
	Each response is due on Canvas under “Assignments” before class on the day that the reading is due.
	You will turn in a total of 33 responses from January 29 to April 20 . On days with more than one assigned reading, you may pick which reading to do. You may not do more than one reading per class day.
	Book chapters may be used for responses, but movies and videos cannot.
	No late submissions accepted: the goals of this assignment are timeliness and regularity.
Each response is graded as “Complete” or “Incomplete.” Bad, late, or missed responses are Incomplete. You are allowed 3 “free” Incompletes out of 33 responses. After that: 30-28 = A . 27 = A- . 26 = B+ . etc.	

I don't curve grades. “B” is often the mean and mode in my classes and also my go-to grade. Don't expect to receive an “A” just because you did everything right: doing everything right is a minimum requirement.

A = exceptional, above and beyond the requirements: this is reserved only for top students and is **rare**
B = standard, meeting all requirements satisfactorily but not exceptionally: this is the **most common**
C = substandard, meeting some requirements but not others: this is for passable to mediocre work
D = unsatisfactory, meeting few requirements, and poorly: this is for all-around bad assignments
F = failure to meet most requirements in most assignments: I have not failed anyone in this class so far

All grades are final. I reject all grade change requests based on your opinion without some evidence of a demonstrable mistake of mine. I will, however, always answer your questions and explain my reasons.

GRADES

POLICIES	HONOR SYSTEM	Students enrolled in this course are responsible for abiding by the Honor Code. Students who have doubts about how the Honor Code applies to any assignment are responsible for obtaining specific guidance from the course instructor before submitting the assignment for evaluation. Ignorance of the rules does not exclude any member of the University community from the requirements and expectations of the Honor Code. For additional information, please visit: https://www.honorsystem.vt.edu/ 📄
	COMMUNITY	Be punctual, articulate, and polite. Abide by the VT Principles of Community! 📄
	SSD	Present your SSD documentation 📄 by Jan. 29 for me to sign. Let's talk in person and figure out the best arrangements for tests and exams. Note-takers are welcome! SSD accommodations are not valid until your accommodation letter is signed. I must be able to sign it with “reasonable notice,” so please bring it up by Jan. 29.
	TIMELINESS	I don't take attendance, but if you are absent often I will notice. Late assignments incur a one-letter grade penalty per day, unless you can prove a debilitating illness.

FORMAT	A typical class is half lecture and half discussion . I call on 2-3 students to summarize the day's readings. During lecture, write down questions to ask during discussion.	HOW TO DO WELL
DIFFICULTY	This course demands engagement, patience, and nuanced understanding . Skimming, guessing, and ballpark answers are insufficient. Be dedicated or drop the class.	
DISCUSSION	You earn credit by attending regularly, looking attentive and engaged, asking questions, giving your opinion, and posting to the forums on Canvas. Failure to be prepared when called upon affects your participation grade negatively.	
THE FIRST RULE	Keep an open mind, but not so open that your brain falls out!	

LINKS	Why study philosophy? 📄	To be successful and make \$\$\$\$. Surprised? Read this article.
	How to e-mail a professor 📄	So you don't sound rude by starting your emails with “hey” or “hello.”
	Claudio's website 📄	More links to music, videos, and readings of interest for this class.
	Philosophy experiments 📄	Some thought experiments to test your philosophical intuitions.

READING SCHEDULE AND DUE DATES

(M) readings are in the Marino book. [Linked](#)  ones are online (click on them). All others are on Canvas.

Movie viewing options are represented by clickable logos next to each title. For example,  indicates that the movie is available for rental at VT's Newman Library or may be streamed from Netflix or Amazon.

All required movies may be watched for free on Canvas under "Files"  the weekend before they are due.

MORAL PHILOSOPHY		
Introduction	Syllabus day	W 1/17
	Rachels : What is morality?	F 1/19
Theory	Mill : <i>Utilitarianism</i> (M) Nozick : The experience machine	M 1/22
	O'Neill : A simplified account of Kant's ethics	W 1/24
	Aristotle : <i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> (M)	F 1/26
Challenges	Held : The ethics of care FIRST RESPONSE DUE	M 1/29
	Epictetus : <i>The Enchiridion</i> (M)	W 1/31
	Rachels : The challenge of cultural relativism	F 2/2
Applications	Miller : Distributing responsibilities EXTRA-CREDIT CLASS ACTIVITY	M 2/5
	O'Neill : Lifeboat Earth (read only pp. 38-42)	W 2/7
	No class. Finish working on the test instead.	F 2/9
Test #1 due under "Quizzes" on Canvas  by 5 p.m.		F 2/9

POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY		
Freedom	Carter : Positive and negative liberty  (read only part 1)	M 2/12
	Hobbes : <i>Leviathan</i> (M) (read pp. 139-143 in the book <u>and</u> the PDF on Canvas)	W 2/14
	Rawls : <i>A Theory of Justice</i> (M) EXTRA-CREDIT CLASS ACTIVITY	F 2/16
Community	Mills : <i>The Racial Contract</i> (read only pp. 9-40; rest is optional)	M 2/19
	Sandel : The procedural republic and the unencumbered self	W 2/21
	Robeyns : The capability approach  (read only part 2)	F 2/23
Ideology	Hospers : What libertarianism is	M 2/26
	Nielsen : A moral case for socialism	W 2/28
	Goldman : Anarchism: what it really stands for 	F 3/2
Test #2 due under "Quizzes" on Canvas  by midnight		S 3/4

Spring Break (March 3-11)

APPLIED ETHICS AND POLITICS				
Speech	Ben-Porath: <i>Free Speech on Campus</i> , chapters 1-2		M 3/12	
	Ben-Porath: <i>Free Speech on Campus</i> , chapter 3		W 3/14	
	Ben-Porath: <i>Free Speech on Campus</i> , chapters 4-5		F 3/16	
Poverty	Singer: Rich and poor (M) Arthur: World hunger and moral obligation		M 3/19	
	Nagel: Poverty and food: why charity is not enough		W 3/21	
	<i>No class</i> — read Moehler: “An unconditional income” and discuss on Canvas!		F 3/23	
Death	Rachels: Active and passive euthanasia	watch for Monday The Sea Inside    	M 3/26	
	Thomson: A defense of abortion (M) Marquis: Why abortion is immoral (M)		W 3/28	
	Foot: Killing and letting die		F 3/30	
Feminism	Haslanger et al.: Topics in feminism 📄 (read only parts 2.1 and 2.2)		M 4/2	
	Hirschmann: <i>The Form of Liberty</i> (read only pp. 1-3 and 30-39)		W 4/4	
	<i>No class</i> — read Jaggard: “Global justice for women” and discuss on Canvas!		F 4/6	
Test #3 due under “Quizzes” on Canvas 📄 by midnight			S 4/8	
Anti-racism	Hodson: Be anti-racist, not non-racist 📄 + video 📄		watch for Friday Dear White People 	
	King: Letter from a Birmingham jail (M)			W 4/11
	<i>No reading: finish watching the show.</i>			F 4/13
Violence	Metzl & MacLeish: Mental illness and mass shootings		M 4/16	
	Cooke: The right to bear arms isn't up for debate Stephens: Repeal the Second Amendment (optional) FBI: A study on active shooter incidents (skim pp. 4-11, 20-21)		W 4/18	
	Fanon: On violence (read only pp. 1-4; rest is optional)		F 4/20	
CONCLUSION				
Meaning	Sagan: Lessons of immortality and mortality 📄		watch for Monday Contact    	
	Chiang: Liking What You See			W 4/25
	Zelazny: A Rose for Ecclesiastes 📄			F 4/27
	Taylor: The meaning of life			LAST RESPONSE DUE
	Le Guin: The ones who walk away from Omelas			W 5/2
Final exam due under “Quizzes” on Canvas 📄 by midnight			T 5/8	

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

POLITICAL JUSTICE

The Great Dictator	The Dark Knight
Rashomon	The Purge
The Laramie Project	13th
Hotel Rwanda	The West Wing (TV)
V for Vendetta	

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
Half-Life – fascism, oppression, liberation, surveillance state, nature of reality, individualism
Horizon Zero Dawn – predestination, individualism, collectivism, feminist ethics, family, power
Deus Ex – transhumanism, surveillance state, technological singularity, freedom and justice
Dishonored – class, labor and union solidarity, wealth and poverty, nonviolence, equality, family
Mass Effect – destiny, fate, artificial intelligence, transhumanism, genocide, genetic engineering
Portal – existentialism, consciousness, nature of reality, meaning of life, artificial intelligence
The Last of Us – human exceptionalism, feminist ethics, toxic masculinity, family, collectivism
The Stanley Parable – free will, determinism, business ethics, late-capitalism, individualism
The Vanishing of Ethan Carter – creativity, art, aesthetics, paranoia, homophobia, child abuse