

CURRENT MORAL AND SOCIAL ISSUES

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COURSE DESCRIPTION: Through class interaction, we will apply existential, Eastern and Western philosophy to injustice and inequity as we perceive and explore it. We will challenge ourselves to self-reflect on social conditioning, confirmation bias, herd mentality etc. With an eye to science and statistics, we'll analyze applications of ethics in context, including governmental policy. We'll explore courage and strength in relation to moral action.

COURSE MATERIALS: Including, but not limited to... various US government webpages (eg PubMed), various science/social science journals, BBC, various local newspapers, MediaBias/FactCheck, NYT, WSJ, VICE, ProPublica, PEW, Al Jazeera, Wikipedia, Snopes, Youtube, Twitter, Politifact, FB, Metabunk, Insta, good faith deconstructive commentaries on the above, as offered.

(Note: Most of these textual resources are already accessible to you as a Rutgers student. Otherwise, they will be provided in class.)

CLASS OUTLINE: Note that this is tentative. Content and pacing on Canvas MODULES supersedes the template below.

Week 1	What you have, How you're doing, What you want, How we'll learn
Week 2	Sources of Information and Accuracy, The Profit in Lying
Week 3	Fear and Scapegoating
Week 4	Covid attitudes and policies
Week 5	End of Life issues
Week 6	Abortion: current policies, critiquing stats
Week 7	Government: Authoritarian vs. Democratic
Week 8	Inequity: Global and National, Trends
Week 9	Racial Inequity
Week 10	Capitalism
Week 11	Education
Week 12	Healthcare
Week 13	Tbd by interest and directions of discussion
Week 14	Tbd by interest and directions of discussion
Week 15	Tbd by interest and directions of discussion

COVID POLICY:

In order to protect the health and well-being of all members of the University community, masks must be worn during class meetings; any student not wearing a mask will be asked to leave. Masks should conform to CDC guidelines and should completely cover the nose and mouth: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/about-face-coverings.html>

Each day before you arrive on campus or leave your residence hall, you must complete the brief survey on the [My Campus Pass symptom checker](#) self-screening app. The results of this daily check may require that you quarantine and stay home, depending on exposure due to your locations. The symptom checker also clarifies symptoms of sickness that would require you to stay home. A positive Covid test, or doctor's advice also necessitate quarantine. Please notify me of any of the above situations asap.

If you need to stay at home, but you are well enough, I will give you instructions to attend remotely through Zoom. Attendance on Zoom will require you to respond to the roll call and then participate actively via zoom chat comments. You can make these zoom chat comments at any time by giving any observation or reaction to what's happening in the class. I may require you to respond on the zoom at various junctures so be sure to be always focused on class. Active participation on zoom will count for full attendance and your grade will not be affected negatively. Obviously, your grade will also not be affected if you're too ill to attend. Just email me if you need to stay at home for any of these reasons.

CLASS EXPECTATIONS

A note about the guidelines below - this class will not be work intensive and most of you will not find it to be difficult, as long as you remain engaged. Furthermore, all of us have been and are being pressured by the pandemic. This means there is even more need for communication and adjustment, based on what we're all navigating. That being said, the world is turning as fast as ever and hopefully most of you took this class because you're open to engaging in serious and sensitive topics that continue to challenge us. Regarding my own teaching style, I am particular about attendance and the quality and engagement that's reflected in your work and your presence. If all of that makes sense to you, you won't have a problem in this class. By the 2nd or 3rd class, I'll take questions on any of these procedures.

ELECTRONICS

Please keep all phones, laptops and other electronics quiet, out of sight and out of reach, unless otherwise instructed. Tablets are the exception if they lay flat on your desk, and you sit in the first or second row.

DAILY/WEEKLY DISCUSSIONS AND HOMEWORK

Homework will most likely be posts in a Canvas Discussion.

Here's a basic rubric:

- 1) Comprehensive – reference the content which the question is based on and show awareness of the overall discussion previous to your own post.
- 2) Consequential – give an answer about something consequential to life.
- 3) Committed – Try to be personally engaged, sincere and use a real-life example.

Also...

- Please be encouraged to cite by name the thought or reference of a previous post of one of your classmates. Remember that this is a conversation.
- Typically, a Canvas Discussion will continue through many days, as I update it with new questions to build on the first. I also typically update new due dates for the added questions. Since these Discussions are in dialogue with the rest of the class, any posts turned in a day late will cost you half your grade. It's expected that if you miss a day, you will make it up the next day, otherwise you'll lose all your credit. If you're more than two days late, it won't help your grade to post to that question.

SOCRATIC METHOD INTERVIEWS

You will most likely be required to do a few Socratic Method live Interviews on various topics. This process will be explained in detail in the future.

A NOTE about assignments - I may share some exemplary assignments with the class after removing the student's name. If for some reason you do not want one of your assignments shared to the class, please inform me when you submit the assignment. Late interviews also lose 50 points per day which obviously is significant.

ATTENDANCE

Students are expected to attend every class and should be ready at the time of start, since class starts punctually. Failure to respond to roll call will result in you being marked absent. Please be considerate and wait for the end of class to come to me/call on me, so I can adjust your notation from 'absent' to 'late'. You'll be allowed three LATES for me to adjust.

If you are compelled to miss this class as indicated by the above symptom checker, a positive covid test (or similar concern), or other emergency, please email me to clarify your situation. If your absence extends more than one week, it is Rutgers policy that the issue be referred to the Dean of Students.

QUIZZES

Typically, roll call is immediately followed by an oral quiz, during which 4 TO 6 random students will hopefully immediately answer a question regarding one key concept, explanation or example, from any previous class. We'll make a note of these Statements and Examples at the end of most classes. Fair warning, if you make the mistake of entering class late on a day that your name is called and you're not present, you will receive a zero (0). One occurrence of that would at the least prevent you from an A on your overall course quiz grade. Two occurrences would prevent you from a B, etc. Conversely, merely your presence and attempted answer on an oral quiz, will automatically get you at least a 50.

UNIVERSITY INFORMATION/POLICIES

Student Wellness

(a) *Counseling, ADAP & Psychiatric Services (CAPS)*

848-932-7884 / 17 Senior Street, New Brunswick, NJ 08901/ rhscaps.rutgers.edu

CAPS is a University mental health support service that includes counseling, alcohol and other drug assistance, and psychiatric services staffed by a team of professional within Rutgers Health services to support students' efforts to succeed at Rutgers University. CAPS offers a variety of services that include: individual therapy, group therapy and workshops, crisis intervention, referral to specialists in the community and consultation and collaboration with campus partners.

(b) *Violence Prevention & Victim Assistance (VPVA)*

848-932-1181 / 3 Bartlett Street, New Brunswick, NJ 08901 / vpva.rutgers.edu

The Office for Violence Prevention and Victim Assistance provides confidential crisis intervention, counseling and advocacy for victims of sexual and relationship violence and stalking to students, staff and faculty. To reach staff during office hours when the university is open or to reach an advocate after hours, call 8489321181.

(c) *Scarlet Listeners*

732-247-5555 / <http://www.scarletlisteners.com>

Free and confidential peer counseling and referral hotline, providing a comforting and supportive safe space.

Academic integrity policy

Cheating, plagiarism, and other forms of academic malfeasance come in many forms—if you haven't already, I would recommend familiarizing yourself with the Academic Integrity Policy *download* (<http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/academic-integrity-policy/>) for a list of examples. Any suspected violation will be automatically referred to the Office of Judicial Affairs, and can carry penalties up to and including a failing grade in the course or expulsion from the university. Note: ignorance about what counts as academic malfeasance, or carelessness in acting in accordance with this policy, is *not* a defense. Thus, if you have any questions about whether you are toeing the line, please do not hesitate to consult with me *before* you submit your work.

University disability statement

Rutgers University welcomes students with disabilities into all of the University's educational programs. In order to receive consideration for reasonable accommodations, a student with a disability must contact the appropriate disability services office at the campus where you are officially enrolled, participate in an intake interview, and provide documentation. For more info, please visit <https://ods.rutgers.edu/students/documentation-guidelines>. If the documentation supports your request for reasonable accommodations, your campus's

disability services office will provide you with a Letter of Accommodations. Share this letter with your instructors and discuss the accommodations with them as early in your courses as possible. To begin this process, please register by following this link:
<https://webapps.rutgers.edu/student-ods/forms/registration>.