

PPLE 220 Politics and Ethics

ART 212 TTH 9:40-11:10

Prof. David Gutterman

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Office Hours: W 2:45-4:00, Th 1:00-2:30, by appointment

Course Description

This course is an introduction to questions of ethics and politics. Topics to be discussed include justice, happiness, virtue, relativism, gender, racism, liberty, equality, and the foundation of rights. Throughout the semester, our goal will be to seek to examine not simply what we think, believe, and feel, but also how we act. This course will be taught as a large seminar. In class we will engage in large- and small-group discussions, and students will be asked to read, write, and share their reflections and analysis.

Course Readings

The following text is required:

Todd May, *A Decent Life: Mortality for the Rest of Us*. University of Chicago Press, 2019.

There will also be readings available online and through the class WISE site.

Student Learning Outcomes

Students who succeed in this course will develop:

- **their capacity to read, think about, and discuss questions of ethics**
- **nuanced ideas about power, justice, love, happiness, and freedom**
- **the ability to use lenses provided by theories of ethics to analyze political issues**
- **their capacity to collaborate with peers**
- **their inclination and capacity to ask challenging questions**

Course Requirements

Success in this course will require commitment and dedication on your part. If you are not able to make this commitment, I strongly urge you to reconsider taking this course at this time.

The reading assignments for this course are rigorous and challenging. You are required to *thoughtfully* read every assignment. When I say that you are required to read, I do not mean that you should mechanically scan every page, but that you should *grapple with the ideas*. Mark up your text, read with a pen and paper, and write down ideas, questions, quotations, and points of confusion or contention. *Read for comprehension rather than completion, pondering every idea rather than looking at every word*. This means that you may need to read a section, think about it, read it again, write about it, discuss it, and then read it again. So, “do the reading” means “engage yourself with the ideas of the texts.”

The reading load will be quite heavy at times. To stay afloat, plan for a sufficient amount of time to complete the assignment, and read aggressively. Remember to make use of your resources. Come to my office hours and form reading groups with your classmates.

Reading in this way will assist you in the second requirement: Your regular attendance, careful preparation, and active participation are essential. Unexcused absences

from class will have serious and significant detrimental effects on your final grade. **Come prepared to participate by doing the reading, reflecting upon the course material, and bringing to class issues, questions, and passages for discussion.** Moreover, class participation does not simply entail speaking, but also listening in an engaged and respectful manner to the thoughts of your classmates.

Grading

- Class Participation, 20%
- Mid-term Exam 1, 25%
- Mid-term Exam 2, 25%
- Final Exam, 30%

* A crucial note about writing, editing, and rewriting: I strive to encourage all students in advanced classes to become careful and conscientious writers. ***My policy is simple: I can't take your work seriously if you don't. If, in reading your paper, I see multiple instances in which the work seems sloppy, or hasty, or lacking evidence of careful review and revision, I will have little incentive to keep reading, and it will be reflected in your grade.*** Like many of you, I have been guilty of not editing, proofreading, and revising my work carefully enough, and as such have submitted work that is sloppy. Falling into bad patterns is all too easy when so much of the writing we do is informal; this policy should make clear that written work for a class should be approached differently than email, texts, or tweets. I also know that editing one's own work can be very difficult – the words on the page can seem so familiar that it is easy to start skipping sentences and paragraphs when reviewing one's own work. Accordingly, I *strongly encourage* you to work with a partner in this editing and proofreading process.

** Note: A penalty of 1/3 grade per day will be imposed on assignments submitted late (one day's lateness would reduce a B+ to a B). I generally do not grant extensions, but if extraordinary circumstances arise, please consult with me as soon as possible -- *and certainly prior to the due date of the paper.*

*** Another note: I fully appreciate that students like fast and thorough comments on their writing assignments. Unfortunately "fast" and "thorough" do not often go together well. I will strive to return your final papers in a timely fashion. *As a general rule, you should receive your papers back within two weeks of turning them in.*

**** **Academic Integrity:** Students of Willamette University are members of a community that values excellence and integrity in every aspect of life. As such, we expect all community members to live up to the highest standards of personal, ethical, and moral conduct. Students are expected not to engage in any type of academic or intellectually dishonest practice and encouraged to display honesty, trust, fairness, respect, and responsibility in all they do. Plagiarism and cheating are especially offensive to the integrity of courses in which they occur and against the College community as a whole. These acts involve intellectual dishonesty, deception, and fraud, which inhibit the honest exchange of ideas. Plagiarism and cheating may be grounds for failure in the course and/or dismissal from the College.

<https://willamette.edu/arts-sciences/catalog/policies/plagiarism-cheating.php>

Commitment to Positive Sexual Ethics: Willamette is a community committed to fostering safe, productive learning environments, and we value ethical sexual behaviors and standards. Title IX and our school policy prohibit discrimination on the basis of sex, which regards sexual misconduct — including discrimination, harassment, domestic and dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking. We understand that sexual violence can undermine students' academic success, and we encourage affected students to talk to someone about

their experiences and get the support they need. Please be aware that as a mandatory reporter I am required to report any instances you disclose to Willamette's Title IX Coordinator. If you would rather share information with a confidential employee who does not have this responsibility, please contact our confidential advocate at confidential-advocate@willamette.edu. Confidential support also can be found with SARAs and at the GRAC (503-851-4245); and at WUTalk - a 24-hour telephone crisis counseling support line (503-375-5353). If you are in immediate danger, please call campus safety at 503-370-6911.

DACA/Undocumented Student Advocate: Willamette is committed to supporting our DACA/Undocumented students in a variety of ways. This year, Professor Michael Niño is the contact person for all DACA/undocumented students can provide those students with a number of external and internal resources that are available. His contact information is email: mdnino@willamette.edu, Office: Smullin 213, Phone: 503-370-6643.

Diversity and Disability Statement: Willamette University values diversity and inclusion; we are committed to a climate of mutual respect and full participation. My goal is to create a learning environment that is usable, equitable, inclusive and welcoming. If there are aspects of the instruction or design of this course that result in barriers to your inclusion or accurate assessment or achievement, please notify me as soon as possible. Students with disabilities are also encouraged to contact the Accessible Education Services office in Matthews 103 at 503-370-6737 or Accessible-info@willamette.edu to discuss a range of options to removing barriers in the course, including accommodations.

Religious Practice: Willamette University recognizes the value of religious practice and strives to accommodate students' commitment to their religious traditions whenever possible. Please let me know within the first two weeks of the semester if a conflict between holy days or other religious practice and full participation in the course is anticipated. I will do my best to work with you to determine a reasonable accommodation.

SOAR Center Offerings: Food, Clothing, and School Materials The Students Organizing for Access to Resources (SOAR) Center strives to create equitable access to food, professional clothing, commencement regalia, and scholarly resources for WU and Willamette Academy students. The SOAR Center is located in the Putnam University Center's third floor (in the former Women's Resource Center and across from the Harrison Conference Room). The space houses the Bearcat Pantry, Clothing Share, and First-Generation Book Drive and is maintained by committed students and staff and faculty advisers. Hours of operation are M-F, 9am-5pm and weekends from 12-2pm. The Center opens for fall semester 2019 on Labor Day, Monday, Sept. 2 at 12pm.

Trans Inclusive Classroom Space: I will gladly honor your request to address you by your chosen name or gender pronoun. If I accidentally use an incorrect gender pronoun when addressing you, please let me know, in whatever manner makes you comfortable, what pronouns you use so that I can make every effort to correct that error.

Willamette's Credit Hour Policy holds that for every hour of class time there is an expectation of 2-3 hours work outside of class. Thus, you should anticipate spending 6-9 hours outside of class engaged in course-related activities. Examples include study time, reading and homework assignments, research projects, and group work. And the reality is that for you to succeed in this course, you should expect to dedicate much more than this required 6-9 hours per week.

A final note about email and communication. ***I will often communicate with the class through email. I will try to respond to your messages as quickly as I can. However, I will only on the rarest of occasions respond after 9:00PM.***

Schedule of Events (subject to change):

Tu 8/28: Simon Blackburn, Ethics: A Very Short Introduction, pp. 1-49, (WISE).

Th 8/30: Simon Blackburn, Ethics: A Very Short Introduction, pp. 1-49, (WISE).
The Book of Job, pp. 5-14, (WISE).

Tu 9/4: The Book of Job (WISE).

Th 9/6: Plato, *Euthyphro*, *Crito*, *Republic* (excerpts) (WISE).
John Kaag and Sarah Kreps, "The Moral Hazard of Drones" (WISE).

Tu 9/11: Plato, *Euthyphro*, *Crito*, *Republic* (excerpts) (WISE).
John Kaag and Sarah Kreps, "The Moral Hazard of Drones" (WISE).

Th 9/13: Immanuel Kant, "Fundamental Principles of the Metaphysics of Morals" (WISE).
Janelle Bouie, "The Enlightenment's Dark Side" (WISE).
Fred Alford, "Whistleblowers and the Narrative of Ethics" (WISE)

Tu 9/18: Kant, (continued.)
Friedrich Nietzsche, On the Genealogy of Morals and The Gay Science (excerpts)
(WISE).

Th 9/20: Peter Singer, "Rich and Poor" (WISE).
Amia Srinivasan, "Questions for Free-Market Moralists" (WISE).

Tu 9/25: Joan Tronto, "Who Cares: How to Reshape a Democratic Politics" (WISE).
Atul Gawande, "Curiosity and What Equality Really Means" (WISE).

Th 9/27: Joan Tronto, "Who Cares: How to Reshape a Democratic Politics" (WISE).

Tu 10/2: TBA

Th 10/4: EXAM

Tu 10/9: William Shakespeare, *Julius Caesar* (WISE).
Machiavelli, *The Prince* (excerpts), (WISE).

Th 10/11: *Julius Caesar* (WISE).
Hannah Arendt, "Truth and Politics." (WISE).

Tu 10/16: *Julius Caesar* (WISE).
Michael Walzer, "Political Action: The Problem of the Dirty Hands." (WISE).

Th 10/18: Ruth Benedict, "Anthropology and the Abnormal" (WISE).
Mary Midgely, "Trying Out One's Sword" (WISE).

- Tu 10/23: Wilson Carey McWilliams, "Values and Politics" (WISE).
Rebecca Solnit, "Protest and Persist: Why Giving Up Hope is Not an Option," *The Guardian*, March 13, 2017. (WISE).
- Th 10/25: Dahlia Lithwick, "Double-Checking the Second Amendment" (WISE).
- Tu 10/30: Claudia Rankine, "I Wanted to Know What White Men Thought about Their Privilege...So I Asked." (WISE)
George Yancy, "Dear White America." (WISE)
- Th 11/1: Gabriella Blair, My Twitter Thread on Abortion (WISE)
Christine Overall, "Think Before You Breed" (WISE)
- Tu 11/6: Alasdair MacIntyre, "Is Patriotism a Virtue?" (WISE)
John Edgar Wideman, "Whose War" (WISE).
Masha Gessen, "In America, Naturalized Citizens No Longer Have an Assumption of Permanence" (WISE).
- Th 11/8: **Exam**
- Tu 11/13: Todd May, A Decent Life: Morality for the Rest of Us. Preface and Ch. 1: "Altruism or Decency?"
- Th 11/15: Todd May, A Decent Life: Morality for the Rest of Us. Ch. 2. "Decency toward Those Around Us."
- Tu 11/20: Fall Break!
- Th 11/22: Fall Break!
- Tu 11/27: Todd May, A Decent Life: Morality for the Rest of Us. Ch. 3. "Widening the Circle: More Distant Others."
- Th 11/29: Todd May, A Decent Life: Morality for the Rest of Us. Ch. 4. "Widening the Circle: Non-human Animals."
- Tu 12/4: Todd May, A Decent Life: Morality for the Rest of Us. Ch. 5. "Politics and Decency" and Conclusion: "Our Stories and Our Values."
- Th 12/6: Review