

LGST 100-301
ETHICS AND SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY
Fall 2021

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Office hours:

- Wednesdays 9:15-10:15 PM over [Zoom](#)
- By appointment if you are unavailable at that time

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, art stolen in an unjust war)?

GRADING

1. **Introductory Video** – 1% (bonus point!)
 2. **Class Participation** – 15%
 3. **Guest Lecture Questions** – 7.5%
 4. **Quizzes: Quiz 1** – 7.5%; **Quiz 2** – 15%
 5. **Group video presentation** – 20%
 6. **Final Paper** – 35 %
- **General policy:** You must complete each of 1-6 to pass this course.

1. **Introductory video** (1%) – **due by Sunday, Sept. 5 at 10 PM.**

Please create, and upload to Canvas, 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 have managed to do during the pandemic and/or one thing you are especially excited about for the year ahead at Penn

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 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. Guest Lecture Questions:

On October 7, we will be joined by Mary Inman, a prominent lawyer who has represented whistleblowers in high-profile cases, including litigation against Theranos, the subject of the documentary we will be watching on October 4 at our movie night. (You can also watch the film on your own; it is available through Course Reserves, accessible through our Canvas site.) Please read the two news items -- [here](#) and [here](#) -- and write up three questions you would like to ask Ms. Inman. 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 that cut across the cases? Please submit your questions **through Canvas by 8 PM on October 6.**

4. Quizzes:

The quizzes are intended to familiarize you with the style of question you are likely to encounter on the final exam, and also to test chunks of material. Quiz 1 (7.5%), held in class on **September 30**, will be based just on Milton Friedman's article, "The Social Responsibility of Business Is to Increase Its Profits." You will be asked to answer questions relating to the article. The quiz will consist of multiple-choice and short answer questions. **You should have a printed copy of the article with you in class so that you can refer to it to answer the quiz questions.** You may not refer to any other materials.

Quiz 2 (15%), held in class on **November 4**, will be closed book. It will test you on the Rawls, Nozick, and Young readings. We will have covered Rawls and at least part of Nozick by then, and you will be expected to have digested whatever we have discussed in class, in addition to being familiar with the readings themselves. You will also be expected to be familiar with the Young reading, even though we will not have discussed it. The quiz will consist of multiple-choice and short answer questions. The quiz is closed-book with respect to the Rawls and Nozick readings, but open-book with respect to the Young reading. **You should have a printed copy of the Young reading with you in class so that you can refer to it to answer the quiz questions.** You may not refer to any other materials.

5. **Group Video Assignment** (20%)

With your group (to be assigned after the first month of class), please create a video describing a business-ethics related **news item**. Your group will be assigned a topic, and the issue you choose related to that topic should be from sources within the last five years. Find three news sources on your issue. Your final product should consist of a videotaped slide presentation (using PowerPoint, Prezzi, etc.) of not more than 8 minutes that features each group member. You will be graded on the following bases:

- i. Choice of issue – 2/20: How well does the issue fit with the assigned topic? How interesting is the chosen issue?
- ii. Description of the issue – 3/20: You should present the news item as if your viewer is completely unfamiliar with the issue.
- iii. Business ethics analysis – 5/20: How well have you identified and articulated the business ethics questions that the issue raises?
- iv. Application of course concepts – 8/20: Have you identified the two most relevant concepts, and have you spelled out their application compellingly?
- v. Entertainment value – 2/20: how engaging and entertaining is your presentation?

Please upload your presentation **to Canvas by 10 PM on November 21, 2021. Late assignments will receive a 0.** See addendum for list of groups and topics.

6. **Final Paper:**

2000 word maximum. Due in Canvas by **10 PM December 17**. (I reserve the right to refine or elaborate on the below. I promise that any modifications will be made in a timely manner.)

TOPIC: 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, [Understanding Effective Altruism](#)
Will MacAskill, [Replaceability, Career Choice, and Making a Difference](#)

Two articles critiquing EA:

Lisa Herzog, [Can Effective Altruism Really Change the World?](#)
Amia Srinivasan, [Stop the Robot Apocalypse](#)

- You should not do outside research on effective altruism.
- 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, well-reasoned 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:

- [Jim Pryor's guidance](#)
- [Harvard philosophy department guidance](#)

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 with a tone of civility and respect for one another.
6. **Missed quizzes:** If you cannot be present on the day of a quiz because you are mandated to quarantine or for another extraordinary reason (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
8/31	Introduction	No reading
	UNIT I	Moral Theory
9/2	Cultural Relativism	James Rachels, The Challenge of Cultural Relativism
9/5	Homework	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Upload your video introduction to Canvas by 10 PM tonight.
9/7	NO CLASS	
9/9	Utilitarianism	John Stuart Mill, excerpt from Utilitarianism
9/14	"	"
9/16	Kantian Ethics	Michael Sandel, Kantian Ethics
9/21	NO CLASS	
9/23	"	"
9/28	Altruism	Peter Singer, "Famine, Affluence, and Morality"
9/30	Quiz	"
		Last half hour of class: QUIZ 1: Milton Friedman, "The Social Responsibility of Business Is to Increase Its Profits"
	UNIT II	Corporate Purpose and Operation
10/4	Movie Night	The Inventor: Out for Blood (the Theranos documentary). 7 pm, room TBD
10/5	Corporate Purpose	Milton Friedman, "The Social Responsibility of Business Is to Increase Its Profits"
10/6	Homework	

10/7	Corporate Purpose	Read the two articles profiling Mary Inman -- -- here and here . Based on these articles, as well as <i>Bad Blood</i> , please come up with three questions you would want to ask Ms. Inman. Upload them to Canvas by 10 PM.
10/12	NO CLASS	GUEST LECTURE: Mary Inman, Lawyer representing whistleblowers in Theranos and other high-profile cases
10/14	Meaningful Work	Friedman (continued) Lynn Stout, The Problem of Corporate Purpose
10/19		Elizabeth Anderson, Tanner Lecture
	UNIT III	Resource Distribution
10/21	Distributive Justice	John Rawls, Distributive Justice
10/26	"	"
10/28	"	Robert Nozick, Anarchy, State, Utopia
11/2	"	"
		Last half hour of class: Overview of what to expect for Quiz 2
11/4	"	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First half hour of class: QUIZ 2 – closed book on Rawls and Nozick and open book on Iris Marion Young, Responsibility and Structural Injustice • Remainder of class: discussion of Young
11/9	" Sexual harassment	Young (continued) 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
11/11	Libertarian Perspective	Richard Posner and Elizabeth Landes, Selection from <i>Rethinking Commodification: Cases and Readings in Law and Culture</i>
11/16	"	"
11/18	Communitarian Perspective	Michael Sandel, What Money Can't Buy
11/21	Homework	News Presentations should be uploaded by 10 PM tonight on Canvas

11/23		Sandel (cont'd)
11/25	NO CLASS	
11/30	Corrective Justice 1	Reparations for Slavery Ta-Nehisi Coates, The Case for Reparations Ta-Nehisi Coates Revisits the Case for Reparations
12/2	Corrective Justice 2	Cheating: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • College admissions cheating scandal – read: Inside the College Cheating Scandal • Stuart Green, Cheating
12/7	Ownership of art	No reading
	Environmental ethics	Hardin, The Tragedy of the Commons Newton, "Eight Perceptions of the Natural World"
12/9		Wrapping up; questions about the final paper

ADDENDUM: News assignment groups and topics:

(If you are the first person listed in your group, please email the others to get the ball rolling. Email addresses: On Canvas, under Files > News Assignment)

Group 1: Lexy (Alexia), Bailey, Kira, Chaneil, Jacob
Topic: Covid-19 vaccine mandates

Group 2: Estelle, Sam, Spencer, Arina, Ibrahim
Topic: Social media sites banning false information about Covid-19 vaccines

Group 3: Gabriella, Cole (Robert), Lauren, Aaron, Jacques
Topic: the "pink" tax

Group 4: Paloma, Maya, Nick, Kidist, Andrea
Topic: factory farming

Group 5: Leanna, Andy, Taylor, Rachel, Ariel
Topic: artificial intelligence