

**PPA/PS 9413**  
**Normative Analysis of American Public Policy**  
**Mississippi State University**  
**(Spring 2005)**  
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Office Hours: By Appointment.  
Class Meets TH 6-9

*Any professor who, subject to the restraints of common sense and common decency, does not seize every opportunity to offend the sensibilities of his students is insulting and cheating them, and is no college professor at all.*

- Eugene Genovese

**Course Objectives**

I kept Professor Duncan’s introduction (above) because I agree completely. Terms like value systems, preferences, cultural values, and the like often hide details that are essential in understanding politics, American or otherwise. ‘Normative questions’ are often avoided in political and academic discourse to avoid offending people by questioning their beliefs, even if only to identify what they are. Normative analysis seeks to shed light on the origins, definition, and implications of holding a particular point of view. This course will examine some of the major policy areas in American politics with an eye to their normative foundations. The texts have been chosen to illustrate conceptual or factual points, and their relevance to matters that are hotly debated in the United States. (Do not assume that I agree with everything that I assign, or that your grade depends on reaching pre-determined conclusions in your papers and exams.)

This course was designed to accomplish two broad tasks. First, this course is designed to acquaint students of American politics and public policy with a systematic overview of various schools of thought concerning moral theory and the problems they address. Second, the course will illustrate how specific normative theories have applied to political decisions and policy choices through an examination of specific case studies. Ultimately, I hope that students will gain a deeper understanding of the content of political discourse and public policy as well as a set of tools for analyzing politics.

**Requirements**

Attendance is required. The course is a seminar. Active class participation will contribute to the students’ grades. Students are expected to have completed all assigned readings before class. Silence will be regarded as a lack of preparation.

(1) Mid-Term Examination.....	30%
(2) Two Short Essays (15pts. each, 6 page maximum).....	30%
(1) Paper.....	30%
Class Participation.....	<u>10%</u>
	100%

### **Attendance Policy**

Any student with more than 1 absence will lose half of participation credit. Any student with more than 2 absences will lose all participation credit. Excused absences, following university policy, are excluded from these calculations.

### **Cheating and Plagiarism**

According to lore, Woody Allen was suspended from NYU for allegedly “looking into his neighbor’s soul” during an exam. The only soul searching allowed in this class will be thine own. Students are responsible for making themselves aware of university policy. For details, see: <http://www.msstate.edu/dept/audit/1207.html> . We will use APA Style for this course.

### **Required Texts (Recommended for Purchase)**

- Bedau, Hugo Adam, Paul Cassell, Paul G. Cassell. *Debating the Death Penalty: Should America Have Capital Punishment? : The Experts on Both Sides Make Their Best Case*. Oxford University Press, 2003. ISBN: 0195169832
- Elshtain, Jean Bethke. *Real Politics*, Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000. ISBN: 0801856000
- Fraser, Steven, ed. *The Bell Curve Wars: Race Intelligence and the Future of America*, Basic Books; 1995, ISBN: 0465006930
- Gardner, Howard, Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, William Damon. *Good Work: When Excellence and Ethics Meet*. Basic Books , 2002. ISBN: 0465026087
- Lambert, Frank *The Founding Fathers and the Place of Religion in America*. Princeton University Press, 2003. ISBN: 0691088292
- MacIntyre, Alasdair. *After Virtue*. 2nd Edition Publisher: University of Notre Dame Press; 2nd edition, 1984, ISBN: 0268006113
- \*MacIntyre, Alasdair. *Is Patriotism a Virtue?* University of Kansas Press, 1984, ISBN 94141627
- Murray, Alan. *Showdown at Gucci Gulch*, Vintage; Reprint edition, 1988, ISBN: 0394758110
- Singer, P. W. *Corporate Warriors: The Rise of the Privatized Military Industry* (Cornell Studies in Security Affairs) Cornell University Press, 2004, ISBN: 0801489156
- Wright, Robert. *The Moral Animal : Why We Are, the Way We Are: The New Science of Evolutionary Psychology*. Vintage; Reprint edition, 1995. ISBN: 0679763996

\*Copy to be distributed in class; must be returned.

### **On Reserve (Personal Copy)**

- Benjamin, Martin. *Splitting then Difference: Compromise and Integrity in Ethics and Politics*, University Press of Kansas, 1990.
- Davis, James R. *Fortune's Warriors: Private Armies and the New World Order*. Douglas & McIntyre, 2002.
- Fishkin, James S. *Justice, Equal Opportunity and the Family*, Yale University Press, 1983.
- Gutmann, Amy and Dennis F. Thompson. *Ethics and Politics: Cases and Comments*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition.
- Higham, Charles. *Trading with the Enemy: An Exposé of the Nazi American Money Plot, 1933-1949*. Doubleday, 1982
- Olson, Mancur. *The Rise and Decline of Nations: Economic Growth, Stagflation, and Social Rigidities*. Yale University Press; Reprint edition, 1984. ISBN: 0300030797
- Rawls, John. *A Theory of Justice*, Belknap Press; Revised edition, 1999.
- Rich, Michael J. *Federal Policymaking and the Poor*. Princeton University Press, 1993.

Rokeach, Milton. *The Open and Closed Mind: Investigations into the Nature of Belief Systems and Personality Systems*, Basic Books, 1960.

Seligman, Martin E.P. *What You Can Change*, Ballentine Books, 1993.

Sommers, Christina, and Fred Sommers: *Virtue and Vice in Everyday Life*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition

Wakin, Malham M., *War, Morality and the Military Profession*, Westview, 1979.

## **Course Outline and Reading Assignments**

### **I. Questions of Good and Evil (Jan. 13)**

- Sommers, Chapter 1

### **II. Moral Doctrine, Moral Theory, and Relativism (Jan. 20 and 27)**

- MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, Chapters 1-9
- MacIntyre, "Is Patriotism a Virtue?"
- Lambert, *Founding Fathers and the Place of Religion in America*, Chapters 1 – 7
- Benjamin, *Splitting the Difference* (Selections)

### **III. Virtue and Vice (Feb. 3 and 10)**

- Sommers chapters 3 - 6
- MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, Chapters 10-19
- Lambert, *Founding Fathers and the Place of Religion in America*, Chapters 8 - 10
- Machiavelli, *The Prince* (selections)
- Rand, *The Virtue of Selfishness* (selections)

### **V. Moral Education, the Individual and Institutions (Feb. 17 and 24)**

- Aristotle, *The Nichomachean Ethics*: <http://classics.mit.edu/Aristotle/nicomachaen.html> (Books VII – X)
- Gardner, et al., *Good Work*, Chapters 1- 11
- Rokeach, *The Open and Closed Mind* (Selections)
- Seligman, *What You Can Change*, Chapters 1- 15
- Wright, *The Moral Animal*, Chapters 1-18
- Benjamin, *Splitting the Difference* (Selections)

## **Mid-Term February 24**

### **VI. The State and Violence (March 3)**

- Gutmann Chapter 1
- Wakin, Part II (Selections)
- Singer, *Corporate Warriors*, Chapters 1-15
- Davis, *Fortune's Warriors* (Selections)
- Uniform Code of Military Justice (Selections)

## **No Class March 17 (Spring Break)**

## **VII. Lying, Corruption, and Whistle-blowing (March 24)**

- Gutmann chapters 2, 3 & 4
- The Prince (selections) by Machiavelli
- The Republic (selections) by Plato
- Thoreau, Henry David: Civil Disobedience
- Higham, Charles. Trading with the Enemy (Selections)
- Murray, Showdown at Gucci Gulch (Selections)

### **March 24 Second Paper Due**

## **VIII. Property, Welfare and Distributive Justice (March 31)**

- Locke, John. Second Treatise on Government,  
<http://www.ecn.bris.ac.uk/het/locke/government.pdf>
- A Theory of Justice (selections) by John Rawls
- Fishkin, Justice, Equal Opportunity, and the Family (Selections)
- Olsen, The Rise and Decline of Nations (Selections)
- Rich, Federal Policymaking and the Poor (Selections)

## **IX. Equality of Opportunity, Gender, Race, and Affirmative Action (April 7 and 14)**

- Elstain, Real Politics, Chapters 1-23
- Fraser, Bell Curve Wars (Selections)
- Fishkin, Justice, Equal Opportunity and the Family (Selections)
- Bakke v. Board of Regents
- Hopwood v. The University of Texas

## **X. Life and Death: Abortion, Capital Punishment, and Euthanasia (April 21 and 29)**

- Bedau, et all. Debating the Death Penalty (Selections)
- Gutmann Chapter 9
- "Hobbes' Children: Abortion, Infanticide, and Rights" by Philip Abbott
- Foot "Euthanasia"
- Gregg v. Georgia (opinions by Justice Stewart and Justice Marshall)
- Leiser, Capital Punishment (selections)
- Camus, "Reflections on the Guillotine"
- Benjamin, Splitting the Difference (Selections)
- Seligman, What You Can Change (Selections)

### **April 29 Final Paper Due**