

P242 Applied Ethics: Ethics Bowl<sup>1</sup>  
M/T/W/R 1:30PM-3:20PM EST [Online, Synchronous](#)

**Instructor**

Elizabeth Cargile Williams

Office: <https://iu.zoom.us/j/88400374540>

Office Hours: Mondays and Wednesdays 3:30PM-4:30PM, and by appointment  
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**Course Description**

Through critically analyzing a variety of case studies, students will develop their ethical reasoning skills and learn to engage in respectful, productive ethical discourse about controversial topics that span a wide variety of disciplines. Students will be provided methodological tools for analysis that will help with identifying the morally relevant features of a case, asking good questions that get at the core moral issues that the case raises, brainstorming creative solutions to problems, applying theoretical moral considerations to a case, and formulating arguments to answer pressing ethical questions. Students will also practice participating in collective ethical inquiry and discussion and will learn how to productively engage in conversations about difficult ethical topics. The skills and values taught in this course are in line with those promoted by the Intercollegiate Ethics Bowl.

**Learning Objectives**

- (1) To help students engage in thoughtful, critical discussion of contemporary moral cases.
- (2) To give students the methodological tools to analyze case studies and develop their own arguments and views.
- (3) To help students gain a basic understanding of major ethical theories and apply that understanding to pick out morally relevant aspects of case studies.
- (4) To develop students' skills in analytical and argumentative writing as well as in oral communication.
- (5) To allow students to practice engaging in difficult ethical conversations and to learn how to share their own arguments, receive constructive criticism from others, listen carefully and charitably to arguments given by others, and respond constructively to disagreement.
- (6) To give students the general skills needed to be good democratic citizens and participants in our collective ethical discourse.
- (7) To assemble a talented and dedicated Ethics Bowl team and to prepare that team to compete at a high level.

**General Education**

This course satisfies the Arts and Humanities Common Ground Breadth of Inquiry Requirement (part of the IU General Education Requirements). The course addresses the following General Education Arts and Humanities learning goals:

- the ability to develop arguments, ideas, and opinions about forms of human expression, grounded in rational analysis and in an understanding of and respect for the historical context of expressions and artifacts, and to express these ideas in written and/or oral form;

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<sup>1</sup> Syllabus may be revised by instructor at any point with sufficient notice given.

- the ability to explore one's own identity within prior and current intellectual, aesthetic, and cultural frameworks.

### **Required Text**

There is no required text for this course. All readings or media will be made available on canvas.

### **Class Etiquette**

1. This class is a discussion-based class. Your participation is required to make the class work. Come to class ready to discuss the material, ask questions, and creatively think about complex ethical issues.
2. Keep your zoom camera on except for short periods in which you need to leave your computer. Have your microphone ready to be able to contribute to discussion.
3. Be prompt and attentive.
4. Be *respectful* and *charitable* to your classmates. I encourage you to think critically about the arguments that you and that your classmates will advance, but before you raise your critique, make sure you understand the argument and that you are respectful. If you're unsure how to do this, try the following kinds of responses: "Do you mean to say \_? If so, I'm worried that \_." "\_ seems like a really good idea, but maybe we need to refine it by \_." "What do you think about a case in which \_?"
5. Be aware of your level of participation in the classroom. If you tend to speak a lot, make sure you are giving space to your other classmates to contribute. If you don't speak up a lot, try to contribute more to class so more perspectives are heard.
6. If you need to leave class early or miss class for some reason, please let me know ahead of time. I will work with you to keep you caught up on the material.

### **Course Feedback**

At different points in the course, I will do anonymous check ins with you to see how the course is going – what you are enjoying, what you are finding difficult, etc. However, please feel free to email me if you have a problem that cannot be solved by checking canvas and the syllabus or a request to spend some time looking at a particular topic. I may not agree with you about what is to be done or be able to incorporate your suggestions, but I will give your thoughts serious consideration. I am committed to creating and sustaining a supportive environment for all students. Absolutely feel more than free to talk with me about things I can do to make the classroom experience more inclusive.

### **Assignments**

Late assignments will be lowered one third of a letter grade per day late and will not be accepted four days after the assignment due date. Extensions are much more likely to be granted in advance of the deadline.

#### *Research Assignment: (10%)*

Starting week 4, 5 students will complete a short research assignment before each day of class that will be helpful for the last two papers. Each student will complete this assignment twice. I will have a sign-up sheet so that individuals can choose which cases they would like to research.

To complete this assignment, students 1) will find a source and 2) explain both why it is a good source (for the purposes of this class) and 3) how it helps to answer a question about the case.

The explanation of why it is a good source should be 2-3 sentences, and the explanation of how it helps to answer a question about the case should be paragraph-length.

*Participation: (10%)*

In order to get full participation credit, students must regularly participate in and contribute to small group discussion. Students are strongly encouraged to participate in discussion at the large class level as well.

*Paper 1: (15%)*

Students will give a brief summary of each of the three main ethical theories and, using a case and question that we have discussed in class, will explain what answer each of the three main ethical theories would give. Finally, the paper will gesture towards some conclusion about which ethical theory best handles the case and why. 1250-1500 words.

*Paper 2: (15%)*

Students will summarize either Rini's or Page's structural solutions to the problems of fake news and unjust police killings, respectively. Students will then evaluate Rini's and Page's solutions in light of Rawls' theory of justice. Finally, students will discuss the difference between individual and institutional solutions to these problems and gesture towards some answer as to whether individual or institutional solutions are more important for solving these problems. 1250-1500 words.

*Paper 3: (15%)*

Students will pick one of the case studies from Week 4, identify a question the case raises, give a clear answer to that question, provide a cogent and informed argument that supports that answer (drawing on at least one ethical theory we have discussed in class), and address at least two opposing perspectives constructively and charitably. 1250-1500 words.

*Final Paper, Part 1: (15%)*

Students will write a contemporary applied ethics article that draws the reader in, constructs the main facts of the case, raises a central ethical question, answers that question, and considers opposing viewpoints charitably and constructively. This paper should be written as if for a public audience. 1250-1500 words.

*Final Paper, Part 2: (20%)*

This will be a revised version of the previous paper. 1250-1500 words.

## **Academic Integrity**

As a student at IU, you are expected to adhere to the standards and policies detailed in the [Code of Student Rights, Responsibilities, and Conduct \(Code\)](#). When you submit an assignment with your name on it, you are signifying that the work contained therein is yours, unless otherwise cited or referenced. Any ideas or materials taken from another source for either written or oral use must be fully acknowledged. All suspected violations of the *Code* will be reported to the Dean of Students and handled according to University policies. Sanctions for academic misconduct may include a failing grade on the assignment, reduction in your final course grade, and a failing grade in the course, among other possibilities. If you are unsure about the expectations for completing an assignment or taking a test or exam, be sure to seek clarification beforehand.

### **Disability Accommodations**

IU is committed to providing an equal educational opportunity for all students. If you have a documented physical, psychological, or learning disability on file with the Department of Disabled Services and/or Counseling and Psychological Services, you may be eligible for reasonable academic accommodations to help you succeed in this course. DSS establishes appropriate accommodations for the course, and I will follow these accommodations.

### **Other Accommodations**

I will work with and appropriately accommodate students to see to it that they can succeed in the course while committing to religious observances and appropriately committing to University extracurricular activities. Please email me in the first two weeks of the semester if any such thing may conflict with an obligation for this course. For more information on accommodations for religious observances, see [here](#).

### **Bias-Based Incident Reporting**

Bias-based incident reports can be made by students, faculty and staff. Any act of discrimination or harassment based on race, ethnicity, religious affiliation, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation or disability can be reported through any of the options: 1) email [biasincident@indiana.edu](mailto:biasincident@indiana.edu) or [incident@indiana.edu](mailto:incident@indiana.edu); 2) call the Dean of Students Office at (812) 855-8188 or 3) use the IU mobile App ([m.iu.edu](http://m.iu.edu)). Reports can be made anonymously.

### **Sexual Misconduct and Title IX**

As your instructor, one of my responsibilities is to create a positive learning environment for all students. IU policy prohibits sexual misconduct in any form, including sexual harassment, sexual assault, stalking, sexual exploitation, and dating and domestic violence. If you have experienced sexual misconduct, or know someone who has, the University can help. If you are seeking help and would like to speak to someone confidentially, you can make an appointment with the IU Sexual Assault Crisis Services at 812- 855-5711 or contact a Confidential Victim Advocate at 812-856-2469 or [cva@indiana.edu](mailto:cva@indiana.edu).

It is also important that you know that University policy requires me to share certain information brought to my attention about potential sexual misconduct, with the campus Deputy Sexual Misconduct & Title IX Coordinator or the University Sexual Misconduct & Title IX Coordinator. In that event, those individuals will work to ensure that appropriate measures are taken and resources are made available. Protecting student privacy is of utmost concern, and information will only be shared with those that need to know to ensure the University can respond and assist. I encourage you to visit [stopsexualviolence.iu.edu](http://stopsexualviolence.iu.edu) to learn more.

### **Grades**

Assignments will be graded on the following scale:

93-100: A	87-89: B+	77-79: C+	67-69: D+	0-59: F
90-92: A-	84-86: B	74-76: C	64-66: D	
	80-83: B-	70-73: C-	60-63: D-	

### **Incompletes**

Concerning the final grade of “Incomplete,” the university states the following: “The grade of Incomplete used on the final grade reports indicates that the work is satisfactory as of the end of the semester but has not been completed. The grade of Incomplete may be given only when the

completed portion of a student's work in the course is of passing quality. Instructors may award the grade of Incomplete upon a showing of such hardship to a student as would render it unjust to hold the student to the time limits previously fixed for the completion of his/her work." Should some emergency or unforeseen hardship arise that impedes your ability to complete the work for this course by the end of the semester, you should let me know right away. While it is impossible to codify the full range of circumstances that would call for an Incomplete, such circumstances may involve family illness or death, documented psychological difficulties, or sudden duress pertaining to finances or employment.

### **Schedule and Readings**

Week 1: Introduction, Basic Elements of Moral Reasoning

T 5/10: Introduction

*Reading:* None

W 5/11: Logic and Reasoning

*Reading:* Hardegree, "Symbolic Logic," Sections 1, 2, 3, 6, and part of Section 8 (start with "In the remainder of the present section," on p. 15 and read to the end of the Section).

<https://courses.umass.edu/phil110-gmh/text/c01.pdf>

R 5/12: Ethical Theory: An Overview

*Reading:* Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy entry on "Ethics," Parts 2 & 3 ("Normative Ethics" & "Applied Ethics") <https://iep.utm.edu/ethics/>

Week 2: Core Ethical Theories

M 5/16: Virtue Ethics

*Reading:* Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Selection

T 5/17: Deontology

*Reading:* Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, Selection

W 5/18: Utilitarianism

*Reading:* Bentham, "An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation," Chapters I-IV <https://www.reed.edu/humanities/hum220/syllabus/2010-11/Bentham-Principles.pdf>

R 5/19: Contract Theory

*Reading:* SEP Article on "John Rawls," Sections 4-4.8

<https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/rawls/#JusFaiJusWitLibSoc>

### ***Paper 1 Due at 11:59PM on Friday, 5/20***

Week 3: Professional Applied Ethics

M 5/23: Social Media

*Reading:* Regina Rini, "Fake News and Partisan Epistemology"

T 5/24: Social Media, cont.

W 5/25: Reparations

*Reading:* Jennifer Page, "Reparations for Police Killings"

R 5/27: Reparations, cont.

***Paper 2 Due at 11:59PM on Friday, 5/27***

Week 4: Case Studies

M 5/30: NO CLASS, MEMORIAL DAY

T 5/31: Case Study: Critical Race Theory

W 6/1: Case Study: Trans Youth and Medical Care

R 6/2: Case Study: Cancel Culture

***Paper 3 Due at 11:59PM on Friday, 6/3***

Week 5: Case Studies

M 6/6: Case Study: TBD

T 6/7: Case Study: TBD

W 6/8: Case Study: TBD

R 6/9: Case Study: TBD

***Final Paper, First Draft Due at 11:59PM on Friday, 6/10***

Week 6: Case Studies

M 6/13: Case Study: TBD

T 6/14: Case Study: TBD

W 6/15: Case Study: TBD

R 6/16: Final Exam (There is *no* exam for this course, only the final paper.)

***Final Paper, Revised Draft Due at 3:20PM on Thursday, 6/16***

**If you like philosophy, you might also like:**

- *The Good Place* – Comedy series about ethics and the afterlife. The writers consulted philosophy professors in ethics, and the show's philosophy is on point.
- *Existential Comics* – <https://existentialcomics.com>
- *Heretics!* – A graphic novel about 17<sup>th</sup> century Western philosophy and the church.
- *Logicomix* – A graphic novel about early 20<sup>th</sup> century Western philosophy.