

Course Syllabus: Spring 2018
PHI5665: Knowledge, Responsibility, and Society
online



Course Description and Objectives:

In this graduate course, we look at the issues arising at the borders of epistemology, ethics, and social philosophy, or between knowledge, values, and policy/action/social organization. We will address questions including:

- Does knowing yourself lead to acting better, or engaging the world in a responsible manner?
- Are advances in medical and environmental knowledge reflected in our ethical intuitions and social policies?
- Do we have an obligation to know the world, in order to make informed decisions and to speak up?
- What are our obligations to the environment?
- Do we have responsibility to other nations, or for past injustices?
- Is there a responsibility to follow scientific insight?
- What does responsibility look like in a digital world?

Students who participate in Phi5665 will develop experience in leading discussions about ethical issues. I anticipate that you will actively contribute to the course through discussion and development of unique topics or case studies.

*Note: this course was originally designed by my colleague Professor Bruce Janz, so I am leaving his approach largely intact for consistency. I've made some shifts in required readings and topics for this term, but wanted to acknowledge this courses' origin in our certificate program.

Office Hours:

I will be available by appointment in-person (physically and synchronously through webcourses) during official office hours from 2:00pm-4:00pm on Tuesdays and will work with you to find a mutually agreeable time to meet in digital formats as needed. I will schedule 30 minute meetings during office hours in advance, and those will take priority over drop-ins.

Instructor Contact:

Dr. Jonathan Beever
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Required Texts & Materials:

1. Kriti Sharma, *Interdependence*. Fordham University Press: 2015. ISBN: 9780823265534
 2. Lorraine Code, *Ecological Thinking*. Oxford University Press: 2006. ISBN: 9780195159448
- Presidential Commission for the Study of Bioethical Issues Project Reports (PCSBI).
<http://bioethics.gov/studies> (now at <https://bioethicsarchive.georgetown.edu/pcsbi/>)
3. Other readings as assigned (downloadable from webcourses)

Class Format:

This course is structured as a seminar. That means that we will focus on the readings for the week, and class

members will rotate in leading the discussion on those readings. Since this is an online course, and hence mostly asynchronous, we will use as many relevant tools as possible (discussions, video, links, et cetera) so that we can have a fruitful discussion.

Course Requirements:

Mandatory Financial Aid Quiz (0%): There is a quiz in We bcourses that all students must do, by order of the university. It is to ascertain who actually begins a course. The university needs to generate this data to report to the federal government. There is no reason for us to have a quiz at this point except to meet this requirement, but I would ask all of you to complete this, by the latest, by Friday January 13 at 5 pm, even if you are not on financial aid. The "grade" will not figure in your final grade for the course.

Introduction to your Peers (5%): Author a video, audio, or mixed media introduction of yourself to your peers. Include your name, background, interest in ethics, and at least one interesting fact about yourself.

Discussions and Participation (20%): There will be a grade attached to discussion posts assigned for each module. Contributions to these discussions will be the primary mode of engaging with me, with your colleagues, and with the material. Treat them like you would opportunities to discuss in an in-person seminar. I will also maintain an open thread throughout the term, for people to post anything from current events, other courses, or their lives in general that might be relevant to the course material.

Seminar Presentation (20%): Each student is responsible for leading one discussion during the term, based on a schedule determined early in the term. This presentation will involve summarizing and clarifying the week's assigned readings for the class and coming up with discussion questions that can lead the seminar group. Students will be expected to go past the assigned readings and to include scholarly work that will help to contextualize, understand, or critique the material in question. If there are more people in the course than there are weeks, it is likely that we will have more than one presentation in a week.

The format of the presentation can vary. You could do a video presentation, a Powerpoint with audio, a Prezi with text, or some other format. Students are encouraged to relate the material to their own area of graduate studies as a means of stimulating discussion. Your presentation will be due by the opening time of the module for which you are presenting. Send material to be embedded in the module to me through as a link or attachment in the webcourses assignment.

After the presentation is up, I will comment on the material for the week as well and will open the discussion thread. It will be the responsibility of the rest of the class to respond to the questions that the presenter raises in the material for the week. The discussion is not limited to those questions – anything related to the week's material is fair game. This will form the basis for the "Discussion and Participation" grade above.

Prospectus with Annotated Bibliography (15%): A prospectus is a summary of what you intend to research and write about. Work to identify a clearly defined problem, and a thesis – your proposal in response to that problem. Then briefly outline how you plan to argue in support of that thesis. The prospectus should be no more than 300 words, and needs to include an annotated bibliography of at least 10 sources. Annotated bibliographies consist of appropriate citations to research sources along with brief summaries of the relevance of those sources. The bibliography will need to identify appropriate research venues to gain critical scholarly information about the chosen topic. Annotations should do at least two

things. They should foremost tell us why you included it as an entry - why is it important for your talk? Second, they should tell us something about the content - main thesis, approach, and important premises. I don't expect that should take you more than 2 short paragraphs each.

Final Paper (40%): This is a traditional academic thesis defense paper. The paper will be graded on your ability to identify an interesting and challenging philosophical question, state and defend a thesis about it, argue coherently for that thesis, and use scholarly sources to support your argument.

Grading Scale:

A	90-100	C	70-76
B+	87-89	D+	67-69
B	80-86	D	60-66
C+	77-79	F	< 59

Academic Integrity:

This is an ethics class, so it seems unnecessary to say that plagiarism will not be tolerated. Plagiarism, or cheating of any kind on an examination, quiz, or assignment will result at least in an "F" for that assignment and may, depending on the severity of the case, lead to an "F" for the entire course and/or the placement of a "Z" designator with your grade. Academic dishonesty will subject you to appropriate referral to the Office of Student Conduct for further action. See the UCF Golden Rule and <http://z.ucf.edu> for further information.

Course Accessibility Statement:

It is my goal that this class be an accessible and welcoming experience for all students, including those with disabilities that may impact learning. If anyone believes the design of this course poses barriers to effectively participating and/or demonstrating learning, please meet with me (with or without a Student Accessibility Services (SAS) accommodation letter) to discuss reasonable options or adjustments. Helpful information is found at SAS: Ferrell Commons 185; 407-823-2371; sas@ucf.edu. You are welcome to talk to me at any point in the semester about concerns, but it is best if we talk at least one week prior to the need for any modification.

Teach Act Statement:

The materials for this course are only for the fair use of students enrolled in this course for purposes associated with this course and may not be retained or further disseminated. The instructor receives no royalty payments for any materials used in this course.

Syllabus Subject to Change:

I anticipate that I will follow the schedule outlined here, but I may make adjustments based on your interests and what decisions we make together in class. All changes will be clearly announced in person and online. Remaining in the course after reading this syllabus will signal that you accept the possibility of changes and responsibility for being aware of them.

Course Calendar: please see our webcourses homepage. This calendar is part of the official syllabus for this course.