VALUES AND ETHICS IN PUBLIC POLICY
PubPol 580
Fall 2015

Class Meetings: T/Th 2:30-4 pm
Class Location: 1120 Weill Hall

Instructor: Joy Rohde
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COURSE DESCRIPTION
We often think of policy analysis as a technical field in which we apply analytical tools to determine the most effective and efficient way to achieve policy goals. However, every time we enter the policy arena we confront normative questions: what should our policy goals be? What is the public good? And how do we make decisions when the normative goals of policies themselves conflict?

This course is based on the conviction that understanding the moral and ethical dimensions of politics and public policy is a skill necessary to successful policy analysis and a crucial foundation for any policy career. This course will familiarize you with a set of concepts, frameworks, and approaches for reasoning, arguing, and writing about the normative issues that confront people working in public policy. Our approach will be case-based. We will connect concepts from political philosophy and applied ethics—including utility, liberty, justice, and rights—to unpack and assess real-world challenges that face policy analysts and policymakers. Our examination will span contentious topics from a variety of policy arenas, including health, education, environment, poverty, bioethics, science and technology, foreign aid, and armed conflict.

Students who take this course will:
- Gain an understanding of key concepts in applied ethics, including the ethics of professional practice;
- Develop and demonstrate the ability to think in a sophisticated and reflective manner about the values and goals of public policies in a variety of arenas;
- Develop the ability to articulate one’s own values and engage the normative claims of others;
- Develop and demonstrate the ability to communicate concisely and persuasively, both orally and in writing, about the moral and ethical dimensions of politics and public policy; and
- Develop the ability to integrate ethical considerations into decision-making.
COURSE REQUIREMENTS

1. **Class preparation, attendance, and participation (25%)**. This course is heavily discussion-based. It demands that we each engage with complicated, controversial, and sensitive issues. Our class time will be devoted almost entirely to discussion. Active engagement with the reading material and thoughtful participation in discussions are crucial to the success of the course as well as to your own success in it. Come to class having done the reading and ready to talk to and learn from each other. Your participation grade will be based on a number of factors. Broadly speaking, we will measure the following three categories:
   a. Evidence of preparation—i.e. evidence that you have completed and reflected upon the readings prior to class;
   b. Evidence of engagement in the classroom through regular, quality contributions to discussion and in-class exercises, as well as attentive and respectful listening and responding to peers. Formal debates and other structured in-class exercises are included in this part of your grade.
   c. Performance on **occasional reading responses**. From time to time, I will begin class by asking you to spend 10-15 minutes writing a response to or reflection on the reading, guided by a question I will provide. These responses will help you analyze and critically respond to our class readings. They will be graded (check plus, check, check minus) according to your engagement with the concepts and cases discussed in the reading.

I recognize that some students find it difficult to speak in large classes. This is a skill you should work on because speaking in large groups is important in many policymaking contexts. For those who are reluctant to speak up, participation may also include: emails to the instructor or GSI about topics discussed in class; attendance at the instructor’s or GSI’s office hours to discuss issues raised in the course; and posts on the class forum relevant to course issues and materials, for example posting news articles or other internet links about relevant issues, with your insightful commentary.

2. **Being “On Call” (10%)**. Once a term, you will be “on call” in class along with two or three of your classmates. Typically, you will prepare a case to present to the class and lead discussion of the case. Your case should unpack the ethical questions raised by the topic for the day, offer a new twist on those questions, or examine the ethical questions under consideration in a different context (i.e., a different national context). You will have thirty minutes of class time for this exercise.

3. **Writing Assignments (65%)**
   a. Op-Ed (20%), due October 16; approx. 750 words.
   b. Memo #1 (20%), due November 20; approx. 800 words.
   c. Memo #2 (25%), due December 17 by 4:30 pm in hardcopy in Joy’s office or mailbox, 1500 words max.

COURSE POLICIES

1. Attendance: Because this course depends heavily upon participation, I expect students to make every effort to attend all class sessions. Please notify the GSI in advance if you will miss class. Repeated absences will negatively affect your grade.

2. Late assignments: Extensions require prior arrangements with the instructor. Late assignments will lose ten points for each day, or fraction thereof, that they are late.
3. Academic honesty: All students are expected to abide by the University’s standards of academic honesty, integrity, and professionalism. For details, see http://www.rackham.umich.edu/policies/academic_and_professional_integrity/.

4. Electronic devices: **Laptops and other devices are NOT allowed in class.** While I recognize that this may cause some consternation, such technologies negatively impact the character and quality of class discussion. In a class where discussion is so important to the intellectual task we face, the costs of laptop presence outweigh the benefits.

5. Syllabus: Because many topics we cover are subjects of ongoing debate, I may make occasional changes to the course readings over the semester. I will always notify you in advance of any changes.

6. Disabilities: If you believe you need an accommodation for a disability, please let me know at your earliest convenience. Some aspects of this course may be modified to facilitate your participation and progress. As soon as you make me aware of your needs, I can work with the Office of Services for Students with Disabilities to help us determine appropriate accommodations. We will treat any information you provide as private and confidential.

**COURSE SCHEDULE**

All course readings are available on CTools.

**September 8: Introduction and Course Overview**

**September 10: Why Should We Care about Ethics? How Do We Think about Ethics?**


**I: UTILITARIANISM**

**September 15: Utilitarianism and Welfare**


**September 17: Utilitarianism and Cost-Benefit Analysis**


September 22: Pricing Risk, Pricing Life
And take at least three *Implicit Association Tests* in preparation for a class discussion about the role unconscious bias may play in policy contexts.

September 24: Deontology vs. Utilitarianism

September 29: Deliberative Democracy and Health Care *On Call Date*

II: LIBERTY

October 1: Liberty

October 6: Organ Allocation *In-Class Exercise*

October 8: Nudging or Shoving? *On Call Date*

**October 13: Promoting Marriage** *On Call Date*

**III. JUSTICE**

**October 15: Justice**

**October 16: Op-Ed Due by 5 pm!!**

**October 20: FALL BREAK!**

**October 22: Justice and Educational Opportunity** *In-Class Exercise*
California School Funding Formula Proposal, n.d. (2 pp.)
**October 27: Justice and Gender Equality** *On Call Date*

**October 29: Justice and Racial Equality** *On Call Date*
National Coalition of Blacks for Reparations in America (N’COBRA), Statement on reparations and description of strategies, [http://ncobra.org/index.html](http://ncobra.org/index.html)

**IV: RIGHTS**

**November 3: Rights**
UN Declaration of Human Rights.

**November 5: Drones and the Ethics of the War on Terror**
Daniel Brunstetter and Megan Braun, “The Implications of Drones on the Just War Tradition,” *Ethics and International Affairs* 25.3 (Fall 2011), 337-358.

**November 10: The Rights of Noncombatants** *In-Class Exercise*


**November 12: Rights, Responsibility and Global Poverty *On Call Date***


**November 17: Climate Change *On Call Date***


**November 19: NO CLASS**

**November 20: First Memo Due by 5 pm**

VI. THE ETHICS OF PRACTICE

**November 24: Lying *On Call Date***


Kennedy School of Government Case Program, “Ethical Problems in Public Careers: Lying.”

**December 1: Whistleblowing *On Call Date***


**December 3: Ethics in a Bureaucracy *On Call Date***


**December 8: Ethics in Policy Research**


**December 10: Standards of Ethical Conduct**


U.S. Office of Government Ethics, “Standards of Ethical Conduct for Employees of the Executive Branch,” July 1, 2011 (skim)


**Memo #2 Due December 17, 5 pm**