

PLSC 334 Public Ethics
Winter 2009, TTh 8-9:15, 280 SWKT

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Office hours: Tue, Wed, Thur 3-5:30, 832 SWKT

The goal of this class is to help you develop your critical analytical skills in assessing public policy debates and in formulating your own views about what policies governments should undertake. The focus here is on how some of the most prominent theories and conceptual frameworks and normative theories from political philosophy can help illuminate the values and assumptions underlying policy choices and serve as criteria for choosing policy options. These theories and frameworks largely focus on issues of public ethics and morality; our interest is in seeing how we can use these concepts to systematically and critically assess policy choices. In pursuing this goal, we will examine the policy debate surrounding a number of public policies, and focus on the issues raised, relevant data, policy options governments face for addressing the issues and solving the problems they pose, and the challenges they pose for developing criteria by which we can assess options and select preferred alternatives. The ultimate goal is for students to develop a framework for evaluating policy options that can serve as a practical guide to help evaluate policy options and choices.

Course requirements include the following:

- Major research paper (20-25 double-spaced pages) that analyzes a public policy of your choice in light of the normative theories and concepts we study in class. 40 percent of final grade. The assignment includes the following preparatory steps (these are ungraded, but are designed to give you feedback on your research and are designed to help you write a successful paper):
 - Jan 29: before class, email me a 2 page (double-spaced) prospectus that indicates what policy you will write about, outlines the key issues in the debate surrounding that policy, and briefly discusses relevant ideas from the readings for the course that relate to your policy. You should specify what level of government your policy analysis will focus on (local, state, U.S., other nation, international). This paper should be written so that it serves as the first draft of an executive summary for your paper.
 - Feb. 26: before class, email me a 7-8 page (double-spaced) literature review that describes the problem (including relevant data, trends, causes, etc.) and the policies that are currently in place to address the problem. This paper should be written so that it can be directly integrated into your final paper. 10 percent of the total grade.
 - Apr. 2: before class, email me the first draft of your final paper (including the bibliography) that includes the following sections: introduction and key issues; description of the problem or issue and of the policies that are currently in place for the specific government you focus on; description of policy alternatives and the

criteria you believe should guide policy analysis; and your **analysis** and application of criteria to the policy options and your specific policy recommendations.

- Apr 14, before 5pm, email me the final version of your paper, to include a two page executive summary and a 20-25 page paper that includes your sources in a standard referencing form used in PLSC 200.
- A final exam of essay questions that will ask you to compare, contrast, synthesize, and critique the major ideas, theories, concepts, and frameworks discussed in class and in the assigned readings. 30 percent of grade.
 - To help prepare for the exam, you should be able to draw from each class period one or two key questions from the discussion that could serve as the basis for an exam question.
- Participation in class debates/presentations, effective class participation, and occasional quizzes to encourage careful reading and preparation for class discussions. 20 percent of grade.
 - The debates/presentations will be organized by groups of 2-4 students, 1-2 on each side and should take about one hour. Their purpose is to help class members understand and critically assess the arguments surrounding public policy issues and explore policy options. The debate can be organized any way the groups choose, such as a traditional debate, presentations, discussions involving the entire class—be creative. The debate/presentation should include a summary of the main arguments in the text and additional ideas you think of, examples from the text and additional ones you come up with, and other ways you develop to engage the class in examining the issues.
- A service learning class project, designed by class members, that will give you an opportunity to examine how a local community is addressing one of the issues we discuss in class. The design of the project is quite open; the goal is to help you explore how people outside of the classroom deal with the policy issues and debates we discuss in class. The project should take about 8-10 hours of time during the semester. I encourage you to pursue the project in groups but you may design an individual project. A short paper (2-3 pages) summarizing what you did and what you learned will be the basis for your grade; please email it to me before class on April 10th. 10 percent of grade.
 - Please visit the BYU Center for Service and Learning from the BYU home page and the United Way Utah County website (<http://www.unitedwayuc.org/volunteer/index.html>) to begin your search.

Final grades will be allocated as follows: 93-99% A; 90-92 A-; 87-89 B+, 83-86 B; 80-82 B-; 77-79 C+; 73-77 C; 70-72 C-; 60-69 D. Late papers will have their grade lowered by 5%/day.

Assigned readings include the following:

Kolbert, Elizabeth. 2006. *Field Notes from a Catastrophe: Man, Nature, and Climate Change*. New York: Bloomsbury.

Olen, Jeffrey, Julie C. Van Camp, and Vincent Barry. 2008. *Applying Ethics: A Text With Readings*. Belmont, CA: Thompson Wadsworth, Ninth Edition (OK to use 8th edition). The reading assignments listed as Olen, ch _ include the background and for and against arguments; the essays from other writers you should read are listed on the dates assigned.

Yarrow, Andrew L. 2008. *Forgive Us Our Debts: The Intergenerational Dangers of Fiscal Irresponsibility*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Additional readings are available on Blackboard and others will be added during the semester. Please also read the New York Times regularly and look for articles on public ethics issues.

Tentative Schedule: Please update throughout the Semester

We will occasionally need to schedule make up classes for days I will be attending academic conferences. Those are scheduled for Thursdays from 5:30-7:15 pm.

Date	Topics
Tue Jan 6	Introduction and overview Climate change: A case study of public ethics Kolbert, chs 1-4
Thur Jan 8	Climate change: interaction of science, politics, and ethics Kolbert, chs 5-10 + pp 191-206
Thur Jan 8, 5:30	Make up class: climate change, ethics, and policy options Vanderheiden, Climate Change and the Challenge of Moral Responsibility (Blackboard)
Tue Jan 13	Moral reasons Olen, ch 1
Thur Jan 15	Good reasoning Olen, ch 2
Tue Jan 20	meet in groups to plan debates
Thur Jan 22	meet in groups to plan debates
Tue Jan 27	Debate: Sexual morality Olen, ch 3
Thur Jan 29	Readings on sexual morality: Roger Scruton, Sexual Morality

Thur Jan 29	Alan Goldman, Plain Sex Michael Levin, Why Homosexuality is Abnormal Timothy Murphy, Homosexuality and Nature Research paper prospectus due via email before class
Tue Feb 3	meet in groups to plan service learning project
Thur Feb 5	Brief update on climate change issues Debate: Abortion Olen, ch 4
Thur Feb 5, 5:30pm	Make up class: Readings on abortion John T Noonan, An Almost Absolute Value of History Judith Jarvis Thomson, A Defense of Abortion Mary Anne Warren, On the Moral and Legal Status of Abortion Rosalind Hursthouse, Virtue Theory and Abortion
Tue Feb 10	Debate: Euthanasia Olen, ch 5
Thur Feb 12	Readings on Euthanasia J Gay-Williams, The Wrongfulness of Euthanasia James Rachels, Active and Passive Euthanasia Philippa Foot, Euthanasia Richard Brandt, A Moral Principle about Killing
Tue Feb 17	meet in groups to work on service learning project
Thur Feb 19	Debate: Cloning/Stem Cell Research Olen, ch 6
Thur Feb 19, 5:30 pm	Make up class: Readings on Cloning/Stem Cell Research Leon R Kass, The Wisdom of Repugnance Michael Tooley, Moral Status of Cloning Humans Bonnie Steinbock, The Morality of Killing Human Embryos Paul Lauritzen, Stem Cells, Biotechnology, and Human Rights
Tue Feb 24	Debate: Capital Punishment Olen, ch 7
Thur Feb 26	Readings on Capital Punishment John Stuart Mill, Speech in Favor of Capital Punishment Sidney Hook, The Death Sentence Ernest Van Den Haag, On Deterrence and the Death Penalty Hugo Adam Bedau, Capital Punishment and Social Defense Research paper literature review due via email before class
Tue Mar 3	Debate: War, Terrorism, and Civil Liberties Olen, ch 8

Thur Mar 5	Readings on War, Terrorism, and Civil Liberties R G Frey and Christopher W Morris, Violence, Terrorism, and Justice Alan M Dershowitz, Make Torture an Option David Luban, Torture and the Ticking Bomb David Cole, National Security State
Tue Mar 10	Debate: Welfare and Social Justice Olen, ch 9
Thur Mar 12	Readings: Welfare and Social Justice John Hospers: What Libertarianism Is Trudy Glover: The Right to Eat and the Duty to Work Kai Nielson, Radical Egalitarianism
Tue Mar 17	Debate: Discrimination Olen, ch 10
Thur Mar 19	Readings on Discrimination Tom L Beauchamp, The Justification of Reverse Discrimination Richard Wasserstrom, A Defense of Programs of Preferential Treatment William T Blackstone, Reverse Discrimination and Compensatory Justice Lisa Newton, Reverse Discrimination as Unjustified
Tue Mar 24	Debate: Environmental Ethics and Animal Rights Olen, ch 11
Thur Mar 26	Readings on Environmental Ethics and Animal Rights Peter Singer, All Animals Are Equal Tom Regan, The Case for Animal Rights Paul W Taylor, The Ethics of Respect for Nature William F Baxter, People or Penguins
Tue Mar 31	Intergenerational Ethics: A Case Study of Debt and Deficits Yarrow, intro, chs 1-4
Thur Apr 2	Yarrow, chs 5-8 Draft of research paper due via email before class
Tue Apr 7	Public policy and future generations Sorenson: Nature of Law, the U.S. Constitution, & Public Policy I (Blackboard)
Thur Apr 9	Sorensen et al, II (Blackboard) Service learning paper due via email before class
Tue Apr 14	Summary and review Research papers due via email before midnight
Mon Apr 20, 2:30-5:30	Final exam

Please see the Department of Political Science's learning outcomes, available at https://learningoutcomes.byu.edu/wiki/index.php/Political_Science

Plagiarism:

While all students sign the honor code, there are still specific skills most students need to master over time in order to correctly cite sources, especially in this new age of the internet; as well as deal with the stress and strain of college life without resorting to cheating. General information about the honor code can be found at honorcode.byu.edu. Details about Academic Honesty at the Honor Code site can be found by moving your mouse over "Honor Code" in the second grey bar and then move down then right and click on "Other Clarifications", then move your mouse down and click on "Academic Honesty." Writing submitted for credit at BYU must consist of the student's own ideas presented in sentences and paragraphs of his or her own construction. The work of other writers or speakers may be included when appropriate (as in a research paper or book review), but such material must support the student's own work (not substitute for it) and must be clearly identified by appropriate introduction and punctuation and by footnoting or other standard referencing. The substitution of another person's work for the student's own or the inclusion of another person's work without adequate acknowledgment (whether done intentionally or not) is known as plagiarism. It is a violation of academic, ethical, and legal standards and can result in a failing grade not only for the paper but also for the course in which the paper is written. In extreme cases, it can justify expulsion from the University. Because of the seriousness of the possible consequences, students who wonder if their papers are within these guidelines should visit the Writing Lab or consult a faculty member who specializes in the teaching of writing or who specializes in the subject discussed in the paper. Useful books to consult on the topic include the current [Harbrace College Handbook](#), the [MLA Handbook](#), and James D. Lester's [Writing Research Papers](#).

A note about discrimination:

Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 prohibits sex discrimination against any participant in an educational program or activity that receives federal funds. The act is intended to eliminate sex discrimination in education. Title IX covers discrimination in programs, admissions, activities, and student-to-student sexual harassment. BYU's policy against sexual harassment extends not only to employees of the university but to students as well. If you encounter unlawful sexual harassment or gender based discrimination, please talk to your professor; contact the Equal Employment Office at 422-5895 or 367-5689 (24-hours); or contact the Honor Code Office at 422-2847.

A note about disabilities:

Brigham Young University is committed to providing a working and learning atmosphere which reasonably accommodates qualified persons with disabilities. If you have any disability which may impair your ability to complete this course successfully, please contact the Services for Students with Disabilities Office (422-2767). Reasonable academic accommodations are reviewed for all students who have qualified documented disabilities. Services are coordinated with the student and instructor by the SSD office. If you need assistance or if you feel you have been unlawfully discriminated against on the basis of disability, you may seek resolution through established grievance policy and procedures. You should contact the Equal Employment Office at 422-5895, D-282 ASB.