

PHI 204/POL 240: Public Morality

Fall 2020, Session 2

Instructor Information

Professor: Dr. Yuval Abrams
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Office Hours

I will be holding office hours by appointment only, on Zoom. **I am are more than happy to set up appointments**, so please email me if you'd like to meet!

In-Person Class Meetings

- Synchronous in-person meetings will be every Tuesday
- On most weeks we will be split into two groups: 1pm – 2:15pm OR 2:30pm-3:45pm
- On some weeks (e.g. the last two weeks when we conduct debates), we will meet for the full session (1-3:45).
- **Check Canvas to find out which section you are in!**
- Classroom: Chapel 101 (on most weeks), Chapel Auditorium (when we meet together).
- Please note: The plan now is to meet in breakout groups for weeks 1-5 and together for weeks 6-7. That said, this is subject to change. I will announce any changes to this, but it is your responsibility to follow my emails and announcements.

Course Format

This is a **hybrid** course. This means the course contains both online and in-person components. Online lecture content will be delivered via videos posted on Canvas, containing interactive quizzing and discussion boards. All exams will be online. Additional discussion and activities will take place in our in-person class meetings, 75 minutes a week.

Generally, there are two due dates per week: **Tuesday and Thursday at 12 noon.** **High stakes assignments (e.g. Exams and Papers) will generally be due on Friday at 11:59pm.** (Note: There is not necessarily a high stakes assignment every week. You have exams at the end of weeks 2 and 5, and papers at the end of weeks 3 and 7).

Course Description

This course examines current moral and political controversies. We will explore questions of social and economic justice, moral and political equality, and social action and individual rights. In examining these debates, we will draw upon both historically influential and contemporary moral and political theories.

GENERAL EDUCATION DESIGNATION: CONNECTIONS-HUMANITIES

Connections courses embody the College's goal of preparing students for "Engaging the World," and becoming responsible, well-informed citizens.

To that end: The Connections portion of the General Education curriculum asks students to connect the range of knowledge they have acquired in [their] Foundations courses to the wider contexts of difference and interdependence within which knowledge is constructed and used. Students will also learn to situate their understanding and their actions within an increasingly interconnected world that routinely puts them into relation with other persons and communities, both locally and globally. By fostering an understanding of these issues among our students, we prepare them for their lives beyond Albright—making informed choices in their jobs and in their roles as responsible citizens.

DEPARTMENTAL OBJECTIVES:

While this course is designated as a Connections course within the College's General Education Curriculum, it is further designated as a Connections-Humanities course. The humanities are academic disciplines that study human history and culture: its languages and literatures, its philosophical and religious systems, its values and ideals, and its artistic creations. As such, the humanities include ancient and modern languages and literature, religion and philosophy, classical studies, and the visual and performing arts. The humanities use methods that are primarily analytical – e.g. the close reading of texts, the logical analysis of arguments, the careful definition of disciplinary concepts and categories – and constructive – e.g. the writing of cogent, well-supported essays developing distinct theses and arguments, the development of novel theories for explaining broad, foundational human questions, and the creation of artistic works (e.g. paintings and sculptures; novels and films). This course resides within the discipline of Philosophy, which seeks to answer some of the most basic questions posed by all humanities subjects: e.g. what is the world really like, what are we doing here, how might we lead a good life, and what if anything might happen to us when we die?

As a course within the discipline of Philosophy, this class includes several objectives which complement those prescribed by the Connections requirement. As an academic discipline, Philosophy is reading and writing intensive, and aims to instill in its practitioners certain habits of mind, among them: (1) accuracy in reading, assessing, and applying abstract theories, (2) fairness and balance in reading, summarizing and evaluating ideas with which they may significantly or completely disagree, and (3) constructiveness in evaluating, responding to and possibly offering alternatives to the ideas, positions or theories with which they may disagree.

Thinking philosophically requires the ability to ask the right questions, as well as skill in answering those questions in a precise, balanced, thorough and well considered manner.

Legal Studies Interdisciplinary Minor Requirement

The interdisciplinary minor in Legal Studies is designed to help students develop a thorough understanding of our legal system. It provides preparation for careers as a lawyer or paralegal, or in the court or judiciary system. or those considering law school, it serves as excellent academic preparation. You study the place of the legal system among our civil institutions, and develop the ability to read, understand and assess critically Supreme Court cases. This minor is open to all students interested in studying our legal system regardless of concentration or career goal. This course satisfies the second elective cluster (from which you must select two courses to complete the Legal Studies minor). For more information on the Legal Studies minor, see <https://www.albright.edu/academic/undergraduate-programs/political-science/> or contact Suzanne Palmer, J.D. spalmer@albright.edu

Course Objectives

By the end of the course, students will be able to:

- Describe the leading moral and ethical theories and the historically significant figures who defended them
- Understand how a moral theory is analyzed, and applied.
- Understand the key concepts of political theory and political philosophy, in particular in its relation to theories of justice.
- Describe and evaluate the major elements of the moral analysis of contemporary controversial moral and political issues
- Evaluate the key concepts in contemporary moral and political discourse including: rights, freedom, equality, happiness, duty, virtue, justice, and fairness.
- Recognize the conceptual connections between the key ideas in moral and political theory and the difficulties they present.

Required Materials

- **Book:** Vaughn, L. (2019). *Doing Ethics: Moral Reasoning and Contemporary Issues*. 5th Ed. New York: Norton.
- **Canvas:** All course information, additional readings, syllabus, etc., will be posted on [Canvas](#)
- For the 4th Hour requirement, we will make significant use of Harvard University's *Justice* course by Prof. Michael Sandel. This will involve watching most of the lecture videos. The course is available online at: <http://justiceharvard.org/justicecourse/>. I will link to the relevant sections of the course on the Canvas site. Additionally, Sandel's supplementary volume *Justice: What's the Right Thing to Do?* is recommended as reading. I will upload any sections from that book, if they are required reading.
- **Zoom:** All office hours meetings will take place via [Zoom](#)

Succeeding in this Course

I am confident that you are capable of succeeding in this class. **You will give yourself the best opportunity to succeed if you:**

- Attend all in-person class meetings
- Check the Canvas site at least 3 days a week, and read all course announcements.
- Submit all assignments by the due date.
- Check your Albright email **regularly** and respond promptly if contacted by me
- Watch all video lectures and take notes
- Submit all assignments on time
- Study in advance for exams
- Reach out when you need support

A note about technology

There is a heavy computer/web component to this course. It is therefore necessary that each student have an active Albright computer network account, and that if any problems develop with the use of this account, it is the student's responsibility to take immediate action and bring the problem to the [Help Desk](#).

Assignments and Grading

The entire course, and thus your final grade, consists of **1005 points**. You will be graded on a scale of 1000 points (the 5 extra points can only help you). Below, I describe the components of your final grade and how much each component is worth:

Grading Breakdown: 1000 Points Total

Item	Number	Points	Total points	Percent
In-Class Participation	7 weeks	10	70	7%
Online Activity (Quizzes / Forums)	7 weeks	45	315	31.5%
Debate	1	100	100	10%
Papers	2	130	260	26%
Exams	2	130	260	26%

Grade Assignment (based on percentage of total points earned in the course):

A	93%+	C	73-76%
A-	90-92%	C-	70-72%
B+	87-89%	D+	67-69%
B	83-86%	D	63-66%
B-	80-82%	D-	60-62%
C+	77-79%	F	<60%

Exams

There will be a total of two non-cumulative exams. The format will be multiple choice and short answer. You will take the exams online, during a 90 minute interval of your choice within the **one-day long window**. In other words, exams will be “available” from 12:01am to 11:59pm on Exam Day, and you will have 90 minutes to complete the exam once you “begin”.

All exams will be “open book”. However, you should be prepared to move through the exam quickly in order to complete the questions within the 90 minute time period. All students are expected to take the exams within the specified time window. Please notify us in advance if you cannot take the exam in the specified window. If you miss an exam for other unforeseeable reasons, please contact us as soon as possible via email.

Quizzes / Forums

You will have online material to complete each week on Canvas. You must complete all quizzes and forums. I will announce, each week, what that week's quiz and forum assignments are, as well as when they are due (usually on Tuesday and Thursday at 12 noon).

Quizzes. These will consist of quizzes and forums. The quizzes will be multiple choice, designed to prepare you for the exam. These may be in the form of quizzes as part of lecture videos, or as separate quizzes.

Forums. The forums will be in response to specific material. When creating a forum, I may assign a specific question or ask you to comment more generally. The forums will cover the Sandel lecture videos (which cover the 4th hour) as well as a selection from the applied ethics

topics that we will cover in the final two weeks (some, but not all, of which will be debated by you in class).

Papers

During the course of the semester, you will write two papers. The first paper, which will be due at the end of week three, will be in response to a specific prompt. The second (final) paper will be on the topic that you debated on in class (see below). Details about each paper are provided on Canvas and will be discussed in class closer to the due dates.

Debates

The final two classes will be in debate format (in Chapel Auditorium). You will be broken into groups and will debate a topic in front of the entire class. The topics will be chosen from the textbook (Part 4: Ethical Issues). I will allow you an opportunity to choose your topic and will try my best to accommodate people's preferences. You will be graded on your debate performance. The topic you debate is the topic you will write on personally for your final paper (if there is a problem with this, we can discuss this on a case by case basis).

In-Person Class Participation

Students must attend all synchronous meetings (10 points per week). Points are awarded based on attendance and quality of participation. Your participation grade will be based on your contributions to class discussions and activities. For those of you who are less inclined to speaking in front of large groups, there will be ample opportunities to participate in other activities. Note that attention is part of this grade, so sleeping, or texting during class will count as non-participation. **Please see “Policies Relating to COVID-19” below for information about what to do if you miss class due to possible COVID-19 symptoms or diagnosis.**

Late Policies

- **Quizzes and Papers** will be penalized 10% per day late, for a maximum late penalty of 50%. For example, a paper that is submitted 6 days late will be penalized 50%; so, if that paper *should* have received a score of 80%, it will receive a score of 40% (80% of 50% = 40%).
- You cannot take an exam late without arrangements with me. You must let me know if you are unable to take an exam on the scheduled date ***before the exam*** – I will then work with you to schedule a make-up exam as soon as possible after the original exam date.

4th Hour of Quality

Albright, like a number of other liberal arts colleges and universities, uses a course unit system to support a greater depth of learning. Because each course unit is the equivalent of four credits, compared to the usual three credit course at schools using the credit system, classes that meet only three hours per week must also require 1 extra hour of learning over the 15-week term, totaling 15 hours of work outside the classroom that are above and beyond the usual course readings, homework, and examinations. These learning activities must result in something the faculty member can evaluate (paper, presentation, journal, reflection paper, problem set, etc.). Note also that federal guidelines expect approximately two hours of work outside class for each instructional hour of class.

The Fourth Hour requirement in this class will consist of watching the lecture videos from Michael Sandel's "Justice" course at Harvard University (available online) and writing forum posts in response to prompts I will give you on this material. The material will be covered in tandem with

the regular material from this course. The Harvard course consists of 24 videos of approximately 30 minutes each (totaling 12 hours of lecture time). Each video is supplanted with discussion questions and a short follow up video covering a contemporary issue. Policies Relating to COVID-19

COVID-19 Absence Policies

Students are encouraged to work directly with their instructors regarding any absences. For absences related to COVID-19, please adhere to the following:

- **Do not come to class if you are sick.** Please protect your health and the health of others by staying home. Contact your healthcare provider or the [Gable Health Center](#) if you believe you are ill. In particular, if you have any [symptoms of COVID-19](#), please do not come to class.
- If you are absent from class as a result of a COVID-19 diagnosis or quarantine, as instructor we will do the following to help you continue to make progress in the course: You must email us to notify us of the absence and we will assign an alternate assignment to count for participation credit. The final decision for approval of all absences and missed work is determined by the instructor.

If your psychological health is compromised due to the pandemic and how it may affect other family members and other close associates, you are encouraged to contact the [counseling services](#) on campus and to discuss options for a modified assignment schedule similar to that outlined above.

Social Distancing

In class, as well as on and off campus, maintain social distance of at least six feet; replace shaking hands, hugs and physical touching with verbal appreciation. Please be aware of social distancing with waiting for, entering, and exiting classes.

Masks and Face Shields

Proper wearing of a mask/shield is required in all classes at Albright College. All students must wear a mask/shield that covers both nose and mouth [as recommended by the CDC](#), both inside buildings (at all times) and outside of campus buildings when within six feet of another person. Students who do not wear a mask/shield properly will be asked to leave class and be reported to the Dean of Students. If you are unable to wear a mask for medical reasons, you must get formal accommodations by contacting Sherry Young, Director of Student Accessibility and Advocacy, by email at SAA@albright.edu or by phone at 610-921-7503

Office Hours

The current pandemic has led me to adjust how I go about office hours, and I ask that you read and respect these guidelines—for your own health as well as the health of the community. Faculty offices are small and do not permit for adequate physical (social) distancing. Please see the office hours noted on this syllabus and note that for this semester, office hours will be held through zoom. You may access the link office link on Canvas in the Start Here module and the zoom office link appears on this syllabus. I also request that you contact me through email if you need to meet outside of office hours and avoid trying to set up meeting times before or after our class. We will need to leave our classroom promptly, in order to avoid a “bottleneck” as a new class enters. We also need to allow adequate time for cleaning in between classes. Thank you in advance for supporting this policy! Please do not hesitate to meet with me—I am here to support you and help you be successful in this course!

Course Changes

Please note that if we move online, there may be adjustments to the nature of our scheduled synchronous in-person meetings.

Student Services

Gingrich Library

The Gingrich Library provides resources to assist Albright students with their class projects and research needs. Located in the Center for Computing and Mathematics, the library offers access to its entire catalog of print materials and DVDs as well as an extensive collection of e-books, electronic journals and databases all available from on-campus, in residence halls or off-campus. A small browsing library and college computers are located in the building. Reference librarians are available to answer questions and help students use resources and find appropriate materials. Students are encouraged to contact a librarian at any stage of the research process. Real-time chat services are available through the library's portal at the library's main page (<http://library.albright.edu>)

Academic Learning Center

The Academic Learning Center (ALC) offers various resources to assist Albright students with their academic success. Students have academic support resources available to them at no charge. The ALC offers course-specific peer tutoring for many general education classes at the 100-200 level. You can request a tutor at this link:

www.albright.edu/academics/tutor_request_form.php. For upperclass students, the ALC offers one-on-one academic coaching on study skills, time management, note-taking, and learning strategies. (The Student Success Specialists offer coaching for first-year students.) The ALC office is located in Teel 309A and the ALC Tutoring Lab is accessible from the tunnel near Jake's Place. Contact the ALC at 610-921-7662 and academiclearningcenter@albright.edu.

Writing Center

You are encouraged to work with the Writing Center early and often to help build a strong foundation for writing in this course and in all of your courses. The center's peer tutors and director will work with you at any stage of the writing process, from developing and organizing ideas to revising and editing drafts. Tutors are also available to discuss and practice approaches to managing the college reading workload and reading more effectively. The center is located in Student Center Classroom 1, on the lower level near the mailroom and can be reached at writingcenter@albright.edu. For online chat sessions (with a whiteboard for revision and options for audio-video or type chat), use our appointment system at <http://alb.mywconline.com>. For e-mail-based feedback, you can submit an essay using this form: <https://www.albright.edu/about-albright/offices-departments/writing-center/essay-feedback-form/>.

The Writing Center may not be available during some holiday breaks.

Office of Student Accessibility and Advocacy

Consistent with the ADA and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, Albright College welcomes students with disabilities into the college's educational programs. If you need impairment-related academic adjustments in this course, please contact Sherry Young, Director of Student Accessibility and Advocacy, by email at SAA@albright.edu or by phone at 610-921-7503. Our office is located in the Student Center Conference Room. Students should contact the office to schedule an appointment. Students who use accommodations should meet with course

instructors privately and in a timely manner to discuss their Academic Accommodation Letter (AAL). *Please note that IEPs and 504 plans do not apply to college-level courses*

Academic Dishonesty

The policies of the College regarding academic dishonesty can be found on the College's website at <http://www.albright.edu/catalog/academicpolicies.html>. Please read these policies as it applies to all facets of this course. Please become aware as to what constitutes academic dishonesty.

Course Schedule

Lecture Dates in Bold (please note: schedule and readings subject to change)

Note: Some weeks are heavier on the reading, others are heavier on video content. I will try to keep them reasonably even. Most Vaughn chapters will be accompanied by a video power point presentation. These will have quizzes attached. You are not required to read the supplementary readings at the end of each Vaughn chapter, unless I state otherwise.

Week 1 (10/7-10/13) (Fundamentals)

Due Dates: 10/13

- Vaughn Chapter 1 (Ethics and the Examined Life) (Canvas)
- Vaughn Chapter 2 (Subjectivism, Relativism, and Emotivism) (Canvas)
- Sandel *Justice* Chapter 1 (Doing the Right Thing) (Canvas)
- Watch:
 - o Video Presentation (Philosophy)
 - o Video Presentation (Ethics)
 - o Video Presentation (Meta-Ethics)

Week 2 (10/14-10/20) (Consequentialism)

Due Dates: 10/15 & 10/20

- Vaughn Chapter 4 (The Power of Moral Theories)
- Vaughn Chapter 5 (Consequentialist Theories)
- Watch
 - o Video Presentation (Moral Theories)
 - o Video Presentation (Consequentialism)
 - o Sandel Lecture 1 (The Moral Side of Murder)
 - o Sandel Lecture 2 (The Case for Cannibalism)
 - o Sandel Lecture 3 (Putting a Price Tag on Life)
 - o Sandel Lecture 4 (How to Measure Pleasure)

Week 3 (10/21-10/27) (Rights/Politics)

Due Dates: 10/22 & 10/27

EXAM 1 FRIDAY 10/23

- Nozick (in Vaughn Ch. 5)
- Rawls (in Vaughn Ch. 5)
- Raley & Burnor, Ethical Choices (Ch. 10 "Social Contracts and Rights") (On Canvas)
- Shaw, *Business Ethics* (Ch. 3 "Justice and Economic Distribution") (On Canvas)
- Watch:
 - o Video Presentation (Rights, Property, and Justice)

- Sandel Lecture 5 (Free to Choose)
- Sandel Lecture 6 (Who Owns Me?)
- Sandel Lecture 7 (This Land is Your Land)
- Sandel Lecture 8 (Consenting Adults)
- Sandel Lecture 14 (A Deal is a Deal)
- Sandel Lecture 15 (What's a Fair Start?)
- Sandel Lecture 16 (What do We Deserve?)

Week 4 (10/27-11/3) (Deontology)

Due Dates: 10/29 & 11/3

Paper 1 Due 10/30

- Vaughn Chapter 6 (Nonconsequentialist Theories)
- Material on Trolley Problem (TBA)
- Reading on Ethics and Rationality of Voting (TBA) (Extra Credit for Election Day)
- Watch:
 - Video Presentation (Nonconsequentialism)
 - Sandel Lecture 11 (Mind your Motive)
 - Sandel Lecture 12 (The Supreme Principle of Morality)
 - Sandel Lecture 13 (A Lesson in Lying)

Week 5 (11/4-11/10) (Virtue/Citizenship and Prep for Debate Topics)

Due Dates: 11/5 & 11/10

Debate Topic Selections Due: November 6th

- Vaughn Chapter 3 (Evaluating Moral Arguments)
- Vaughn Chapter 7 (Virtue Ethics)
- Watch:
 - Video Presentation (Virtue Ethics)
 - Jonathan Haidt (TED Talk on Moral Foundations)
 - Sandel Lecture 18 (What's the Purpose?)
 - Sandel Lecture 19 (The Good Citizen)
 - Sandel Lecture 20 (Freedom v. Fit)
 - Sandel Lecture 21 (The Claims of Community)
 - Sandel Lecture 22 (Where Our Loyalty Lies)
 - Sandel Lecture 24 (The Good Life)

Week 6 (11/11-11/17) (Ethical Issues/Debates)

Due Dates: 11/12 & 11/17

EXAM 2 November 13

Week 7 (11/18-11/24) (Ethical Issues/Debates)

Due Dates: 11/19 & 11/24

Selections from (depending on student selection)

- Vaughn 9 (Abortion)
- Vaughn 10 (Euthanasia)
- Vaughn 11 (Health Care)
- Vaughn 12 (Animal Welfare)
- Vaughn 13 (Environmental Ethics)
- Vaughn 14 (Racism)
- Vaughn 15 (Sexual Morality)
- Vaughn 16 (Free Speech on Campus)

- Vaughn 17 (Drugs, Guns)
- Vaughn 18 (Capital Punishment)
- Vaughn 19 (War, Terrorism, Torture)
- Vaughn 20 (Immigration)
- Vaughn 21 (Global Economic Justice)

Final Papers: Date TBA