LGST 1008-Honors
ETHICS AND SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY
Fall 2022

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Office hours:

- Wednesdays 9:15-10:15 PM over Zoom
- By appointment if you are unavailable at that time

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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, the 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 for-profit corporations be engaging in politics or otherwise trying to make the world a better place?
- Are high CEO salaries morally justifiable? Why or why not?
- Do we have obligations to assist the domestic or global poor? Why or why not?
- Are there moral limits to the market? E.g., should people be permitted to sell babies? Their bodies?
- Should we seek to redress injustices from long ago (e.g., reparations for slavery)? Do we have obligations to future generations (e.g., environmental conservation)?

GRADING

1. *Introductory Video* – 1% (bonus point!) – Due 9/4 at 10 pm
2. *Class Participation* – 15%
3. *Evening Session Questions* – 12%
    a   Emily Guendelsberger – visiting us **10/12 in person, room TBD**
        i   Submit questions through Canvas by **10/7 at 10 pm**
        ii   If you can't attend the evening session, email Tabitha by 10/5
        iii   If you didn't attend, submit your reflection piece through Canvas by 10/19
    b   Patrick Radden Keefe – visiting us over Zoom on **11/2 at 7 pm**
        i   Submit questions through Canvas by 10/28 at 10 pm
        ii   If you can't attend the evening session, email Tabitha by 10/28
        iii   If you didn't attend, submit your reflection piece through Canvas by 11/10 at 10 pm

4. *Midterm* – 20% -- 11/8 in class
5. *Group video presentation* – 20% -- Due 11/22 at 10 pm
6. *Your assessment of others' group videos* – 3% -- Due 11/30 at 10 PM
7. *Final Paper* – 25% -- Due 12/18 at 10 pm
8. *Self*-assessment – 5% -- Due 12/21 at 10 pm

• General policy: <u>*You must complete each of 1-8 to pass this course.*</u>

1. *Introductory video* (1%) – due by Sunday, Sept. 4 at 10 PM.
Please create, <u>and upload to Canvas</u>, a video of not more than 1 minute that tells me:
    i.   Your full name, as written on roster and pronounced slowly
    ii.   The name you would like to be called, pronounced slowly
    iii.   Your preferred pronouns *iv.*   Where you are from
        v.   Your class year, major/concentration, minor, etc.
        vi.   One fun thing you did this summer

2. *Class participation* (15%)
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 be prepared to offer critical insights. The primary mode of class participation will involve my calling on students.

I will 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.

o 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.)

3. *Evening Session Questions* (two assignments, each worth 6% -- 12% total)
   a **October 12**
   b **November 2, from 7-8 PM,** Patrick Radden Keefe, [staff writer](#) for the *New Yorker* and award-winning author of numerous [books](#). He will be visiting with us by [Zoom](#) to discuss *[Empire of Pain](#)*, a "grand, devastating portrait of three generations of the Sackler family, famed for their philanthropy, whose fortune was built by Valium and whose reputation was destroyed by OxyContin." We will be reading some of Mr. Keefe's work in the lead-up to his visit. Based on these readings, please write up three questions you would like to ask Mr. Keefe. Your questions should make clear that you have completed the readings. They will be graded based on your having done so and also on how interesting and searching they are: are they likely to be ones to which your classmates would want answers? Do they get at deep questions about proper and improper ways of earning money? Please submit your questions **through Canvas October 28, 2022, at 10 PM.**

   c Second guest speaker (6%):
   c. Attendance at the evening sessions: I understand that some of you will be unable to attend the evening sessions due to other commitments. ***If you cannot attend, you are expected to let your TA know at least one week in advance. You must still complete the assignment for the event.*** Further, to receive credit for that assignment, you must watch a video recording of the event (which I will make available through Canvas) and send me, via email with subject line "LGST 1008 response piece," **a one-paragraph response**, describing something you found interesting, no later than one week after the event date. If you do not get pre-clearance from your TA for your absence by a week in advance, or you do not submit the response piece, you will receive a 0 for the assignment, even if you have completed it on time.

4. *Midterm:*
The midterm will be held in class on November 8. It will be closed book, and it will test you on Units I, II, and as much of III as we have covered by 11/1. The midterm will consist of multiple-choice and short-answer questions.

5. *Group Video Assignment* (20%)

With your group (to be assigned after the first month of class), please create a video on your assigned topic. Each video will have a "So You Wanna…" theme – e.g., "So You Wanna Reduce Your Carbon Footprint." In your four-minute video, you should instruct your viewer on the best, easiest-to-implement steps to achieving your assigned aim. Your video should be based on research. You will be graded on the following bases:

    i. How effective are your suggestions at addressing the problem? – 3.5 points

    ii. How practical and practicable are your suggestions? This is different from effectiveness. To see this, suppose your topic is "So You Wanna Reduce Global Poverty!" One could propose "donate a bazillion dollars!" as a good answer to (i). But that answer is going to fail (ii). – 3.5 points

    iii. How well can you deploy your research? You should incorporate your research in order to

        1. convince your viewer, based on your research, that they *should* want to make the change in question – 2 points

        2. convince your viewer that you have done the research such that they can trust that your solutions will work – 2 points

    iv. How engaging is your video? Four minutes is a long time to keep someone watching. But you need your viewer to get through the video in order for them to be ready to tackle your assigned aim – 4 points

    v. Written bibliography, uploaded separately to Canvas as a Word document: this is the place to list the resources you consulted. I don't care whether these are formatted according to a style guide, but each source should have Author, Title, Place of Publication, Date, and web address (if there is a web address) – 2 points

Please upload your presentation to Canvas by 10 PM on November 22, 2022. *Late assignments will receive a 0.*

6. *Your review of your classmates' videos* (3%)

You will be have to watch three other groups' videos; these will be assigned to you. You will then be asked to fill out a form evaluating these videos based on the likelihood that you, or someone like you, would make the changes they propose. You must submit your form to Canvas by 10 PM on November 30, 2022.

7. *Final Paper* (25%)*:* 2000 word maximum. Due in Canvas by 10 PM December 18. TOPIC: I will be selecting a new topic for Fall 2022. To give you a taste of what your paper assignment will look like, please find in Appendix I (very end) the assignment from Fall 2021.

8. *Self-Assessment* (5%): Early in the semester, I will invite you to identify one objective you have for yourself – in particular, what do you most hope to get out of the course? I will ask that you specify the objective concretely, and describe concrete steps to its fulfillment. At

the end of the course, I will ask you to evaluate your progress toward your objective, as well as other aspects of your performance and the course in general. More details to follow.

COURSE POLICIES:

1. Canvas: There will be a course website on Canvas, which will be our primary resource. For example, the Canvas site will be the repository for all of your readings. You will also be submitting all of your assignments through Canvas.

2. Email: Students should check email at least daily in the event that I send a message to the class.

3. Late assignments: All assignments must be submitted by the deadlines stipulated above. Late assignments will receive a 0. I will make exceptions only for extraordinary circumstances. You should not request lenience unless you feel reasonably certain that your circumstances are in fact extraordinary.

4. In-class conduct: In order to ensure your full engagement, I do not permit use of any electronic devices in class – no laptops, tablets, phones, etc. This is for your benefit. Studies show that students are more engaged when they have no electronics in front of them.

5. Sensitive topics: We will be venturing into some of the most fraught topics of the day – issues of racial injustice, rights of historically oppressed groups, markets for sex, etc. In order to discuss these fully and trenchantly, we will have to allow that each of us has the freedom to speak their mind, no matter how distasteful their views may be to others in the class. This class will welcome all viewpoints but I nonetheless expect that you will proceed civilly and with respect for one another.

6. Missed tests: If you cannot be present on the day of our midterm because of an enforced quarantine or other grave issue (e.g., serious illness, family death) you will have to write the missed test on the LGST department's day for make-up midterms (typically the last Friday of the semester before exams). You will need to show proof of your mandated quarantine, or otherwise get permission from me confirming that you have an extraordinary reason, in order to be eligible to write the make-up quiz.

CALENDAR OF READINGS AND ASSIGNMENTS

All required materials for the course will be available on our Canvas site. *Dates subject to change, depending on the speed of our progress through the materials.*

Date	Topic	Reading
	UNIT I	Moral Theory
9/1	Cultural Relativism	James Rachels, The Challenge of Cultural Relativism
9/4	Homework	Upload your video introduction to Canvas by 10 PM tonight.
9/6	Utilitarianism	John Stuart Mill, excerpt from Utilitarianism
9/8	"	"
9/13	Kantian Ethics	Michael Sandel, Kantian Ethics
9/15	"	"
9/20	Altruism	Peter Singer, Famine, Affluence, and Morality
9/22	Critical race theory	See readings on Canvas: Files > Materials for 9/22 lecture
9/27	NO CLASS	
9/29	Altruism (cont'd)	Singer, continued

	UNIT II	Corporate Purpose and Operation
10/4	Corporate Purpose	Milton Friedman, "The Social Responsibility of Business Is to Increase Its Profits"
10/6	NO CLASS	
10/7	**Homework**	• EVERYONE: Submit three questions to Canvas by 10 pm based on the Guendelsberger readings • IF YOU CANNOT ATTEND EVENING SESSION ON 10/12: Email Tabitha to let them know – tmustafa@wharton.upenn.edu
10/11	Corporate Purpose;	Friedman (continued)
10/13	Meaningful work	Elizabeth Anderson, Tanner Lecture
10/18	Corporate Purpose	Lynn Stout, The Problem of Corporate Purpose
	UNIT III	Resource Distribution
10/20	Distributive Justice	John Rawls, Distributive Justice
10/25	Dist J (cont'd)	Rawls (cont'd)
10/26	**Guest lecture**	Emily Guendelsberger – SHDH 1206, 7-8 pm
10/27	Dist J (cont'd)	Robert Nozick, Anarchy, State, Utopia
10/28	**Homework**	• EVERYONE: Submit three questions based on the Patrick Radden Keefe readings • IF YOU CANNOT ATTEND EVENING SESSION ON 11/3: Email Tabitha to let them know – tmustafa@wharton.upenn.edu
11/1	Structural Injustice	Iris Marion Young, Responsibility and Structural Injustice
11/2	**Guest speaker**	Patrick Radden Keefe, 7-8 PM, over Zoom
11/3	Sexual harassment	Center for Work-Life Policy, Lack of Sponsorship Keeps Women from Breaking Through the Glass Ceiling Finds New Study
11/8	**Midterm**	In class, covering material up to and including 11/1

	UNIT IV	Moral Limits of the Market
11/9	**Homework**	IF YOU DID NOT ATTEND EVENING SESSION WITH KEEFE: Submit reflection piece to me via email – sepin@wharton.upenn.edu – with subject line "LGST 1008 response piece"
11/10	**NO CLASS**	
11/15	Libertarian Perspective	Richard Posner and Elizabeth Landes, Selection from *Rethinking Commodification: Cases and Readings in Law and Culture*
11/17	Libertarian (cont'd)	Posner and Landes (cont'd)
11/22	Communitarian Perspective	Michael Sandel, What Money Can't Buy
11/22	**Homework**	Video Presentations should be uploaded by 10 PM tonight on Canvas
11/24	NO CLASS	
11/29	Communitarian (cont'd)	Sandel (cont'd)
11/30	**Homework**	Rating sheet for other groups' videos should be uploaded to Canvas by 10 PM
12/1	Corrective Justice	Reparations for Slavery Ta-Nehisi Coates, The Case for Reparations Ta-Nehisi Coates Revisits the Case for Reparations
12/6	Ownership of art	No reading
12/8	Environmental ethics	Hardin, The Tragedy of the Commons Newton, "Eight Perceptions of the Natural World" Wrapping up; questions about the final paper

Appendix I

PAPER ASSIGNMENT FOR FALL 2021: Effective Altruism

Effective altruists believe that we have strong obligations to donate money to charitable causes and, further, that we fail to fulfill these obligations unless we direct our charitable donations to a cause that will *maximally serve the most needy*. The overarching question for your essay is this: Are effective altruists correct in holding both those beliefs? A "yes" answer should defend both beliefs. A "no" answer should argue against one or both of the beliefs. Your essay should summarize the arguments for and against effective altruism. It should then offer your answer ("yes" or "no," as above) and a defense of your answer. You cannot just rehash the arguments in the readings. You need to provide your own reasons for thinking that one side or the other has the better arguments.

A typical essay will have the following components, graded accordingly:

Introduction – 5 points: what is this essay about and what is the central claim you will defend (i.e., your "yes" or "no" answer, of the form "I will argue that…."). You should also provide a roadmap – i.e., a description of what you will go on to do in the rest of the essay.

Summary of the debate – 12.5 points: what is the central claim in effective altruism? What is the argument in support of it? What are the objections to it and what arguments support them?

Your critical take – 17.5 points: argue in support of your "yes" or "no" answer. If yes, you must rebut the objections to EA. If "no," you must think about how the effective altruist would respond to Herzog's or Srinivasan's or your own objection, and then rebut the anticipated objection. *I urge you to choose your position ("yes" or "no") in light of what you genuinely believe, rather than thinking about which position will make the essay easier to write. If you choose a position that is harder to defend, I will grade your essay more leniently.*

Two articles defending EA:

Will MacAskill, <u>Understanding Effective Altruism</u>
Will MacAskill, <u>Replaceability, Career Choice, and Making a Difference</u>

Two articles critiquing EA:

Lisa Herzog, <u>Can Effective Altruism Really Change the World?</u>
Amia Srinivasan, <u>Stop the Robot Apocalypse</u>

- o You should not do outside research on effective altruism.
- o Your papers should be written without help from your classmates. But you are permitted to work through the articles with your classmates – i.e., to discuss them in an effort to better understand them.

GENERAL GUIDANCE ON WRITING PAPERS: It is essential to have a clear, wellreasoned argument, and the best papers will have something interesting or somewhat original to say. Clarity in writing and reasoning is critical. The top papers will also add value (i.e. say something non-obvious). It is perfectly fine to use the first-person, but you don't have to. For more guidance, the following links provide resources for writing a philosophy paper, which may be useful:
- o [Jim Pryor's guidance](#)
- o [Harvard philosophy department guidance](#)