

**Contemporary Moral Problems (4/5 units)**  
**Philosophy 72, Ethics in Society 185M, Political Science 134P**  
**Spring 2017**  
**Monday/Wednesday 3:00PM-4:20PM in building 200, room 305**

**Instructor:** Oded Na'aman

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### **Course Description**

This course considers some of the moral problems encountered on campus and elsewhere in our lives as citizens and individuals. We will begin with questions that pertain to our own classroom and gradually broaden our scope to include, eventually, questions about slavery and torture. The primary aims of the course are to encourage students to recognize and address moral questions as they appear in the concrete messiness of life and to help students develop the skills necessary to do this. Questions to be considered include: What would make this a good class and is this very question a moral one? What is democratic education and who is entitled to it? What is the value of equality on campus and beyond? What is institutional discrimination? Are Stanford athletes being exploited? What should count as sexual harassment and is it properly captured by Stanford sexual harassment policies? How should we treat and relate to animals? What is the proper place of truth, bullshit, and contempt in public discourse? Ought the City of San Francisco allow the homeless to reside in its streets? How should we respond to undocumented immigrants? What do slavery and torture teach us about the possibility of decent human relations?

### **Course Goals**

The goal of this course is not merely to read philosophy, but to do philosophy. Toward that end, in each class meeting we will critically evaluate the arguments made in the readings, identify the tools philosophers use to make those arguments, and, ideally, use these tools to make and assess our own arguments. By the end of the quarter, students should be able to:

- i. Reconstruct and evaluate arguments for controversial moral conclusions.
- ii. Articulate shared presuppositions of conflicting views about one and the same moral problem.
- iii. Distinguish and move back and forth between academic and literary modes of philosophizing.
- iv. Tell the difference between an illuminating disagreement and a merely competitive one.
- v. Communicate nuanced answers to the questions that drive this course.

## Assignments and Grading

Paper #1 (≈5 pages): Due April 24<sup>th</sup> (20% of course grade) Paper #2 (≈5 pages): Due May 15<sup>th</sup> (30% of course grade) Paper #3 (≈10-12 pages): Due June 12<sup>th</sup> (40% of course grade) Informed, Respectful, and Productive Participation\* (10% of course grade)

\*Participation will be evaluated on the following guidelines, which stress the quality rather than the quantity of contributions.

A range (A+, A, A-): The student is highly motivated and engaged. S/he has clearly thought about the material in advance of class and has substantive and thoughtful questions and ideas. S/he listens and responds respectfully to other students' contributions.

B range (B+, B, B-): The student participates consistently and comes to class prepared. S/he listens and responds respectfully to other students' contributions.

C range (C+, C, C-): The student is prepared for class and participates on occasion, but her/his contributions do not advance the discussion. S/he is respectful to other students.

Students who fail to meet this minimal set of criteria will receive a "D" or lower.

*Attendance in lectures is mandatory. Failure to attend lectures will lead to a lower participation grade.*

## Topics and Readings

### Week 1: Education and Classroom Ethics

**Monday, April 3.** Why take this class?

- No readings.

**Wednesday, April 5.** How should this class be conducted?

- Dewey, John. *Democracy and Education*, 1916, chapter 2 and 12, pp. 10-23, 152-163.
- Gutmann, Amy. *Democratic Education*, 1987, chapter 6, pp. 172-192.

### Week 2: Equality in Education and Beyond

**Monday, April 10.** Who is admitted to Stanford?

- Adam Swift, *How Not to be a Hypocrite: School Choice for the Morally Perplexed Parent*, 2003, chapter 2, pp. 21 – 33.
- Raj Chetty, Nathaniel Hendren, Patrick Kline, Emmanuel Saez, Nicholas Turner, "Is the United States Still the Land of Opportunity? Recent Trends in Intergenerational Mobility," NBER working paper, January 2014, pp. 1-2, 10-11, figure 4.
- Stanford Admissions Report, March 2015.  
<http://news.stanford.edu/news/2015/march/new-admits-finaid-032715.html>
- Guinier, Lani. *The Tyranny of Meritocracy: Democratizing Higher Education in America*. Introduction and chapter 1: pp. vii-xiii, 2-11.

**Wednesday, April 12.** Equality beyond education

- Parfit, Derek. "Equality or Priority?" *The Lindley Lecture*, 1991, pp. 1-34.
- Scanlon, T. M. "Why Does Equality Matter?"
- *Equality of Opportunity and Education*: <https://edeq.stanford.edu/>  
A website that contains analysis of key terms and references. (Recommended)

**Week 3: Discrimination**

**Monday, April 17.** Institutional discrimination

- Stanford University Nondiscrimination Policy  
<https://studentaffairs.stanford.edu/registrar/policies/nondiscrimination>
- Richard Pérez-Pena, "Students Gain Access to Files on Admission to Stanford," *New York Times*, Jan. 16, 2015. <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/01/17/us/students-gain-access-to-files-on-admission-to-stanford.html>
- Du Bois, W. E. B. "The Forethought" and "Of Our Spiritual Strivings," *The Souls of Black Folk*, 1903. Available online: <http://www.bartleby.com/114/>.
- Margalit, Avishai. "The Paradox of Humiliation." *The Decent Society*, 1995, pp. 115-139.

**Wednesday, April 19.** Resistance and disobedience to unjust institutions

- Rawls, John. On Civil Disobedience. *A Theory of Justice* (1999), pp. 319-343.
- Shelby, Tommie. "Justice, Deviance, and the Dark Ghetto," *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 35, 2007, pp. 126-160.

**Week 4: Exploitation**

*First paper due by 12PM Monday, April 24.*

**Monday, April 24.** Exploitation of college athletes

- Cardinal Athletics: Facts 2015. <http://facts.stanford.edu/campuslife/athletics>
- Alan Wertheimer, "The Exploitation of Student Athletes," in his *Exploitation*, pp. 3 - 4, 10 - 12, 77 - 95,
- Taylor Branch, "The Shame of College Sports," *The Atlantic Monthly*, October 2011. Available online: <http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2011/10/the-shame-of-college-sports/308643/>
- Oliver, John. "The NCAA." *Last Week Tonight*.  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pX8BXH3SJn0>

**Wednesday, April 26.** Exploitation and justice

- Anderson, Elizabeth. "Is Women's Labor a Commodity?" *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 19, 1990, pp. 71-92.

## Week 5: Sexual Harassment

**Monday, May 1.** What counts as sexual harassment?

- Overview of Stanford Policies on Sexual Harassment. <https://harass.stanford.edu/be-informed/overview-stanford-policies>
- “Stanford releases results of campus climate survey of students,” Stanford press release, October 2015. <http://news.stanford.edu/2015/10/01/climate-survey-summary-100115/>
- “Stanford students, faculty, alumni call for new sexual-assault survey,” *Palo-Alto online*, April 2016. <http://www.paloaltoonline.com/news/2016/04/19/stanford-students-faculty-alumni-call-for-new-sexual-assault-survey>
- Anderson, Elizabeth. “Recent thinking about sexual harassment: A review essay.” *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 34, 2006, pp. 284-311.

**Wednesday, May 3.** Sexual harassment by mistake?

- Baron, Marcia. “‘I Thought She Consented.’” *Philosophical Issues* 11, 2001, pp. 1-25.

## Week 6: Public Discourse

**Monday, May 8.** Truth and bullshit

- Frankfurt, Harry. “On Bullshit.”
- Arendt, Hannah. “Truth and Politics.” *The New Yorker*, February 1967.

**Wednesday, May 10.** Contempt and condemnation

- Cohen, G. A. “Casting the First Stone: Who Can, and Who Can’t Condemn the Terrorists?” *Royal Institute of Philosophy Supplement* 58, 2006, pp. 113-136. Reprinted in his *Finding Oneself in the Other*, ed. Michael Otsuka, pp. 115-133.
- Bell, Macalester. *Hard Feelings: The Moral Psychology of Contempt*, 2013, pp. 137-151.

## Week 7: Animals

*Second paper due by 12PM Monday, May 15.*

**Monday, May 15.** Using animals

- The APLAC’s Mission. <https://labanimals.stanford.edu/>
- Kitcher, Philip. “Experimental Animals,” *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 43, 2015, pp. 287-311.
- Coetzee, J. M., “The Lives of Animals,” *The Tanner Lectures on Human Values*, 1997, pp. 113-166.

**Wednesday, May 17.** Valuing animals

- Singer, Peter. “All animals are equal,” in Tom Regan & Peter Singer (eds.), *Animal Rights and Human Obligations*, 1989, pp. 148-162.
- Korsgaard, Christine. “Getting Animals in View,” *The Point*. Available online: <http://thepointmag.com/2012/examined-life/getting-animals-view>

## **Week 8: Life in the Margins of Society**

### **Monday, May 22.** Homelessness and undocumented immigrants

- Sit-lie Ordinance, San Francisco. (Proposition L). <http://sanfranciscopolice.org/civil-sidewalks-ordinance>
- Emily Green, Bob Egelko, and Kurtis Alexander., “Ruling against rousting sleepers gets S.F.’s attention,” *SF Gate*. Available online at: <http://www.sfgate.com/bayarea/article/Ruling-against-rousting-sleepers-gets-S-F-s-6445569.php>
- Orwell, George. “The Spike,” *The Collected Essays, Journalism and Letters of George Orwell*, 1968. Available online: [http://orwell.ru/library/articles/spike/english/e\\_spike](http://orwell.ru/library/articles/spike/english/e_spike)
- Vivian Yee, Kenan Davis, Jugal K. Patel, “Here’s the Reality about Illegal Immigrants in the United States,” *New York Times*, March 6, 2017. [https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2017/03/06/us/politics/undocumented-illegal-immigrants.html?\\_r=0](https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2017/03/06/us/politics/undocumented-illegal-immigrants.html?_r=0)

### **Wednesday, May 24.** Freedom and self-determination

- Waldron, Jeremy. “Homelessness and the Issue of Freedom,” *UCLA Law Review*, 1991-1992, pp. 295-324.
- Fine, Sarah. “The Ethics of Immigration: Self-Determination and the Right to Exclude,” *Philosophy Compass* 8/3, 2013, pp. 254-268.

## **Week 9: The Corruption of Humanity**

### **Monday, May 29.** Accounts of torture and slavery

- Duras, Marguerite. “Albert of the Capitals.” *The War: A Memoir*, pp. 115-141.
- Améry, Jean. “Torture.” *At the Mind's Limits: Contemplations by a Survivor of Auschwitz and Its Realities*, pp. 21-40.
- Douglass, Frederick. *Narrative of The Life of Frederick Douglass*. 1845. Chapters I and II.

### **Wednesday, May 31.** Analyses of torture and slavery

- Sussman, David. “What’s Wrong with Torture?” *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 33, 2005, pp. 1-33.
- Hegel, G. W. F. “Independence and Dependence of Self-Consciousness: Lordship and Bondage.” *Phenomenology of Spirit*, pp. 111-119.

## **Week 10: Recap**

### **Monday, June 5.** Recap class

*Third paper due by 12PM Monday, June 12.*

## **Course Information and Policies**

**Readings:** All of the readings for the course are posted in the Resources section of the course's Canvas site. You should read the material *before* the lectures in which it will be discussed. At the end of each Wednesday lecture I will let you know what will be covered in the next week and how to approach the readings. **Important note:** Monday readings will usually be less theoretical and easier to get through while Wednesday readings will be more academic, abstract, and generally more demanding. I urge you to begin reading for Wednesday over the weekend.

**Lectures:** Lectures will be Mondays and Wednesdays from 3:00PM-4:20PM in 200-305. I expect attendance at all lectures. Failure to attend lectures will lead to a lower participation grade. I will encourage questions, comments, and discussion about the readings during lecture, and it will help you prepare for writing your papers to participate during lecture.

**Section:** Section attendance is mandatory, and you must register for a section through Canvas. Participation in section is an important part of the course, since it is the time when you will have the most extensive opportunity to discuss the issues raised in the readings and lectures.

**Office Hours:** My office hours will be Mondays after class, from 4:30PM-5:30PM, in my office, Room 375 in the Law School (Crown Quadrangle). If you can't make it at this time slot, don't hesitate to ask to meet me at another time – I'll be more than happy to schedule a time to meet. I encourage you to come to office hours often. Engaging in one-on-one or small group discussions is perhaps the best way to improve your ability to engage in the kind of philosophical discourse that will occur in section and that I will encourage in lecture. If you have friends in the class, feel free to come to office hours as a small group. Also, you need not have any very specific questions to ask if you come to office hours; coming to discuss the topics that we're covering in a rather general manner is just fine.

**Late Papers:** Late papers will be penalized one grade-step (e.g. a B to a B-) for each day that a paper is late, with a maximum penalty of one full grade (e.g. a B to a C).

**Students with Documented Disabilities:** Students who may need an academic accommodation based on the impact of a disability must initiate the request with the Office of Accessible Education (OAE). Professional staff will evaluate the request with required documentation, recommend reasonable accommodations, and prepare an Accommodation Letter for faculty dated in the current quarter in which the request is made. Students should contact the OAE as soon as possible since timely notice is needed to coordinate accommodations. The OAE is located at 563 Salvatierra Walk (phone: 723-1066, URL: <http://studentaffairs.stanford.edu/oea>).

**The Stanford University Honor Code is a part of this course:** It is Stanford's statement on academic integrity first written by Stanford students in 1921. It articulates university expectations of students and faculty in establishing and maintaining the highest standards in academic work. It is agreed to by every student who enrolls and by every instructor who accepts appointment at Stanford. The Honor Code states:

- 1) The Honor Code is an undertaking of the students, individually and collectively

- a) that they will not give or receive aid in examinations; that they will not give or receive unpermitted aid in class work, in the preparation of reports, or in any other work that is to be used by the instructor as the basis of grading;
  - b) that they will do their share and take an active part in seeing to it that others as well as themselves uphold the spirit and letter of the Honor Code.
- 2) The faculty on its part manifests its confidence in the honor of its students by refraining from proctoring examinations and from taking unusual and unreasonable precautions to prevent the forms of dishonesty mentioned above. The faculty will also avoid, as far as practicable, academic procedures that create temptations to violate the Honor Code.
  - 3) While the faculty alone has the right and obligation to set academic requirements, the students and faculty will work together to establish optimal conditions for honorable academic work.

Penalties for violation of the Honor Code can be serious (e.g., suspension, and even expulsion).

**So re-read the Honor Code, understand it and abide by it.**

**Plagiarism:** In order to clarify what is regarded as plagiarism, the Board on Judicial Affairs adopted the following statement on May 22, 2003:

“For purposes of the Stanford University Honor Code, plagiarism is defined as the use, without giving reasonable and appropriate credit to or acknowledging the author or source, of another person's original work, whether such work is made up of code, formulas, ideas, language, research, strategies, writing or other form(s).”

If you are in doubt about what constitutes plagiarism in the context of a particular assignment, talk with the instructor.

For more details, see: <https://communitystandards.stanford.edu/student-conduct-process/honor-code-and-fundamental-standard/additional-resources/what-plagiarism>