

LGST 100-001
ETHICS AND SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY
Fall 2019

Professor Amy Sepinwall
Huntsman Hall, Room 642
sepin@wharton.upenn.edu
Office hours: By appointment

Teaching Assistant: Will Heaston
wheaston@wharton.upenn.edu
Office hours: By appointment

COURSE OVERVIEW AND OBJECTIVES

This is a course with three aims: First, and most importantly, the course is intended to provide you with the tools to answer the question, “what should I do?,” as regards a morally weighty issue, and as that question might arise in your future professional lives (and perhaps in other contexts too). Second, the course aims to acquaint you with some of the most prominent post-enlightenment accounts of moral and political philosophy – a knowledge base that some might say every good college education should provide. Finally, this course seeks to improve your analytic and critical thinking and writing skills: you will learn some logic and acquire other tools that will enhance your ability to construct your own arguments, and to identify and criticize others’.

You will do all of this by gaining acquaintance with seminal philosophical accounts and applying them to questions like:

- Should businesses be permitted to refuse to hire or serve individuals with whose lifestyles/life choices the business owners disagree?
- Are high CEO salaries morally justifiable? Why or why not?
- Do we have obligations to assist the global poor? Why or why not?
- Are there moral limits to the market? E.g., should people be permitted to sell babies? Their bodies?
- When if ever is it morally permissible for employers to discriminate on the basis of race? Sex? Appearance?
- How can you lead your (morally) best life? And (why) should you?

GRADING

The course requirements consist of five quizzes, a final exam, and class participation (voluntary and cold-calling).

Quizzes – 5 @ 12.5% each, dropping lowest one = 50%

Final Exam – 35 %

Class Participation – 15%

QUIZZES: There will be five “surprise” quizzes (i.e., no advance notice) throughout the semester. Each such quiz is aimed at evaluating whether you have done the reading, and whether you have taken the time to reflect critically on it. Below are some **examples** of the kinds of questions you might expect a quiz to include. (You can treat these as prompts as you are doing the assigned reading. You might find it helpful to take notes on the readings in a way that provides answers to these questions):

1. What is the thesis/key claim/central position of the author (or the theorist described in the reading – e.g., the psychological egoist; the cultural relativist)?
2. What is the argument used to defend the position of the author (or the theorist described in the reading – e.g., the psychological egoist)?
3. Raise an objection to the author’s (theorist’s) position.
4. Raise an objection to the author’s (theorist’s) argument.
5. Provide a counterexample that shows the author’s (theorist’s) position to be wrong.

In our first few class sessions, I will present the readings in a way that draws out answers to these questions, so you can see what I am after.

If your quizzes demonstrate that you have completed the reading, you will automatically earn a 8.5/12. Grades higher than 8.5 will be generously offered to those who also demonstrate a critical grasp of the material.

If you complete all 5 quizzes, I will drop the grade on your lowest quiz. If you miss a quiz for any reason, that quiz will receive a grade of ‘0.’ Barring extenuating circumstances (see below), there are no make-up quizzes or assignments.

****Optional:** You can skip a quiz (or have the two lowest grades on your quizzes dropped) in exchange for your attending a lecture given by Elizabeth Anderson on September 12, 2019, from 4:30-6, and submitting three questions that you would have asked Anderson. You should work on these individually, with no help from other resources or people – i.e., exam conditions apply. These questions should be sent to me at sepin@wharton.upenn.edu by 10 PM on September 13, 2019. I will grade these questions generously – so long as they demonstrate thoughtful digestion of the material she presents, you can expect to get at least an 11/12.5.

FINAL EXAM: The final exam will consist of multiple-choice and short-answer questions. You will be required to answer each multiple-choice question and then short-answer follow-up questions will have you defend your answer, or define and apply some of the terms in the multiple-choice question.

The final exam will be cumulative. The exam is designed to test your analytic skills and assimilation of covered class materials, and your ability to evaluate these critically.

The final exam will be held *on the Registrar’s designated date* during the final exam period. You can find that information here: <https://www.registrar.upenn.edu/finals/index.html>. Please do not ask me when the final exam is. I will have to do the very work that you will have to do (namely, look it up). And the Registrar does not post a **finalized, confirmed** exam schedule until late in the semester; before then, the schedule is “tentative.” I do not want to mislead you about the

exam date by announcing a date that is only tentative. It is therefore your responsibility to determine the exam date, time, and place.

CLASS PARTICIPATION (15 points): The success of the course, and your success in it, depends in significant part on your active participation. You should come to class having read the materials assigned for that session, and prepared to offer critical insights. **The primary mode of class participation will involve my calling on students.** I will, in addition, sometimes welcome and encourage students to volunteer their thoughts in class. Students' participation grade will be dictated far more by **quality** than quantity of **participation**.

- **What counts as “quality” participation?** The purpose of our class discussions is to gain clarity together on an author's position and the reasons to accept or reject it. Quality interventions are those that help advance this purpose: they describe an author's position, or provide reasons for accepting or rejecting it. Quality interventions are also those that are responsive to my questions. Unhelpful interventions are those that raise issues not clearly relevant to the discussion at hand; those that have the effect of obstructing our progress to clarity; and those that fail to demonstrate proper respect for others in the room. (This last is not intended to deter disagreement. In fact, disagreement is enthusiastically welcomed! But it should be pursued respectfully.)

CLASS POLICIES

1. **Absences:** Extended, unexcused absences will negatively impact your participation grade, and may also result in your missing quizzes. (Please see the policy for missed quizzes above.) If you know you will be missing more than one class in a row, or if you have already missed two or more classes, then I expect a note from you explaining each subsequent absence. I may require substantiating evidence, where appropriate.
2. **Extenuating circumstances:** You might come to face unusually difficult circumstances during the course of the semester – for example, you suffer from an extended illness, a death in your family, etc. In such circumstances, I am amenable to making alternate arrangements for you (e.g., providing you with make-up assignments), provided that you have your academic advisor contact me to explain the exceptional circumstances.
3. **Make-up exam:** A make-up final exam will be offered only for the most exceptional circumstances (e.g., serious illness, death in the family), and only if you abide by the “extenuating circumstances” policy above.
4. **In-class conduct:** In order to ensure your full engagement, you may not use any electronic device during class (no laptops, no tablets, no cell phones. This includes no under-the-tabletop phone use, etc.). Also, while I welcome disagreement in our class

discussions, I nonetheless expect that our conversations will proceed with a tone of civility and respect for one another.

5. **Non-Wharton Students:** A Wharton account is required for this course. To obtain a Wharton account, please visit <http://accounts.wharton.upenn.edu>.
6. **Class meals:** In the past, I have found it fun and enriching to interact informally with small groups of students outside of class. I will look forward to doing so this semester over the course of student meals, for which you can sign up on Canvas. Stay tuned for further details!

COURSE MATERIALS AND CALENDAR OF READINGS

All required materials for the course will be available on study.net. Occasionally, I will post supplementary (i.e., optional) readings to our Canvas site. ***Dates subject to change, depending on the speed of our progress through the materials.***

Date	Topic	Reading
8/27	Introduction	No reading
	UNIT I	Corporations and Ethics
8/29	Cultural Relativism	James Rachels, The Challenge of Cultural Relativism
9/3	Corporate Purpose	Milton Friedman, "The Social Responsibility of Business Is to Increase Its Profits"
9/5	"	Lynn Stout, The Problem of Corporate Purpose
9/10	"	
9/12	Meaningful Work	Elizabeth Anderson, Tanner Lecture
	UNIT II	Moral Theory
9/17	Utilitarianism	John Stuart Mill, excerpt from Utilitarianism
9/19	Kantian Ethics	David Velleman, "A Brief Introduction to Kantian Ethics"
9/24	"	
9/26	Altruism	Peter Singer, "Famine, Affluence, and Morality"
10/1	NO CLASS	
10/3	Altruism	"
	UNIT III	Resource Distribution

10/8	Distributive Justice	John Rawls, Distributive Justice
10/10	NO CLASS	
10/15	Distributive Justice	Rawls (continued)
10/17	"	Robert Nozick, Anarchy, State, Utopia
10/22	"	"
10/24	"	Iris Marion Young, Responsibility and Structural Injustice
10/29	"	Note on the Law of Sexual Harassment Center for Work-Life Policy, Lack of Sponsorship Keeps Women from Breaking Through the Glass Ceiling Finds New Study
UNIT IV		
Moral Limits of the Market		
10/31	Libertarian Perspective	Richard Posner and Elizabeth Landes, Selection from <i>Rethinking Commodification: Cases and Readings in Law and Culture</i>
11/5	"	"
11/7	Communitarian Perspective	Michael Sandel, What Money Can't Buy
11/12	"	"
11/14	Corrective Justice	College admissions cheating scandal – read: Inside the College Cheating Scandal Restoring stolen art – read: nothing
11/19	Moral rights of artists	Charles Beitz, The Moral Rights of Artists
11/21	Ethics of Boycotts	Tom Christiano, Democracy and Capital
11/26	Environmental ethics	Hardin, The Tragedy of the Commons Newton, "Eight Perceptions of the Natural World"
12/3	Corruption	Readings TBA
12/5	<i>Course Review</i>	No readings