

# GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY

*School of Continuing Studies*

## Introduction to Ethics

Spring 2015

Course # BLHS-100-1

Professor Lewis

Professor Buckley

## SYLLABUS

### Class Information

Time: Tuesday **6:30pm-10:05pm**

Dates: **January 13, 2015-April 21, 2015**

Location: **640 Massachusetts Ave, Room C116**

### Overview

Three quotes by Plato, attributed to Socrates, provide the central themes for this class:

“For we are debating no trivial question, but the manner in which a man ought to live.”  
*The Republic* (c. 360 BC)

“The unexamined life is not worth living.” *The Apology* (c. 395-380 BC)

“[W]e shall be better, braver, and more active men if we believe it right to look for what we don't know than if we believe there is no point in looking because what we don't know we can never discover.” *The Meno* (c. 380 BC)

Based on Professor Lewis's background with the House Ethics Committee, and Professor's Buckley's background and publications in ethnic conflict and bioethics, the class also takes a close look at ethics and politics. Plato and Aristotle believed ethics and politics were closely related. We will reflect on President Kennedy's quote (written in 1955 while he was a senator) from *Profiles in Courage*: “A man does what he must – in spite of personal consequences, in spite of obstacles and dangers and pressures – and that is the basis of all human morality.” Other key themes include the relationship between ethics, religion, and science, theories of moral education, and theories of knowledge.

A signature piece of a Jesuit education is the study of ethics. Ethical issues have been debated and discussed throughout history and many of the issues which confronted society in classical times are still with us today. As society grows more complex, ethical issues also grow more complex. While all core courses in the Bachelor of Arts

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<sup>1</sup> Note that there will be time scheduled on **Saturday TBA 2014**, from 9am-5:00pm for possible make-up classes. Please do not schedule activities for this day, in case make-up classes are necessary.

in Liberal Studies curriculum explore human values and moral issues in particular historical contexts, in this required core course students are introduced to the classical issues in ethics and are required to think, speak and write critically about the following major ethical theories: 1) virtue ethics, 2) stoicism, 3) religious ethics, 4) the social contract, 5) duty ethics, and 6) utilitarianism. We will also study modern and contemporary interpretations of these traditional theories. Finally, the traditional theories are applied to critical ethical issues confronting society today. Applied ethics topics include social justice, abortion, just war, and ethics and politics.

Georgetown is a center for the study of ethics:

Georgetown is the oldest Jesuit university in the country and remains committed to the tenets of a Jesuit education: passion for quality; study of the humanities and sciences; an emphasis on ethics and values; the importance of religious experience; and a commitment to being person-centered.

The School of Continuing Studies offers numerous courses and advanced degrees in ethics and related subjects. The Liberal Studies program offers a concentration in "Ethics and the Professions." A student may also obtain a masters degree in the same concentration, "Ethics and the Professions."

The Kennedy Institute for Ethics is the world's oldest and most comprehensive academic bioethics center.

Dr. Edmund Pellegrino, emeritus professor of medicine and medical ethics, was the Chairman of the President's Council on Bioethics from 2005-2009.

Georgetown offers many social justice and service opportunities. Please see the university website for additional information. The university has an active Center for Social Justice.

Georgetown University Law Center has a well-regarded *Journal of Legal Ethics*.

### **Instructors**

**Paul M. Lewis, Esq.**

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My ethics background started with an emphasis on ethics at Notre Dame Law School and continued during eight years on the staff of the Committee on Standards of Official

Conduct (Ethics Committee) for the U.S. House of Representatives. I was counsel to the Chairman of the Committee my final two years. During my time on the Ethics Committee staff, the House expelled a member for the first time in twenty years (Rep. James Traficant (D-OH) and also resolved a controversial complaint against the House Majority Leader, Rep. Tom DeLay (R-TX). Ethics continued to be an issue in my portfolios as general counsel/minority general counsel to the House Armed Services Committee. Ethics is an important part of my current position regarding detention policy.

I am available before and after class for consultation and you may e-mail questions at any time. I have listed, see above, all my primary e-mails. Much of the day at the Pentagon I am in classified locations where e-mail reception is sporadic, so the best way to contact me is to call my office and send an e-mail to all of my accounts. I am also available by appointment at my office at the Pentagon. I will answer messages as quickly as I can, usually within one business day after receipt.

William Joseph Buckley PhD MA  
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My work in ethics has always been about very practical issues—especially the ways in which personal and policy choices intersect. An ecumenical fellowship commemorating slain seminarian civil rights worker Jonathan M. Daniels, that I received as a student in my hometown of St. Louis (not far from “Ferguson”), supported early work as a volunteer, and then as an organizer of international teams of peace volunteers in Northern Ireland during its civil conflict. This community-based social work vastly deepened our sense of the cultural complexities of ethnic conflict—coming at the tail end of the Vietnam era. Ongoing research into bioethics led to publications and teaching (Georgetown Schools of Medicine and Nursing; Johns Hopkins). Research into how local communities constructively mobilize resources for justice subsequently inspired courses, curricular designed service learning, and publications such as my later work on ethnic conflict and humanitarian intervention entitled *Kosovo: Contending Voices on Balkan Interventions*. My graduate research at the University of Chicago brought an MA and PHD—as well as research trips to Europe (Fulbright, DAAD). Teaching and publications have turned to practical moral reasoning in professions and comparative ethics—both bioethics and end of life decision-making—in a new publication co-edited with Karen Feldt (PhD, RN), *Taking Sides: Clashing Views in Death and Dying*, that newly addresses the timely topic of end-of-life decision-making. My past work in practical ethics has taken interesting turns: hospital ethics committees; a United Nations Commission (on Kosovo); a nationally recognized domestic abuse shelter (Heartly House) and mostly recently my appointment to the Maryland Judicial Ethics Commission.

I welcome any chance to help. I am available before and after class for consultation and you may e-mail questions at any time. I am also available by appointment at SCS. I will answer messages as quickly as I can, usually within one business day after receipt.

## **Learning Objectives**

After completing this course, a student should have a sophisticated understanding regarding the following key issues:

- What is ethics?
- What is your opinion on “the manner in which a man ought to live?”
- What are the major classical ethical theories?
- Are ethics rules objective or subjective?
- What is the proper relationship between self and society?
- What is the relationship between ethics, religion, and science?
- What is the relationship between ethics and politics?
- What is the nature of knowledge?
- Is there an appropriate standard method of analysis for ethical questions?
- What are the main modern and contemporary interpretations of the major ethical theories?

## **Textbooks**

There are no assigned textbooks. All current assigned readings are assigned below and will be posted on Blackboard before the class. If the assigned readings change, you will be notified in class, on Blackboard, and by e-mail.

## **Grading**

Grades will be determined as follows:

- A: 93% to 100%
- A-: 90% to 92%
  
- B+: 87% to 89%
- B: 83% to 86%
- B-: 80% to 82%
  
- C+: 77% to 79%
- C: 73% to 76%
- C-: 70% to 72%
  
- D+: 67% to 69%
- D: 63% to 66%
- F: 62% and below

An “A” constitutes outstanding work; “B” work is good, above what is required by the assignment; “C” is satisfactory, meets basic requirements of the assignment; “D” is a minimal pass; and “F” is failure. Grades are not curved, i.e., you are evaluated based

on your own work and not in comparison to your classmates. I will send an interim evaluation to you after class 7. This is a rigorous and demanding course, with extensive requirements in all phases of the Liberal Studies Program: reading, writing, class participation, and oral presentations.

### **Attendance**

**Attendance is mandatory. Students are expected to attend all sessions of the course. Students who miss more than two class sessions, for whatever reason, may receive a failing grade for the course. To arrive more than twenty minutes late constitutes a full absence.** Any absence, tardiness, or early excusal must be approved in advance by the professor. If you need to miss a class, it is your responsibility to make sure any assignments are submitted on time unless arrangements are made with the instructor in advance. If a class is missed or a student is late, make-up assignments may be assigned.

**Note that there may be make-up classes on a Saturday at the end of the semester.**

### **Assignments**

Anticipated weekly assignments are posted in the course outline at the end of this syllabus. **If the assignment changes from the syllabus, it will be posted on Blackboard at least one week before the class. Check Blackboard and e-mail regularly for updates.** I often add readings from the newspaper after the syllabus has been posted in an effort to keep the class as up-to-date as possible. I will e-mail these last-minute readings, but also check Blackboard to make sure you don't miss anything.

Weekly assignments include extensive readings, a written assignment, and class participation. The readings often require the student to re-read and reflect on the selection. Students will present one formal oral presentation during the semester. The course concludes with a formal paper. Liberal Studies courses engage students in reading, reflection, writing, and discussion. Each of these skills are important elements of this course.

**Class participation: 25%** of the grade. This is a higher percentage than most undergraduate courses at Georgetown, so plan accordingly. You should be prepared to answer questions during class and to discuss the required reading material and the listed discussion questions in detail. As part of class participation, **students are expected to actively participate in each class discussion. As stated above, class absence, early excusal or tardiness will have an impact on this grade. You may expect to be called on at any time to discuss any reading or writing assignment.** Be prepared to discuss the readings, your written assignments, and the discussion topics listed for each class. The discussion question often required preparation on your part. I often call on a student to summarize required readings. Anticipate that you will have to explain/defend your opinions to both the instructor

and other students in the class. If you state an opinion, anticipate the questions you may be asked the instructor or fellow students. **Students are encouraged to ask respectful questions based on the comments of their fellow students or of the instructor. Students are encouraged to actively question each other.**

**Weekly Writing Assignments: 25%** of the course grade. Weekly one page papers emailed to instructors (**250 words maximum**) and weekly online discussion group questions on Blackboard.

**One Oral Presentation** (during class 13): **25%** of the course grade.

**Final Paper (minimum 2500 words): 25%** of the course grade.

### **Submitting Assignments**

All assignments are due by the start of class on the date specified unless otherwise specified. Written assignments must be submitted electronically by e-mail.

**Important: no credit will be given for any assignment that is submitted late without the prior approval of the instructor.** “Prior approval” means that the student must communicate with the instructor **before** the assignment is due. A late assignment will have a least ½ grade deducted (an A paper will be reduced to an A-). Assignments that are significantly late (more than a day) may be reduced a full grade (an A paper will be reduced to a B) or receive no credit, at my discretion. At my discretion, additional work may be assigned instead of reducing the grade.

**All work for this class should be proofread and spell-checked. Times New Roman font (12 point) and Microsoft Word are required for all written assignments. Each written assignment shall include a statement that the Georgetown Honor Code has been complied with for that paper.**

### **Georgetown Honor System**

All students are required to follow Georgetown’s honor code unconditionally. Nothing less can be expected in any class, in particular a class on ethics. All students are encouraged to read the honor code material located at [www.georgetown.edu/honor](http://www.georgetown.edu/honor), including the following documents: Georgetown University Undergraduate Honor System, a letter from President DeGioia on academic integrity, and the article, *What Is Plagiarism*. Submitting material in fulfillment of the requirements of this course means that you have abided by the Georgetown honor pledge: “In the pursuit of the high ideals and rigorous standards of academic life, I commit myself to respect and uphold the Georgetown Honor System: To be honest in any academic endeavor, and to conduct myself honorably, as a responsible member of the Georgetown Community, as we live and work together.” **Each student will be required to acknowledge at the end of each written assignment submitted for this class that she has abided by the honor pledge for that assignment.**

## **Plagiarism**

Plagiarism is the presentation of someone else's ideas or work as your own, or without proper acknowledgement. It is not tolerated. The sources for all information and ideas in your papers must be documented. Details regarding proper citation and what constitutes plagiarism are provided on Blackboard and in the article *What is Plagiarism* (additional readings for class 1). In addition, all quotations must be identified as quotations, using quotation marks and documentation of the sources of the quotation. Anything less than these standards is plagiarism and will be treated as such. Plagiarized work will be reported to Georgetown's Honor Council. If the Council finds the work has been plagiarized, the work will receive an "F" for the paper as a first offense; a second plagiarism will earn an "F" for the course.

This course uses "SafeAssign," which is a plagiarism prevention service that is used at the discretion of each course Instructor in accordance with university procedures and the Georgetown University Honors System.

## **Disabilities**

If you are a student with a documented disability who requires accommodations or if you think you may have a disability and want to inquire about accommodations, please contact the Academic Resource Center at 202 687-8354 or [arc@georgetown.edu](mailto:arc@georgetown.edu). All such accommodations must be arranged through the Center, not directly with the professor.

## **Religious Observations**

Georgetown University promotes respect for all religions. Any student who is unable to attend classes or to participate in any examination, presentation, or assignment on a given day because of the observance of a major religious holiday (see below) or related travel shall be excused and provided with the opportunity to make up, without unreasonable burden, any work that has been missed for this reason and shall not in any other way be penalized for the absence or rescheduled work. Students will remain responsible for all assigned work. Students should notify professors in writing at the beginning of the semester of religious observances that conflict with their classes. The Office of the Provost, in consultation with Campus Ministry and the Registrar, will publish, before classes begin for a given term, a list of major religious holidays likely to affect Georgetown students. The Provost and the Main Campus Executive Faculty encourage faculty to accommodate students whose bona fide religious observances in other ways impede normal participation in a course. Students who cannot be accommodated should discuss the matter with an advising dean.

## **Other Student Resources**

There are many health, safety, and wellness services offered to students at Georgetown.

Georgetown has a wellness website at <http://wellness.georgetown.edu> that I recommend bookmarking and visiting often. In addition, on the main Georgetown website ([www.georgetown.edu](http://www.georgetown.edu)), under the link for Campus and Community, there are additional links for health services, counseling services, the Academic Resource Center, spirituality, student services, social justice, arts, and culture. Also visit [be.georgetown.edu](http://be.georgetown.edu) and look under the practicalities link.

### **Inclement Weather and Other Emergencies**

During inclement weather or other emergencies, check <http://preparedness.georgetown.edu> or call (202) 687-7669 for information on whether the university is open. If the university is open, this class will meet. If the university is closed, this class will not meet, **but written assignments will be due as usual**. You may e-mail or call me for additional information. The university recently has acquired the capability to send text messages and recorded messages about emergencies to cell phones and other mobile devices. Sign up at Student Access +.

## **COURSE OUTLINE AND ASSIGNMENTS**

**The course outline is a tentative schedule of assignments, readings, and topics that may be covered during the semester. Check Blackboard and e-mail regularly for updates. If there are any changes to the syllabus, the specific assignment for each class will be posted at least one week in advance of that class. Note that there are reading assignments for the first class.**

### **Class 1 (January 13, 2015): Introduction**

#### Required Readings

- Jim Valvano, *Don't Ever Give Up* (1993)
- Georgetown Honor Pledge
- A. H. Maslow, *A Theory of Human Motivation* (1943)
- Plato, *The Republic* (c. 360 BC)(selections)
- Plato, *Phaedras* (c. 370 BC) (selections)
- President George W. Bush, *Bush Discusses Stem Cell Research*, August 9, 2001

### **Class 2 (January 20, 2015): Wisdom**

#### Required Readings

- Plato, *Apology* (c. 395-80 BC)
- Photo: *Earthrise* (1968)
- Will Durant, *What is Wisdom?* (1957)
- Student Questionnaire and Basic Moral Orientation
- William Styron, *Sophie's Choice* (1979)(selections and video)



### Written Assignments

- Student Questionnaire and Basic Moral Orientation
- One page essay (250 words maximum): After reading all the week's required readings, what is your definition of wisdom?
- Online Group Discussion (Blackboard)

### **Class 3 (January 27, 2015): Justice**

#### Required Readings

- Plato, *The Republic* (c. 360 BC)(selections)
- Jamie Stiehm, *Office Rug Gets History Wrong*, Washington Post, September 4, 2010

#### Written Assignments

- One page essay (250 words maximum): After reading all the week's required readings, what is your definition of justice?
- Online Group Discussion (BlackBoard)

### **Class 4 (February 3, 2015): Courage and Virtue Ethics**

#### Reading Assignments

- Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* (c. 350 BC)(selections)
- Senator John McCain, *In Search of Courage* (2004)

#### Written Assignments

- One page essay (250 words maximum): After reading all the week's required readings, what is your definition of courage?
- Online Group Discussion (BlackBoard)

### **Class 5 (February 10, 2015): Temperance**

#### Reading Assignments

- Epictetus, *Enchiridion* (c. 135 AD)
- Marcus Aurelius, *Meditations* (c. 170-180 AD)(selections)
- John Lennon and Paul McCartney, *I'm a Loser* (1964)
- Vice Admiral James B. Stockdale, *Courage Under Fire: Testing Epictetus's Doctrines in a Laboratory of Human Behavior* (1993)

#### Written Assignments

- One page essay (250 words maximum): After reading all the week's required readings, what is your definition of temperance? Is stoicism a practical ethical system? Is the golden rule a practical theory of ethics?
- Online Group Discussion (Blackboard)

### **Class 6 (February 17, 2015): Piety**

#### Reading Assignments

- Plato, *Euthyphro* (c. 380 BC)(selections)
- *Book of Exodus*, Chapter 20 (Ten Commandments) (c.600-500BC)
- C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (1952)(selections)
- *Gospel of Matthew*, Chapter 5:1-12 (Sermon on the Mount)(c. 1<sup>st</sup> century AD)
- Bertrand Russell, *A Free Man's Worship* (1903)(transcript and video selections)
- Rev. James Martin, SJ, *The Easiest Prayer*, September 2007

#### Written Assignments

- One page essay (250 words maximum): After reading all the week's required readings, what is your definition of piety?
- Online Group Discussion (BlackBoard)

### **Class 7 (February 24, 2015) : The Social Contract and Natural Rights**

#### Reading Assignments

- Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan* (1651)(selections)
- Declaration of Independence (1776)
- UN Universal Declaration on Human Rights (1948)
- Dr. Martin Luther King, *Letter From A Birmingham Jail* (1963)
- George Will, *Rage of the Rights Talkers*, Washington Post, October 11, 2009

#### Written Assignments

- One page essay (250 words maximum): What is the proper balance between self and society?
- Online Group Discussion (Blackboard)

### **Class 8 (March 3, 2015): Duty Ethics and Utilitarianism**

#### Reading Assignments

- Will Durant, *The Story of Philosophy, Chapter 6- Kant and German Idealism* (1926)
- Immanuel Kant, *Fundamental Principles of the Metaphysics of Morals* (1785) (selections)

- Jeremy Bentham: *Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation* (1780) (selections)
- John Stuart Mill, *Utilitarianism* (1863) (selections)
- Bernard Williams, *A Critique on Utilitarianism* (1973)

#### Written Assignments

- One page essay (250 words maximum): Which is the more practical ethical theory: duty ethics or utilitarianism?
- Online Group Discussion (Blackboard)

#### **No Class: March 10, 2014: Spring Break**

#### **Class 9 (March 17, 2015): Social Justice**

##### Assignments (required)

- Senator Robert F. Kennedy, *Day of Affirmation Address*, June 6, 1966
- Pope Francis, *Apostolic Exhortation Evangelii Gaudium*, Ch. II, Sec. 1, November 2013
- UN Millennium Development Goals and Targets (2000)(each student will be assigned one Goal/Target to summarize and update)
- Peter Singer, *The Singer Solution to World Poverty*, New York Times Magazine (September 9, 1999)
- Nicholas Kristof, *Triumph of a Dreamer*, New York Times, November 14, 2009
- Michael Gerson, *Ethical Choices Surround a Potential Ebola Vaccine*, *Washington Post*, October 6, 2014

#### Written Assignments

- One page essay (250 words maximum): What is the most important UN Millennium Development Goal and how can it most ethically be achieved?
- Online Group Discussions (BlackBoard)

#### **Class 10 (March 24, 2015): Beginning and End of Life Decision-Making: Abortion and Suicide**

##### Reading Assignments

- *Roe v. Wade*, 410 US 113 (1973)
- *Doe v. Bolton*, 410 U.S. 179 (1973)(selections)
- Each student will be assigned one portion of the above cases to summarize and present to the class (TBA)
- **Additional readings on suicide will be posted on Blackboard.**

### Written Assignments and Discussion Board

- One page essay (250 words maximum): Write a one page summary of your decision in *Roe* if you were a member of the Supreme Court in 1973? Would it change if you were deciding the case today?
- Online Group Discussion (BlackBoard)

### **Class 11 (March 31, 2015): Just War**

#### Reading Assignments

- James Turner Johnson, *Just War, As it Was and Is*, First Things (January 2005)
- St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, (1265-74)(selections)
- President John F. Kennedy, *Address to the Nation* (October 22, 1962)(transcript and video)
- U.S. Catholic Bishops Pastoral Letter on War and Peace (1983)
- *Hamdi v. Rumsfeld*, 542 U.S. 507 (2004)(selections)
- Charles Krauthammer, *Torture? No. Except....* Washington Post, May 1, 2009
- President Barack Obama, *Nobel Lecture*, December 10, 2009
- David Luban, *What Would Augustine Do? The President, Drones, and Just War Theory*, Boston Review Online, June 6, 2012 (each student will be assigned an article cited in the reading to discuss)
- White House Fact Sheet on Drones and additional readings

### Written Assignments and Discussion Board

- One page essay (250 words maximum): Is warfare just?
- Online Group Discussion (Blackboard)
- Select Topic for Oral Presentation (email instructor)

### **Class 12 (April 7, 2015): Ethics and Politics**

#### Reading Assignments

- Senator Paul Douglas, *Ethics in Government* (1952)(selections)
- Senator John F. Kennedy, *Profiles in Courage* (1955)(selections)(each student will be assigned a chapter to discuss)
- Michael Walzer, *Political Action: The Problem of Dirty Hands* (1973)
- U.S. House of Representatives Code of Official Conduct (1968)
- U.S. House of Representatives, *In the Matter of Representative James Traficant*, (2002) (selections)
- David Brooks, *The Case For Low Ideals*, New York Times, October 16, 2014

### Written Assignments and Discussion Board

- One page essay (250 words maximum): What are the ethical strengths and weaknesses of modern electoral politics?
- Online Group Discussions (Blackboard)
- Outline of oral presentation (email instructor)

### **Class 13 (April 14, 2015): Oral Presentations on Modern Ethics**

#### Reading Assignments

- Read background material and prepare a ten minute oral presentation on a modern ethical philosopher, writer, or political leader. Select authors or topics from the following:
  - A reading selection listed on Blackboard;
  - List of modern ethical philosophers on Blackboard;
  - List of modern ethical leaders on Blackboard; or
  - List of Nobel Peace Prize winners on Blackboard; or
  - Consult with instructor if you have another choice

#### Oral Presentation (fifteen minutes)

- Introduction and why you chose this person or topic (30 seconds)
- Biography of writer or main proponent of theory (2 minutes)
- Summarize the main ethical point the writer makes in the selection (3 minutes)
  - List key facts, key issues, list ethical theories applied, and writer's conclusion
- Analyze strength and weaknesses of the writer's theory (2 minutes)
- State your opinion (2 minutes)
- Conclusion (30 seconds)
- Be prepared to answer questions from class and instructor (5 minutes)

### **Class 14 (April 21, 2015): Conclusion**

- Robert Bolt, *A Man For All Seasons* (1960)(selections and video)(each student will be assigned a character to discuss)
- James Rachels, *What Would a Satisfactory Moral Theory Be Like?*(2009)
- Randy Pausch, *The Last Lecture*, (2008) (selections)
- Will Durant, *We Have a Right to Be Happy Today* (1958)

#### Written Assignments

- Outline of final paper (email instructor)

### **Final Paper (TBA)**

