Ethics and Public Policy

Public Policy 42 / Government 60.01
Dartmouth College  Fall, 2009

Lucas Swaine
Dept. of Government
230 Silsby Hall
Tel.: 6-0765/6-2544
Office Hours: Friday, 3:00-5:00 P.M.

Monday/Wednesday/Friday
10:00-11:05 A.M.
X-hour: Thursday, 12:00-12:50 P.M.

Course Description

This course examines the nature and validity of arguments about vexing moral issues in public policy. Students examine a number of basic moral controversies in public life, focusing on different frameworks for thinking about justice and the ends of politics. The primary aim of the course is to provide each student with an opportunity to develop his/her ability to think in sophisticated ways about morally difficult policy issues. Among the questions students address will be the following: Are policies that permit torture justifiable under any circumstances? Do people have basic moral claims to unequal economic holdings and rewards, or should economic distribution be patterned for the sake of social justice? Should people be permitted to move freely between countries? Is abortion wrong in theory or in practice, and in what ways should it be restricted?

Required Readings

There will be a course text as well as other reading materials for PBPL 42. The required text for the course is as follows:


This text has been ordered and is available for purchase at Wheelock Books. Required readings for the course are either contained within the Gutmann and Thompson text, or they are listed below in the course schedule. All course materials not contained in the Gutmann and Thompson text will be made available through Blackboard.

Format
PBPL 42 is not simply a lecture course, since lectures will be joined by in-class discussion in which you are invited to participate. Normally, there will be a period of lecturing at the outset of each class, following which the floor will be opened to discussion. Classes will focus on specific readings (described below in the course schedule), with different works examined in each successive week. There is a good deal of involved reading in this course, but it is crucial that you come prepared so that you can make use of the lectures and the discussions with your cohort. Please also bring the Gutmann and Thompson book and your other readings with you, when we discuss them, since we will frequently refer to passages in the texts. If there are changes to be made to the syllabus, or adjustments of other kinds, they will be announced in class.

**Grading**

Students’ grades will be comprised of the following four components:

1. Sixty-minute exam 25% of total grade (covers weeks 1 to 4)
2. Seven-page paper 30% (covers weeks 5 to 8)
3. Final exam 35% (cumulative)
4. Class participation 10%

Late papers will not be accepted, and make-up exams will not be granted, without sufficient reason and advance notice. Students are expected to understand and follow the Academic Honor Principle of Dartmouth College in pursuing studies for this course. Students with any disabilities requiring special arrangements are encouraged to see the instructor by October 2, in order to arrange appropriate accommodation.

**Course Schedule**

**Week 1:** Dropping the Bomb (Total Reading: 33 pp.)

Sept. 23: Introduction
Sept. 25: • “The Decision to Use the Atomic Bomb” and “Alternatives to the Bomb,” in Gutmann and Thompson [25 pp.]

**Week 2:** Torture and Dirty Hands (Total Reading: 113 pp.)
Sept. 28:  

Sept. 30:  

October 2:  
- “Interrogating Detainees” (U.S. Government Documents) in Gutmann and Thompson [10 pp.]
  

Week 3:  
**Deception, Manipulation, and Lies**  
(Total Reading: 67 pp.)

October 5:  
- “Disinformation for Quaddafi,” “The Iran-Contra Affair” and “George W. Bush on Iraq’s Nuclear Weapons”; in Gutmann and Thompson [22 pp.]

October 7:  
- “Crafty Communications,” “Lyndon Johnson: Master Manipulator?” and “The Texas Redistricting Caper,” in Gutmann and Thompson [25 pp.]
  

October 9:  

Week 4:  
**Criminal Justice**  
(Total Reading: 101 pp.)

October 12:  

October 14:  
  

October 16:  

Week 5: Distributive Justice and the Poor (Total Reading: 55 pp.)

October 19: In-class examination on topics in weeks 1 to 4
  Recommended: Rawls, “Justice as Fairness,” in Collected Papers (on reserve)

Week 6: Inheritance and Equal Opportunity (Total Reading: 103 pp.)

  Recommended: “Death and Taxes,” in Gutmann and Thompson
October 30: • “Affirmative Action at AT&T,” “Affirmative Action at the Michigan Law School,” The Vouchers That Made Milwaukee Famous” and “A Golfer’s Handicap?” in Gutmann and Thompson [36 pp.]

Paper topic announced; due Wednesday, November 11

Week 7: Immigration and Borders (Total Reading: 63 pp.)
  • Chandran Kukathas, “The Case for Open Immigration,” in Contemporary Debates in Applied Ethics, pp. 207-20


November 4:  • National Immigration Law Center, An Analysis of the Secure America and Orderly Immigration Act of 2005


Recommended: Greg Siskind, “Summary of [Senate Immigration Bill] S. 1348 (the Senate Comprehensive Immigration Reform Bill)”
http://www.visalaw.com/S1348_SSB.pdf

Week 8:  Abortion and Life Sciences  (Total Reading: 123 pp.)


Seven-page paper due

November 13:  • “Administering Abortion Policy,” “Abortion in South Dakota” and “Regulating Abortion in the Late Term,” in Gutmann and Thompson [60 pp.]

Weeks 9 & 10:  Justice Between Peoples  (Total Reading: 160 pp.)

November 16:  • “Federal Funding for Stem Cell Research” and “Ethics Without Borders? Clinical Trials of AZT” in Gutmann and Thompson [16 pp.]


**Week 11: Course Completion**

November 30: Course synthesis

December 2: Final class

December 5-9: Final exam period; final exam date TBA