

**Contemporary Moral Problems (4/5 units)**  
**Philosophy 72, Ethics in Society 185M, Political Science 134P**  
**Winter 2016**  
**Tuesday/Thursday 10:30AM-11:50AM in building 60, room 120**

**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 terrorism 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 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? Should abortions be offered by the Stanford Division of Family Planning? Is it permissible to kill animals for the purpose of scientific experimentation? Should Stanford divest from coal companies? Ought the City of San Francisco allow the homeless to reside in its streets? Who has the standing to condemn acts of terror and how do such acts compare to torture?

### **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 January 25<sup>th</sup> (20% of course grade) Paper #2 (≈5 pages): Due February 15<sup>th</sup> (30% of course grade) Paper #3 (≈10-12 pages): Due March 14<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—including the questions on the syllabus—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

**Tuesday, January 5.** What would make this a good class and is this very question a moral one?

- No readings.

**Thursday, January 7.** How should this class be conducted?

- Dewey, John. *Democracy and Education*, chapter 2 and 7, pp. 10-23, 82-99.
- Jencks, Christopher. “Whom Must We Treat Equally for Educational Opportunity to be Equal?” *Ethics* 98, 1988, pp. 518-533.

### Week 2: Equality in Education and Beyond

**Tuesday, January 12.** 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.

**Thursday, January 14.** Equality beyond education

- Parfit, Derek. "Equality or Priority?" *The Lindley Lecture*, 1991, pp. 1-34.
- Thomson, Judith Jarvis. "Preferential Hiring," *Philosophy & Public Affairs* 2, 1973, pp. 364 – 384.

**Week 3: Discrimination**

**Tuesday, January 19.** 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.

**Thursday, January 21.** 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, Jan. 25.*

**Tuesday, January 26.** 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=pX8BXH3Sj0>

**Thursday, January 28.** Exploitation and justice

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

- Nozick, Robert. “Equality, Envy, Exploitation, etc.” *Anarchy, State, and Utopia*, 1974, pp. 232-275.

## **Week 5: Sexual Harassment**

### **Tuesday, February 2.** What counts as sexual harassment?

- Overview of Stanford Policies on Sexual Harassment. <https://harass.stanford.edu/be-informed/overview-stanford-policies>
- Dougherty, Tom. “Yes Means Yes: Consent as Communication.” *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 43, 2015, pp. 224-253.

### **Thursday, February 4.** What *is* sexual harassment?

- Anderson, Elizabeth. “Recent thinking about sexual harassment: A review essay.” *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 34, 2006, pp. 284-311.
- Baron, Marcia. “‘I Thought She Consented’.” *Philosophical Issues* 11, 2001, pp. 1-25.

## **Week 6: Abortion**

### **Tuesday, February 9.** Abortion and regret

- Amelia Bonow, “My abortion made me happy,” *Salon*. Available online: [http://www.salon.com/2015/09/22/my\\_abortion\\_made\\_me\\_happy\\_the\\_story\\_that\\_started\\_the\\_shoutyourabortion\\_movement/](http://www.salon.com/2015/09/22/my_abortion_made_me_happy_the_story_that_started_the_shoutyourabortion_movement/)
- Billy Hallowell, “Five Women Reveal the Heartbreaking Impact Abortion Had on Their Lives.” *The Blaze*. Available online: <http://www.theblaze.com/stories/2014/05/08/five-women-reveal-the-heartbreaking-impact-abortion-had-on-their-lives/>
- Wilson, Jacque. “Before and after Roe V. Wade.” CNN, Available online: <http://edition.cnn.com/2013/01/22/health/roe-wade-abortion-timeline/>
- Pollitt, Katha. “Abortion in American History,” *The Atlantic Monthly*, May 1997. Available online: <http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/1997/05/abortion-in-american-history/376851/>

### **Thursday, February 11.** Abortion and wrongness

- Foot, Philippa. “Abortion and the Doctrine of Double Effect,” *Oxford Review* 5, 1967, pp. 1-5.
- Anscombe, G. E. M. “Who is Wronged?—Philippa Foot on Double Effect: One Point,” *Oxford Review* 5., immediately following Foot’s essay.
- Marquis, Don. “Why Abortion is Immoral.” *Journal of Philosophy* 86, 1989, pp. 183-202.

## **Week 7: Animals**

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

### **Tuesday, February 16.** Using animals

- The APLAC’s Mission. <https://labanimals.stanford.edu/>

- Coetzee, J. M., “The Lives of Animals,” *The Tanner Lectures on Human Values*, 1997, pp. 113-166.

**Thursday, February 18.** 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: The Environment**

**Tuesday, February 23.** Should Stanford divest from fossil fuel companies?

- Fossil Free Stanford. Available online: <http://www.fossilfreestanford.org/why-divestment.html>
- Corbyn, Zoë, “Stanford students begin ‘definite’ sit-in over fossil fuel divestment.” *The Guardian*. <http://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2015/nov/17/stanford-students-begin-indefinite-sit-in-over-fossil-fuel-divestment>
- Stanford to Divest from Coal Companies. <http://news.stanford.edu/news/2014/may/divest-coal-trustees-050714.html>
- Leopold, Aldo. “The Land Ethic.” *A Sand County Almanac*, 1949, pp. 201-226.
- Hardin, Garret. “The Tragedy of the Commons.” *Science* 168, 1968, pp. 1243-1248.

**February 25.** Why value the environment and how?

- Kagan, “Do I make a Difference?” *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 39, 2011, pp. 105-141.
- Sober, Elliott. “Philosophical Problem for Environmentalism.” *Environmental Ethics*, ed. Robert Elliot, 1995, pp. 226-247.

**Week 9: Homelessness**

**March 1.** Do the homeless have a right to lie on the sidewalk?

- Sit-lie Ordinance, San Francisco. (Proposition L). [https://ballotpedia.org/San\\_Francisco\\_Sit-Lie\\_Ordinance,\\_Proposition\\_L\\_\(November\\_2010\)](https://ballotpedia.org/San_Francisco_Sit-Lie_Ordinance,_Proposition_L_(November_2010))
- Emily Green, Bob Egelko, and Kurtis Alexander., “Ruling against rousting sleepers gets S.F.’s attention,” *San Francisco Chronicle*. Available online at: <http://www.sfchronicle.com/bayarea/article/Ruling-against-rousting-sleepers-gets-S-F-s-6445569.php?t=f58cab551bbaa6eec6&cmpid=twitter-premium>
- 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)

**March 3.** Homelessness and freedom

- Waldron, Jeremy. “Homelessness and the Issue of Freedom,” *UCLA Law Review*, 1991-1992, pp. 295-324.

## **Week 10: Terrorism and Torture**

**March 8.** Who may condemn an act of terrorism?

- 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.

**March 10.** How does terrorism compare to torture?

- 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.
- Sussman, David. “What’s Wrong with Torture?” *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 33, 2005, pp. 1-33.

*Third paper due by 12PM Monday, March 14.*

## **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 Thursday lecture I will let you know what will be covered in the next week and how to approach the readings. **Important note:** Tuesday readings will usually be less theoretical and easier to get through while Thursday readings will be more academic, abstract, and generally more demanding. I urge you to begin reading for Thursday over the weekend.

**Lectures:** Lectures will be Tuesdays and Thursdays from 10:30AM-11:50AM in 60-120. 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 Thursdays from 3:00-4:00 in my office, which is Room 375 in the Law School (Crown Quadrangle). If you can’t make it at this time, 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 as well. If you have friends in the class, feel free to come 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>