

DEBATING ETHICAL ISSUES ACROSS DISCIPLINES

Spring 2018

50:730:240

Tuesdays and Thursdays 11:10-12:30

Armitage 201

INSTRUCTORS



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OBJECTIVES

This course trains students in ethical reasoning and argumentation through both the study of ethics as a discipline and the practice of ethical debate in an ethics bowl competition. Students gain not only an understanding of ethical ideas and argumentation, but also skills in constructing arguments, oral communication, close reading, community outreach, and event organization.

This course also fulfills the new General Education requirement in Ethics and Values (EAV) through the following learning goals:

1. Students will learn how to interpret, explain, and compare significant systems and theories of human ethics and/or values;
2. Students will analyze ethical debates in terms of their underlying assumptions and implications;
3. Students will be able to recognize the ethical values at stake in practical, concrete, and/or everyday situations;
4. Students will learn how to apply ethical reasoning toward solving practical problems;
5. Students will formulate, communicate, and evaluate effective ethical arguments.

In the first third of the course, students will gain a grounding in ethical theory and how it relates to ethical practice. In the second third, with the aid of the instructors, students will develop and organize a college-wide ethics bowl, which is a competition between teams of students who debate specific ethical cases. In the final third of the course, students will form their teams for the ethics bowl and practice for the competition in April. The winning team will receive a prize and have their names inscribed on a new trophy that will be displayed in the Campus Center.

READINGS AND RESOURCES

Students are required to purchase or rent *A 21st Century Ethical Toolbox* (third edition). All other readings for the course are available on the course Sakai website. Here you will also find links to further resources about ethical argumentation as well as about organizing ethics bowls.

OUTLINE

Introduction

- Jan 16 Introduction to the course (no reading)
Jan 18 What is Ethics? Read *A 21st Century Ethical Toolbox* (third edition) (hereafter *A2CET*), pp. 3-12.

I. Understanding Ethics

- Jan 23 What Ethics is Not. Read *A2CET*, pp. 28-40.
Jan 25 Ethics and Religion. Read *A2CET*, pp. 59-71; and case, "The Ethics of Podcasting."

Jan 30 Deontological Ethics. Read *A2CET*, pp. 85-90, 112-117, and 126-133.
Feb 1 Consequentialist Ethics. Read *A2CET*, pp. 143-155 and 160-164; and case, "XYLO" in *A2CET*, pp. 96-102.

Feb 6 Virtue Ethics. Read *A2CET*, pp. 173-184 and 188-190.
Feb 8 Relational Ethics. Read *A2CET*, pp. 201-216; and case, "Mind Over Matter?"

Feb 13 Ethics in Practice. Read *A2CET*, pp. 233-236, 256-264, and 279-285.
Feb 15 Ethics and Creativity. Read *A2CET*, pp. 312-324 and 342-355; and case, "Selecting for Deafness."

II. Ethics Bowl Organizing – all readings and resources on Sakai

- Feb 20 How to organize an ethics bowl – competition structure.
Feb 22 How to organize an ethics bowl – event logistics.

Feb 27 Research cases for ethics bowl – scenarios in Science & Social Science
Mar 1 Research cases for ethics bowl – scenarios in Law & Criminal Justice (Nathan Link)

Mar 6 Research cases for ethics bowl - scenarios in Business & Medicine
Mar 8 Research cases for ethics bowl – scenarios in the Humanities & Arts
case summaries due

*****Spring Recess Mar 10-18*****

III. Ethics Bowl Practice

- Mar 20/22 Check in on event organization progress; mock ethics bowls; post-debate discussion
Mar 27/29 Check in on event organization progress; mock ethics bowls; post-debate discussion
Apr 3/5 Check in on event organization progress; mock ethics bowls; post-debate discussion

III. Ethics Bowl! – rules & resources on Sakai

- Tuesday April 10 (regular class time), Raptor Roost? Ethics Bowl Semi-Final I
Thursday April 12 (regular class time), Raptor Roost? Ethics Bowl Semi-Final II
Friday April 13, free period (11:20-12:20), Raptor Roost Ethics Bowl Final!!!

Conclusion

Apr 17/19	Post-bowl debriefing
Apr 24/26	Work in class on final written reports
May 4	Final reports due

EXPECTATIONS

1. Class participation. Class participation means completing all readings prior to classes and engaging actively in class discussions. It is essential if you are to develop your abilities to think critically and creatively about ethical issues. Learning is best done actively rather than passively. Class participation is a major part of your grade and is based on (1) class attendance, (2) frequency of contributions, and (3) quality of those contributions. You will receive a poor grade for class participation if at any point you are disruptive to the class (including whispering to a neighbor, putting down someone else's point of view, texting, browsing the internet, repeatedly arriving late to class, etc.). *Absences can be excused in the case of an emergency, provided you inform the instructors beforehand.*
2. Case summaries. In the second part of the course, each student researches and prepares two case summaries. A case summary is a typed 3-page paper that lays out the following: (1) a detailed but succinct scenario in which an ethical dilemma presents itself; (2) an explanation of potential ethical arguments about the case on at least two sides; and (3) an explanation for why the case is particularly illuminating for ethical debate, including how it brings into play different ethical theories. Students are encouraged to engage Rutgers faculty from other departments in order to craft scenarios that are reflective of current issues within a given field.
3. Mock ethics bowl arguments. In the third part of the course, each student engages in two mock ethics bowl teams. Students also take turns acting as moderators. Students are graded on an individual basis on the quality of their oral mock ethics bowl arguments, including (1) depth of understanding of the ethical issues involved; (2) ability to develop an effective argument; (3) ability to respond in detail to opposing arguments; (4) ability to engage in discourse that is respectful, fair, and productive.
4. Planning of and participation in the April Ethics Bowl. Students are required to help plan, execute, and participate in a team at the Ethics Bowl, which takes place toward the end of the semester. Debate performance grades are team-based (not individual), on the same four criteria as listed above for the mock ethics bowl arguments. Teams that progress further in the bowl are likely to receive somewhat higher grades, but not necessarily. Students are graded individually for their contribution to the event planning logistics. Tasks will be assigned in class.
5. Ethics Bowl final report. At the end of the semester, each student turns in an individual written report of 5 pages on their experience of the Ethics Bowl. This report must include the following elements (not necessarily in this order): (1) an analysis of any *one* of the rounds of debate that that student participated in, including a summary of the case, an explanation of the argument made, and a detailed response to at least one of the major counter-arguments encountered; (2) a reflective analysis of what the student learned from participating in the Ethics Bowl, including about the nature of ethical argumentation, their own theoretical ethical orientations, and what it takes to use ethical theory effectively to argue in practical cases.

GRADING

Class participation: 15 points

Case summaries: 20 points (10 points each)

Mock ethics bowl arguments: 20 points (10 points each)

Ethics Bowl planning participation: 15 points

Ethics Bowl performance: 15 points

Ethics Bowl final report: 15 points

Overall course grade (out of 100 points):

A (90 points or higher): outstanding

B+ (85 points) or B (80 points): good

C+ (75 points) or C (70 points): satisfactory

D (60 points): poor; F (fewer than 60 points)

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Attendance:

Please make every effort to be present for class on time. If you do not attend class you will miss information that you will be responsible for on assessments. As this class is dependent on student participation, missed classes will greatly affect your final grade.

Late Assignments:

Unless you have a legitimate excuse, absence, or emergency, you may not make-up any missed work and will thus receive a 0 for that assignment. Late assignments will not be graded and the student will receive a 0 for the assignment turned in late.

Academic Policies:

Each student in this course is expected to abide by the University Code of Academic Integrity (<https://fas.camden.rutgers.edu/faculty/faculty-resources/academic-integrity-policy/>). Any work submitted by a student in this course for academic credit will be the student's own work. Students are highly recommended to educate themselves on the subject (<http://library.camden.rutgers.edu/EducationalModule/Plagiarism/whatisplagiarism.html>).

Students with Disabilities:

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: <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. Please share this letter with your instructors and discuss the accommodations with them as early in your courses as possible. To begin this process, please complete the Registration form on the ODS web site at: <https://ods.rutgers.edu/students/registration-form>.

Rutgers Learning Center

Free academic tutoring is available through the Rutgers Learning Center. For more information regarding subjects being tutored and scheduling appointments please see the Rutgers Learning Center website (<https://learn.camden.rutgers.edu>).

Rutgers Student Affairs

The Division of Student Affairs works to improve the quality of student life on and off campus, and is a very good resource if you are struggling with concerns that are wider than comprehension of the material in this class. For example, it can help with academic advising, health concerns, stress management, new or transfer student issues, international student concerns, and much else. For more information regarding their resources contact the Division of Student Affairs at (856) 225-6050 or visit their website (<https://studentaffairs.camden.rutgers.edu>).