

POLI 27 – Ethics and Society

Instructor:	Adam Tyner (atyner@ucsd.edu)
Class Time/Location:	MW 2:00-4:50, PETER 103
Discussion Section:	MW 10:00-10:50, MANDE B-104
Teaching Assistant:	Caleb Scoville (crscovil@ucsd.edu)
Comprehensive Final Exam Time/Location:	August 1 nd (Friday), 3:00-6:00, Location TBA
Office Hours/Location:	W 1:00-1:50, The Loft (Price Center), or by appointment

Course Summary and Objectives:

What do we owe to others in society? On what do we base this judgment?

Reason? Nature? Custom? Maximizing happiness? Revelation? Duty? Society?

Given that there exist disagreements between individuals, groups, and societies about the proper basis for social values, how do we negotiate them?

This course will explore several important foundations for social ethics, paying particular attention to arguments about cultural relativism, tolerance, and colonialism. After completing this course you should be able to:

- Understand the most commonly used philosophical frameworks of modern social ethics such as deontology, utilitarianism, and arguments from nature.
- Apply these frameworks to new social problems.
- Make a strong argument that a given controversial social practice is acceptable/unacceptable.
- Visit another country with the confidence that you have some idea how to behave yourself.
- Identify and avoid common rhetorical fallacies.

Information on Readings:

Please complete the assigned readings **before each class**. (Readings are listed in the schedule section below.) Recommended readings may be useful for oral projects, research papers, or to help satisfy your curiosity.

Book for Purchase:

Appiah, *Cosmopolitanism: Ethics in a World of Strangers*

Articles, etc. on reserve:

Use the libraries e-reserve. The password will be emailed to you on the first day of class.

Grading:

20% In-class quizzes. (There may be up to three pop-quizzes per day, including reading checks where you will be asked to briefly summarize arguments from the readings. Three will be dropped, then the remaining will be curved to compute your quiz grade.)

5% Take-home assignment on Montaigne (due 7/7)

15% In-class mid-term examination (IDs, short answers, and short essays)

20% Position paper: You will select a social problem which poses an ethical problem. Then you will present decision-makers with a memo which first lays out multiple ways of viewing this problem and then presents your argument for how to resolve this problem.

5% Prop 8 Arguments Analysis, to be completed in-class on 7/28

25% Comprehensive final examination (IDs, short answers, essay)

10% Section

Turnitin.com:

All written work will be submitted to turnitin.com and is due online at the same time it is due in class. You may need to set up a turnitin.com account. If you are not already listed when you go to turnitin.com, you can find the class using the **class ID [To Be Announced]** and the enrollment **password [To Be Announced]**. Please leave yourself plenty of time to submit your work online.

Key Dates (subject to change):

July 7th: Montaigne Assignment Due (on turnitin.com and hard copy in class)

July 16th: Mid-term examination

July 21th: Position paper due (on turnitin.com and hard copy in class)

July 27th: Prop 8 Exercise In-Class

August 1nd: Comprehensive in-class final (location TBD)

Academic Integrity:

If you don't want to do the work for this class, you are free to drop it. All the work you turn in for this class should be your original work, and you should consult your instructor and/or academicintegrity.ucsd.edu if you have any questions about what may or may not constitute cheating.

Disability:

If you have a disability, please inform the instructor so that we can make appropriate accommodations.

Tentative Course Schedule:

6/30 1. Course Introduction

7/2 1. Cultural Relativism I: "The Anthropologists" ← notice the quotes

Readings: American Anthropological Association, "Statement on Human Rights," (1947)

Appiah, pp. xi – 32

Recommended: Engle (2001), "From Skepticism to Embrace: Human Rights and the American Anthropological Association from 1947 – 1999"

Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948)

2. Reason and Duty

Readings: On Kant and the Categorical Imperative, *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*

Kant, "On a Supposed Right to Lie From Altruistic Motives"

7/7 1. Cultural Relativism II: The Skeptics

<Take-home assignment on Montaigne due at beginning of class>

Readings: Appiah, pp. 33 – 68

Montaigne, "Of Cannibals," selection

2. Ethics from Nature I: Natural Law

Readings: Goldwin, "John Locke," (from *History of Political Philosophy*)

Nozick, "The Entitlement Theory," (from *Anarchy State and Utopia*)

Recommended: Locke, *Two Treatises on Civil Government*

7/9 1. Sentiment

Readings: Appiah, pp. 155 – 158 (on Smith)

Hume, "A Treatise of Human Nature," selection

Recommended: Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*

2. Utility I: Act-Utilitarianism vs. Rule-Utilitarianism

Readings: Hooker, "Rule-Utilitarianism and Euthanasia"
Nozick, "The Experience Machine" (from *Anarchy, State, and Utopia*)
Recommended: Mill, "What Utilitarianism Is," (Chapter Two from *Utilitarianism*)

7/14 1. Utility II: Diminishing Returns to Income

Readings: Singer, "Famine, Affluence, Morality"
Appiah, 158 – 174

2. Midterm Review

7/16 1. Midterm Examination (bring blue books)

2. Video: TBD

7/21 1. . Cultural Relativism III:

Readings: Appiah, pp. 53 – 56, 69 – 100
Bloom, "Culture," (from *The Closing of the American Mind*)

2. Ethics from Nature II: The Naturalistic Fallacy and Its Discontents

Readings: Appiah, pp. 20 – 25
Wilson et al., "On the Inappropriate Use of the Naturalistic Fallacy"

7/23 1. Cultural Relativism IV: Colonialism, Exchange, and Appropriation

Readings: Appiah, pp. 101 – 136
Uwujaren, "The difference between cultural exchange and cultural appropriation"

Recommended: Wallerstein, "The Modern World System"

2. Ethics from Nature III: Tribalism, Morality, and Ideology

Readings: Haidt, *The Righteous Mind*, selection
Gray, "The Knowns and the Unknowns"

7/28 1. Social Ethics Beyond Humanism I: Animal Liberation

Readings: Singer, "Animal Liberation at 30"

Singer, "Utilitarianism and Vegetarianism"

2. In-class Exercise: Prop 8 Arguments

7/30 1. Social Ethics Beyond Humanism II: 22rd Century Humanism

Readings: "It Could Be A War Crime To Use Biologically Enhanced Soldiers"

2. Video: "Plug & Pray" (1:31:00)

8/1 1. Comprehensive In-class Final Examination