

Ethics and International Politics (POLI 4040)

Time: MWF 12:30-1:20pm
Room: 220 Stubbs Hall
Instructor: Dr. Sean Illing
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Office: Stubbs 217
Hours: TBD (appointments preferred)

Louisiana State University
Department of Political Science

“Relativity applies to physics, not to ethics.” – Albert Einstein

Course Description

This course provides students with an overview of the basic philosophical concepts of ethics and morality in a political setting. We’ll draw on applied ethics and normative theory to address pressing moral problems in international politics. We’ll examine whether we have responsibilities to others beyond our borders and, if so, what those commitments entail. We’ll debate how we should make ethical judgments and we will ask questions about what an ethical foreign policy looks like. We’ll focus on a range of issues in international politics, including economics and inequality, global justice, human rights, and the laws governing the conduct of war and humanitarian intervention.

This is *not* a lecture course, although lectures will occasionally be delivered. It is a research, writing, and discussion course. For most sessions, I will prepare several questions based on the readings in order to initiate class discussions. Student presentations will also be regularly scheduled: these may involve a topic outline or a synopsis of the readings. Every student will make at least one presentation to the class, and will be expected to lead discussion that day. Following presentations, the class will raise questions, make comments and offer suggestions.

I cannot stress this enough: attendance is an academic requirement of this course. You must not only attend each class, but you must know all the readings and come prepared to contribute substantively to our discussions. In addition, we’ll watch several films over the course of the semester – it is essential to attend class on these days, as you’ll be asked to discuss and write about the films.

Required Texts

Mark Amstutz, *International Ethics: Concepts, Theories, and Cases in Global Politics*. 3rd Edition.

*All other readings will be provided or distributed electronically by the instructor**

Course Assignments

All course assignments must be ready for submission at the beginning of the class session in which it is due. Assignments must be typed, spell checked, printed, stapled and be clearly labeled. I will not accept assignments through email, unless specifically directed or unless prior arrangements have been made with me due to extenuating circumstances.

Grading for the course will be determined on the following basis:

- *Class Participation (30%)* – This includes any presentations you make as well as general participation in class discussions/debates. To receive full participation credit, you'll need to show up for class prepared and ready to engage in conversation about the materials.
- *Opinion Editorial Op-ed (15%)* – Students will write an op-ed on an issue of contemporary relevance. The goal of the opinion editorial is to influence a policy debate or alter citizen action by defending the status quo or proposing changes in behavior or public policy. The article should be between 800-1000 words.
- *Analytical Paper (15%)* – Students will write a short paper (4-5 pages) analyzing an ethical issue or problem in one of the films we watch throughout the semester. This is worth 15% of the course grade. More information about the paper will be distributed later in the class.
- *Research Paper (40%)* – Students will be asked to write a research paper of approximately 8-10 pages. The research paper will be on a topic of your choosing, subject to my approval. I encourage you to start thinking about potential topics as early as possible. To ensure that everyone does this, you'll be required to submit a 1 page proposal early in the semester, in which you provide an abstract stating the central question to be asked and how you plan to go about answering it. You will also include a tentative bibliography. The purpose of the proposal is to help you in choosing a manageable topic and in thinking through some important issues early. The proposal will be graded on a pass/fail basis, and will count towards your overall participation grade.

Course Letter Grades

Final course letter grades will be assigned based on the following score:

- A: 90-100
- B: 80-89
- C: 70-79
- D: 60-69
- F: 59 and below

Course Policies

Courtesy in the Classroom: Attention to classroom courtesy is necessary to ensure that all students have the opportunity to learn without distraction. As such, please, please silence and put away all cell phones and other electronic devices during class time. Please be on time to class and remain in class until you are dismissed. Please show respect for your fellow students by refraining from talking during lectures, as well as when other students are speaking. Similarly, please respect the opinions of your fellow students, even and especially when you disagree with them.

Nondiscrimination Policy: ULL does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, nationality, age, religion, sex, sexual orientation or disability. This classroom is intended to be a positive and safe learning environment based upon open communication and mutual respect. If you have any suggestions as to how I can improve the learning environment in this course, please let me know. I will give all such suggestions serious consideration.

BEWARE OF PLAGIARISM! Because of the seriousness of the offense, the Department as a whole would like to remind students precisely what constitutes plagiarism in an essay, and how to avoid it. Do not hesitate to talk to your professors if you ever have a question concerning this most serious of academic offenses:

PLAGIARISM (Quoted from the UL-Lafayette Undergraduate Bulletin):

Academic Honesty

A. Introduction: An essential rule in every class of the University is that all work for which a student will receive a grade or credit be entirely his or her own or be properly documented to indicate sources. When a student does not follow this rule, s/he is dishonest and s/he defeats the purpose of the course and undermines the goals of the University. Cheating in any form therefore cannot be tolerated; and the responsibility rests with the student to know the acceptable methods and techniques for proper documentation of sources and to avoid cheating and/or plagiarism in all work submitted for credit, whether prepared in or out of class.

B. Definitions of Cheating and Plagiarism

1. Cheating, in the context of academic matters, is the term broadly used to describe all acts of dishonesty committed in the taking of tests or examinations and in the preparation of assignments. Cheating includes but is not limited to such practices as gaining help from another person or using crib notes when taking a test, relying on a calculator or other aids if such aids have been forbidden, and preparing an assignment in consultation with another person when the instructor expects the work to be done independently. In other words, cheating occurs when a student makes use of any unauthorized aids or materials. Furthermore, any student who provides unauthorized assistance in academic work is also guilty of cheating.

2. Plagiarism is a specific type of cheating. It occurs when a student passes off as his or her own the ideas or words of another person, when s/he presents as a new and original idea or product anything which in fact is derived from an existing work, or when s/he makes use of any work or production already created by someone else without giving credit to the source. In short, plagiarism is the use of unacknowledged materials in the preparation of assignments. Thus, the student must take care to avoid plagiarism in research or term papers, art projects, architectural designs, musical compositions, science reports, laboratory experiments, and the like.

C. Penalties: The University considers both cheating and plagiarism serious offenses. The minimum penalty for a student guilty of either dishonest act is a grade of “0” for the assignment in question. The maximum penalty is dismissal from the University.

To illustrate **plagiarism**, here is a condensed passage from the book *Faith in Politics*, by A. James Reichley, Brookings Institution Press, 2002, pp. 104–105: “Though convinced of the need, both spiritual and political, for religion, most of the founders had at the same time concluded that government, at least at the national level, should be kept largely secular. The first reason for this conclusion was the practical fact of religious pluralism. Although a substantial majority among citizens of the new nation had roots in some form of Puritanism, no single denomination approached majority status. Under the circumstances, designation of a single denomination of the established national church was simply out of the question. Conviction that the national government should remain secular also resulted from concern, derived from direct experience or from study of history. Most had decided that even a multid denominational direct relationship between church and state and the national level would be harmful for both. Finally, the founders held the belief, that religious liberty is itself a primary religious value within the moral and spiritual tradition from which the United States had grown. Coerced religion, they were persuaded, was an impediment rather than an aid to genuine faith.”

Assume the students in a class are assigned to write a term paper about the separation of church and state in the U.S. Constitution, and the students have access to the Reichley passage above. Here are some improper uses of the source material:

Term Paper Excerpt from Student 1:

The people who founded our country did not establish a national religion in our U.S. Constitution. This is because most of the founders had at the time concluded that government, at least at the national level, should be kept largely secular. The founders then added the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, which gives us our religious freedoms.

THE SECOND SENTENCE IS PLAGIARISM. The source material is quoted *from the first sentence of the first paragraph of the aforementioned passage*, but no quotation marks and no citation are used to indicate either that the material is quoted or the source of the quote.

Term Paper Excerpt from Student 2:

The people who founded our country did not establish a national religion in our U.S. Constitution. “This is because most of the founders had at the time concluded that government,

at least at the national level, should be kept largely secular.” The founders then added the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, which gives us our religious freedoms.

THE SECOND SENTENCE IS PLAGIARISM. The source material is quoted, and quotation marks are used, but no citation is given to indicate the source of the quote.

Term Paper Excerpt from Student 3:

The people who founded our country did not establish a national religion in our U.S. Constitution. This is because most of the founders had at the time concluded that government, at least at the national level, should be kept largely secular (Reichley 2002, pp. 104–105). The founders then added the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, which gives us our religious freedoms.

THE SECOND SENTENCE IS PLAGIARISM. Although a citation is provided, the source material is directly quoted, but no quotation marks are used to indicate the wording is not the student’s wording.

Term Paper Excerpt from Student 4:

The people who founded our country did not establish a national religion in our U.S. Constitution. This is because a majority of the framers of the Constitution then believed that our national government should remain secular. The founders then added the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, which gives us our religious freedoms.

THE SECOND SENTENCE IS PLAGIARISM. Although the student has now paraphrased the source material into the student’s own original wording, the factual assertion/idea comes from the source material and not the student, but no citation is provided to indicate the source of the idea.

Tentative Course Outline

Week of January 14 – 16: Introduction to course, your instructor, and each other (*no readings today*)

- (a) What do we mean by ethics? (Fri)
Reading: Amstutz, Introduction and Chapter 1 (all)
- (b) *Create student presentation schedule**

Monday, January 19th: NO CLASS (MLK Day)

Week of January 21 – 23

- (a) International Relations Theory and Ethics: Realism (*video clips, discussion*)

Realism: Amstutz, Chapter 3 (pages 43-52)

Week of January 26 – 30th: Realism

- (a) Realism cont.
- (b) *Reading*: Excerpt from Thomas Hobbes' *The Leviathan*
(<http://oregonstate.edu/instruct/phl302/texts/hobbes/leviathan-contents.html>)
- (c) International Relations Theory and Ethics: *Liberalism/Idealism*
Reading: Amstutz, Chapter 3 (pages 53-63)

Week of February 2 – 6: Making Ethical Decisions

- (a) *Reading*: Amstutz, Chapter 2 (all)
- (b) *Op-ed proposals due**

Week of February 9 – 13: Ethics of War

- (a) Readings: Amstutz, Chapter 6 (all)
- (b) Case Study (drone strikes)
- Reading*: Chapter 9 (section on drone strikes)

Week of February 16 – 20: MARDI GRAS (2/16-2/18)

Week of February 23 – 27: Ethics of War cont.

- (a) *Readings*: Chapter 7 (all)
- (b) Genocide: Rwanda (Chapter 4, 65-74)
- (c) Film screening: "Hotel Rwanda)

Week of March 2 – 6: Midterm Exam Week

- (a) Review/Concentrated Study Period
- (b) *Exam on Friday, March 6th*

Week of March 9 – 13: "Hotel Rwanda" cont.

- (a) *Opinion Editorials Due Monday, March 9th*
- (a) Discussion/analysis of film*

(b) Human Rights (*Reading*: Amstutz, Chapter 5)

Week of March 16 – 20: The Ethics of Torture

- (a) Movie: *Frontline: The Torture Question*
- (b) *Reading*: Amstutz, Chapter 8 (164-68)

Week of March 23 – 27: Terrorism: Case Study (Israel)

- (a) Movie: *The Gatekeepers*
- (b) Discussion/Analysis*

Week of March 30 – April 3: Nuclear Weapons

- (a) *Reading*: to be determined*
- (b) Movie: *The Day After Trinity*

Week of April 6 – 10: SPRING BREAK

Week of April 13 – 17: Nuclear Weapons cont.

- (a) Movie: *Dr. Strangelove or: How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb*
- (b) *Analytical Papers Due Friday, April 17**

Week of April 20 – 24: Sanctions, Inequality, and The Environment

- (a) Reading: Amstutz, Chapter 10 (all)
- (b) Global Inequality (Reading: UN Millennium Declaration (available via Moodle))
- (a) Environmental Challenges (*Reading*: Amstutz, Chapter 12)

Week of April 27 – May 1: CONCENTRATED STUDY PERIOD

- (a) Final Session, Course Wrap-up
- (b) Watch Steven Pinker talk on progress and decline of violence*
- (c) *Research Papers due Friday, May 1st*

****This syllabus is a guide for the course and is subject to change if necessary.**