

Syllabus

PHIL 262: Ethical Problems and Public Issues, Summer 2020

T/Th 1-4pm US Central Time (Remote)

Instructor: Susan Bencomo (susanbencomo2011@u.northwestern.edu)

Office Hours: Mondays 12-1 pm US Central Time, and by appointment.

Course Description: This course is a study of ethical problems arising in public policy, as well as philosophical approaches to addressing these problems. We will survey contemporary moral theories, including utilitarianism, liberalism, conservatism, deontological ethics, and care ethics, and we will apply these theories to disputed moral issues including punishment, freedom of speech, and public healthcare ethics.

Learning Objectives:

1. Students will gain understanding of moral issues that arise in public policy contexts as well as a facility with major philosophical frameworks for addressing these issues.
2. Students will develop proficiency in recognizing, reconstructing, and critically evaluating moral arguments.
3. Students will develop and defend their own answers to important ethical questions.

Required Text: Mark Timmons, *Disputed Moral Issues*, 5th Edition

Where to get the book: A physical copy of the book can be ordered and shipped to wherever you are from the Northwestern University bookstore in Norris. However, you can also order an **ebook** from one of the following services: Redshelf.com, Vitalsource.com, or Chegg.com
You will need the **ISBN** to search and order it: 978-0-19-093054-7

*Other required readings and required podcasts will be posted on the Canvas course site.

Evaluation Method: Your grade in the course will be based upon the following four elements, weighted as indicated:

Explication Assignment (4-5 pages):	30%
In-Class Presentation on Podcast:	20%
Participation:	10%
Final Paper (5-6 pp):	40%

Expectations for each of the above elements will be discussed in class.

Attendance Policy: Attendance at lecture is expected and essential for success in this course, particularly given the compressed nature of the course. *If you are taking this class from a distant time-zone, making it difficult to attend at the scheduled time, please contact me *before* the start of the first class to discuss what alternatives we can come up with.

An e-mail informing me that you are ill and unable to attend class is a welcome courtesy, but

absences are excused only with documented evidence of personal illness, immediate family emergency, or significant university or professional obligation – for example, a record of care from the NU health service.

Contact: For administrative questions, the best way to contact me is through my email. For substantive questions about readings and or lecture, please try to schedule an appointment with me in my office hours. I will try to answer email within 24 hours within normal business hours, or 48 hours on weekends.

Academic Integrity: Plagiarism is a serious offense and will be treated as such in this course. Suspected violations of academic integrity will be reported to the Dean’s Office. For more information on Northwestern’s academic integrity policies, please see <https://www.weinberg.northwestern.edu/undergraduate/courses-registration-grades/integrity/>.

All student work in this class may be analyzed electronically for violations of the University’s academic integrity policy and may also be included in a database for the purpose of testing for plagiarized content.

Accessibility Needs: Students with a disability are entitled to reasonable accommodations. Any student requesting accommodations related to a disability or other condition is required to register with AccessibleNU and provide professors with an accommodation notification from AccessibleNU, preferably within the first two weeks of class. Accessible NU may be reached at accessiblenu@northwestern.edu or 847-467-5530. All information will remain confidential.

Student Support: Students can find useful resources for safety and security, academic support, and mental and physical health and well-being at the NUhelp website and app. Visit <https://www.northwestern.edu/nuhelp/>.

Course Schedule: Please be aware that the following schedule is tentative and may be modified as we go along. Changes will be announced in lecture and posted to Canvas at least one class meeting in advance. Note that all page numbers refer to Timmons, *Disputed Moral Issues*, 5th edition.

Date	Reading Assignments, Scheduled Discussion, & Assignments
T 7/28	<i>Course Introduction</i> : READ: Timmons, “Why I Am Not a Moral Relativist,” pp. 42-49 (8 pages) Assign Explication Assignment
Th 7/30	<i>Intro to Moral Theories</i> (cont.): READ: [all in Timmons’ book] Timmons, “Consequentialism,” pp. 6-11; (6 pages); Mill, <i>Utilitarianism</i> , pp. 49-54 (6 pages); Timmons, “Kantian Moral Theory,” pp. 14-19 (6 pages) Optional: (a little difficult): “Immanuel Kant: The Moral Law” pp. 59-65 (7 pages)
T 8/4	<i>Punishment & Death Penalty</i> : READ: [all in Timmons’ book] Nathanson, “An Eye for an Eye?,” pp. 533-539; van den Haag, “A Defense of the Death Penalty,” pp. 540-544; Reiman, “Civilization, Safety, and Deterrence,” pp. 544-547 (15 pages total)

Th 8/6	<p><i>Punishment & Death Penalty</i>: READ: Same as T 8/4. If we finish covering all the material from Tuesday, I aim to discuss Plato's account of Punishment and a brief bit on Liberalism and Conservatism and their takes on Punishment</p> <p><i>Explication assignment due Friday 8/7</i> [Submit on Canvas]</p>
T 8/11	<p><i>Freedom of Speech</i>: READ: [in Timmons] Mill, <i>On Liberty</i>, pp. 157-160; Altman, "Speech Codes and Expressive Harm," pp. 172-181 (14 pages total).</p> <p><i>Assign Final Paper (due 8/27)</i></p>
Th 8/13	<p><i>Freedom of Speech</i>: READ: [In Timmons] Lukiannoff and Haidt, "The Coddling of the American Mind," pp. 182-192 (11 pages).</p>
T 8/18	<p><i>Relational Ethics & Public Health</i>: READ: [all in Timmons] Timmons, "Care Ethics," pp. 30-34; Collins, "Care Ethics," pp. 93-104 (17 pages total)</p> <p><i>Assignment 3 assigned</i>: Podcast mini-presentation (group work, on 8/25, requires prep) Links to Podcasts to be provided in Assignment 3 on Canvas</p>
Th 8/20	<p><i>Relational Ethics & Public Health</i>: READ: [In Canvas Files folder] Baylis, et al. "A Relational Account of Public Health Ethics" (PDF file in Canvas Files: Readings, 11 pages)</p>
T 8/25	<p><i>Public Health and the Pandemic</i>: Assignment 3 Due - break-out sessions & mini-presentations to class</p> <p>[<i>please submit your filled out assignment on Canvas. I need each member of each group to submit it in order for each person to get a grade</i>]</p>
Th 8/27	<p><i>Public Health and the Pandemic</i>: mini-presentations (we will meet only if presentations have not been completed on Tuesday's meeting)</p> <p>Final Paper Due [Submit on Canvas] / Non-negotiable</p>
T 9/1	<p>Grades Due. This is non-negotiable</p>