

COURSE PHIL 1385: ETHICS & ECONOMICS, SPRING 2019

INSTRUCTOR J. Dmitri Gallow
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MEETING TIMES Tuesdays, 18:00–20:30
Room 2311, Cathedral of Learning

OFFICE HOURS Tuesdays, 14:00–16:00
1029-D, Cathedral of Learning

COURSE GOALS The primary goal of this course is for you to come to a deeper understanding of the ethical assumptions implicit in welfare economics, as well as various reasons to accept or reject those assumptions. A secondary goal is for you to develop the ability to fruitfully engage in and with ethical arguments, especially those formulated in the terms of welfare economics. This is a course which aims to teach you *how* to think about the ethical dimensions of economics; it does not attempt to teach you *what* to think about them. You are encouraged to make up your own mind about the various ethical controversies we will be discussing, and to disagree (respectfully, of course) with the readings, the instructor, and your fellow classmates about any and all substantive ethical matters.

COURSE TEXT HAUSMAN, DANIEL M., MICHAEL S. MCPHERSON, & DEBRA SATZ. 2016. *Economic Analysis, Moral Philosophy, and Public Policy*. Cambridge University Press, New York, third edn.

Additional readings will be made available on Courseweb.

EVALUATION Final grades will be determined by 6 components:

Midterm	25%
Final	25%
Reading Comprehension Quizzes	10%
In Class Exercises	10%
Problem Sets	20%
In Class, Clarificatory Questions	10%

MIDTERM AND FINAL: There will be an in-class midterm on February 26th, and a (non-cumulative) final on April 16th. At the start of each lesson, I will distribute one or two essay prompts on the material to be covered in the lesson. (That way, you know in advance what you really need to understand.) The essays on the midterm and final will be drawn (randomly—as in, using a random number generator) from these. The expectation is that you will prepare by writing out mini-essays for each prompt, and come to the test prepared to reproduce any of those essays.

READING COMPREHENSION QUIZZES: At the start of most class days, there will be a short comprehension quiz on the reading for that day. These quizzes won't be asking you complicated conceptual questions about the reading; instead, they will ask simple questions which anybody who did the reading and made a sincere effort to understand it should be able to answer (like, *e.g.*, did the reading discuss the book *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, or not?). The point of these quizzes is just to incentivize reading the assigned readings closely and carefully. If you have difficulty with these quizzes, that is a sign that you need to do the reading more carefully and/or work on retaining the information from the reading. If you have an unexcused absence, you will not be allowed to make up a quiz you missed.

EVALUATION
(CONT)

IN CLASS EXERCISES: From time to time, I will hand out exercises to be completed in class. These exercises will be graded by your classmates and collected. While there will be a very slight grade difference between in class exercises which are completed correctly and those which are completed incorrectly—just to incentivize making a sincere effort—the most important thing is that you show up to class to complete the exercises. These exercises are meant to be *formative*, not *summative*. That is: the point of these exercises is to help you learn and understand the material, not to test whether you have learnt and understood the material.

PROBLEM SETS: The material we will be covering is both conceptually and formally challenging. To facilitate your comprehension of this material, there will be several problem sets due at various points over the course of the semester. You are permitted, and even encouraged, to work on these problem sets with your fellow students. While these problem sets are also meant to be formative, as opposed to summative, there will be larger grade differences between problem sets completed correctly and those completed incorrectly.

IN CLASS, CLARIFICATORY QUESTIONS: Finally, 10% of your grade will be an evaluation of your in-class clarificatory questions. This category is a bit more specific variation of what might otherwise be called ‘participation’. ‘Participation’, however, is something of an elusive category. Being told that you are supposed to participate makes it unclear *how* exactly you are supposed to participate. In my experience, students who are encouraged to participate rarely act any differently than those who are not so encouraged. I am making this portion of your grade depend upon your in class, clarificatory questions to make it very clear just how I want you to participate, and just how you will be graded on participation: I want you to interrupt me and ask clarifying questions, and the frequency with which you do this, together with the quality of your questions, will be what determines this component of your grade.

SCHEDULE

January 8th, lesson 1: Course Intro

Course Syllabus

Hausman, McPherson, & Satz, chapter 1

January 8th, lesson 2: Introduction to Ethics and Ethical Reasoning

MacKinnon, *Ethics and Ethical Reasoning*

January 15th, lesson 1. Illustrating Consequentialism: Utilitarianism

1. MacKinnon, *Utilitarianism*

January 15th, lesson 2. Illustrating Non-consequentialism: Kantianism

1. Feldman, *Kantian Ethics*

January 22nd, lesson 1. Rationality: Expected Utility Theory, Ordinal Utilities, and Cardinal Utilities

Hausman, McPherson, & Satz, chapter 4 (stop at §4.3)

January 22nd, lesson 2. Rationality: Preferences and Utilities

Gaus, *Utility Theory* (stop at §2.4)

Resnik, *Choices*, chapter 4 (*optional*)

January 29th, lesson 1. Rationality: The Allais and Ellsberg Problems

Hausman, McPherson, & Satz, §4.3

January 29th, lesson 2. Rationality: Act-State Dependence

none

SCHEDULE
(CONT)

February 5th, lesson 1. From Rationality to Goodness: Welfarism, Preferentism, and the Pareto Principle.

Hausman, McPherson, & Satz, chapter 7

February 5th, lesson 2. Ethical Theories of Welfare

Heathwood, *Welfare*

Hausman, McPherson, & Satz, chapter 8

February 12th, lesson 1. Objections to Preferentism

Hausman, *The Impossibility of Interpersonal Utility Comparisons*

Gibbard, *Interpersonal Comparisons: Preference, Good, and the Intrinsic Reward of a Life (optional)*

February 12th, lesson 2. Beyond the Pareto Principle: Efficiency

Gaus, *Efficiency* (pp. 72–81)

Hausman, McPherson, & Satz, chapter 9

Gorman, *The Intransitivity of Certain Criteria Used in Welfare Economics*, §§1–2 (*optional*)

February 19th, lesson 1. Ethical Limitations of the Market?

Anderson, *The Ethical Limitations of the Market (selections)*

Hausman, McPherson, & Satz, chapter 6

February 19th, lesson 2. Further Ethical Dimensions: Exploitation

Zwolinski, *The Ethics of Price Gouging (optional)*

Christiano, *What is Wrongful Exploitation?*

February 26th. **Midterm**

The midterm only covers material up through February 5th.

March 5th, lesson 1. Further Ethical Dimensions: Libertarianism

Hausman, McPherson, & Satz, chapter 10

March 5th, lesson 2. Further Ethical Dimensions: Egalitarianism

Hausman, McPherson, & Satz, chapter 11

Anderson, *What is the Point of Equality?*

March 19th, lesson 1. Introduction to Social Welfare Functions

Hausman, McPherson, & Satz, chapter 13 (stop before §13.5, p. 258)

March 19th, lesson 2. Arrow's Impossibility Theorem

Resnik, *Choices*, chapter 6 (*optional*)

March 26th, lesson 1. Social Welfare Functions and Theories of Justice.

Beckerman, *Economics as Applied Ethics*, §§5.1–5.4

Beckerman, *Economics as Applied Ethics*, chapter 11

March 26th, lesson 2. The Impossibility of a Paretian Liberal

Hausman, McPherson, & Satz, chapter 13, §13.5

Sen, *Liberty, Unanimity, and Rights (selections)*

April 2nd, lesson 1. Valuing Life

Beckerman, *Economics as Applied Ethics*, chapter 16

SCHEDULE
(CONT)

April 2nd, lesson 2. Valuing Life: the non-identity problem

Parfit, *Reasons and Persons*, chapter 16

April 9th, lesson 1. Valuing Life: the repugnant conclusion

Parfit, *Overpopulation and the Quality of Life*

Feldman and Serrano, *Welfare Economics and Social Choice Theory*, ch. 11 (*optional*)

April 9th, lesson 2. Valuing Life: further issues with variable populations

Broome, *The Value of Living*

April 16th: **Final**

The final covers material from February 19th through April 9th

ACADEMIC
INTEGRITY

Students in this course will be expected to comply with the University of Pittsburgh's Policy on Academic Integrity. Any student suspected of violating this obligation for any reason during the semester will be required to participate in the procedural process, initiated at the instructor level, as outlined in the University Guidelines on Academic Integrity. This may include, but is not limited to, the confiscation of the examination of any individual suspected of violating University Policy. Furthermore, no student may bring any unauthorized materials to an exam, including dictionaries and programmable calculators.

DISABILITY
SERVICES

If you have a disability for which you are or may be requesting an accommodation, be sure to contact me within the first two weeks of the semester, as well as Disability Resources and Services (DRS), 140 William Pitt Union, (412) 648-7890, drsrecep@pitt.edu, (412) 228-5347 for P3 ASL users. DRS will verify your disability and determine reasonable accommodations for this course.

LAPTOP
POLICY

As a general rule, laptops and smart phones are not allowed in class. If you have a good reason for requiring a laptop or a cell phone during class, come speak to me about it during office hours. Students who, throughout the semester, volunteer to leave their cell phones at the front of the room during class will receive a 3% bonus added to their final grade.

RECORDING
POLICY

To ensure the free and open discussion of ideas, students may not record classroom lectures, discussion and/or activities without the advance written permission of the instructor, and any such recording properly approved in advance can be used solely for the student's own private use.

SCHEDULE
REVISION

As the course progresses, the course schedule may be revised. If it is, I will notify all enrolled students via email and post an updated syllabus to Courseworks.

STAPLE AND
KADOOBIE
POLICY

If you hand in work which consists of multiple pages, those pages should be stapled together. I reserve the right to refuse to accept any work which is not stapled together. In addition, any written work should be handed in free of kadoobies.