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**PI 102-01 – Contemporary Ethical Issues**  
Course Syllabus and Calendar

**Section Information**

PI 102-01  
In Person  
M/W 11:00 AM- 12:20 PM  
HSS 310

**Instructor Information**

Dr. Jonathan Wurtz  
wurtzj@triton.uog.edu  
HSS 318F  
Office Hours: TBD  
(671) 735-2818

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**COURSE CATALOG DESCRIPTION**

This course provides a careful and critical examination of the moral issues in our society, including (but not limited to) the ethics of food, climate change, ethics, and the city, robotics, population ethics, space exploration, human enhancement, medical ethics, animal ethics and environmental ethics. This course develops students' abilities to engage in ethical reasoning through the application of ethical theories and moral concepts to concrete, real-world cases.

**COURSE CONTENT**

This is a survey course examining three topics in contemporary applied ethics. They are 1) Genetic human enhancement, 2) Digital Privacy and Artificial Intelligence, and 3) Abortion. The first unit will focus on our moral obligation to genetically enhance future generations. The second unit will engage with data ethics and moral dimensions of social media and artificial intelligence with respect to surveillance, social control, and digital privacy. The third section will engage with the transversal moral elements of abortion from its impact on women's agency to its connection with broader bioethical rights like the right to refuse medical treatment.

**COURSE REQUIREMENTS**

**REQUIRED TEXTS**

*Required readings are provided on Moodle*

**STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES ALIGNMENT MATRIX**

Course Student Learning Outcomes (SLO)	Program (PLO)	Institutional (ILO)
Justify philosophical positions with reasoned argument in a rigorous way	(A) Justify positions with reasoned argument in a rigorous way	Mastery of critical thinking and problem solving
Express philosophical positions orally and in writing precisely and clearly	(B) Express themselves orally and in writing precisely and clearly	Effective oral and written communication
Engage in comparative philosophical thinking across multiple traditions	(C) Understand and engage with perspectives different to their own	Understanding and appreciation of culturally diverse people, ideas, and values in a democratic context
Engage in philosophical dialogue about concrete situations and problems with breadth and depth	(D) Analyse real-world problems using philosophical tools	Mastery of quantitative analysis
Reconstruct the philosophical positions of authors through the close reading of texts	E) Reconstruct the positions of authors through the close reading of texts	Responsible use of knowledge, natural resources, and technology
Practice philosophical virtues in their interactions with others	F) Practice philosophical virtues in their interactions with others	An interest in personal development and lifelong learning

**WORDS OF WISDOM**

As your professor, I am here to help you succeed and I built this syllabus as a means to maximize this effort. However, students must take the initiative to communicate with me their struggles, difficulties, and obstacles with the class. ***IF I DON'T KNOW WHAT'S GOING ON, I CAN'T HELP YOU.*** Send me an email at [wurtzj@triton.uog.edu](mailto:wurtzj@triton.uog.edu) or come to my office hours.

## **GRADING INFORMATION**

### **COURSE FINAL GRADES**

A	940-1000 points	NC	No Credit. <i>Note: This Course Grade must be stated in the approve Course Catalog Description.</i>
A-	900-939 points		
B+	870-899 points		
B	840-869 points		
B-	800-839 points	UW:	Unofficial withdrawal assigned by Registrar. Student stopped attending classes and did not submit required documents to the Admissions & Records office.
C+	770-799 points		
C	700-769 points		
D+	640-699 points		
D	600-639 points		
F	0-599 points	W:	Withdrawal assigned by Registrar. Student stopped attending classes and submitted required documents to the Admissions & Records office.

### **ASSIGNMENTS**

#### **Discussion Days**

There are a total of 5 in-class discussion days meant to tease out the nuances of each theory we discuss this semester (see schedule). For class, students will have to prepare a written answer to the given question and be ready to present and discuss their ideas with the class. Your discussion days paper must:

- Answer the entire prompt.
- draw from the pool of philosophers and philosophical arguments we covered so far in the class.
- provide an argument for your position (unless the prompt asks otherwise).
- be turned in on the appropriate forum on Moodle before the discussion day.
- be at least two paragraphs long.

**Participation will be tracked.** If you do not like to participate in public dicussions, you are invited to start or participate in virtual pariticipation by responding to a couple of your peer's posts. **Every student is in fact invited to start the conversation early and respond to their peer's posts.** Your professor will be engaging with your posts online too, so be sure to check on them.

### **Presentation and discussion**

At the end of the semester students will be responsible for presenting and leading a small group discussion on a selected contemporary moral problem of their choice. The goal of the presentation is 1) to present the moral complexity of a contemporary moral issue and 2) encourage a class-wide dialogue on the moral considerations, evaluations, and decisions we ought to make. You are required to select a contemporary moral issue that interests you, conduct thorough research on the topic, and prepare a presentation that you will deliver to the class. After your presentation, you will lead a class discussion, encouraging your peers to engage with the issue from multiple angles. To complete this assignment you should:

1. Ensure that the issue is broad enough to allow for a range of perspectives, yet specific enough for a focused discussion.
2. Research the issue at hand
3. Gather Information from a variety of reputable and peer-reviewed sources.
4. Consider history context, key stakeholders, and differing viewpoints related to the issue.
5. Analyze moral principles and ethical theories that can be applied to understand the issue.
6. Prepare your presentation by
  - a. Providing the necessary background information
  - b. Discussing the moral assumptions behind the issue at hand
  - c. Exploring the current debate and controversies
7. Summarize your findings in a clear and concise way
8. Highlight the complexity of the issue and invite community discussion by
  - a. Developing a set of open questions
  - b. Providing competing points
  - c. Highlighting the value and harms of multiple sides
  - d. Rejecting or questioning fundamental assumptions and more...

Your presentation and facilitation will be evaluated as follows:

1. **Research Quality:** Depth and breadth of your research; use of reputable and diverse sources.
2. **Ethical Analysis:** Clarity and accuracy in applying ethical theories and principles to the issue.
3. **Presentation Skills:** Organization, clarity, and effectiveness of your presentation; use of visual aids.
4. **Discussion Facilitation:** Ability to lead a productive and inclusive discussion; quality of discussion questions.
5. **Engagement:** Your active participation during both the presentation and the class discussion.

### **Unit Reflections**

At the end of every unit, you will be asked to write 400-600 words essay reflecting on the covered topics. These reflections must be turned in on the due dates by 11:59 PM. Your reflection should **demonstrate mastery over the explicit and implicit moral tensions of a unit's topic by:**

- a) Engaging with multiple authors and their philosophical arguments
  - a. Summarize their respective positions (include a discussion of key concepts, ideas, arguments, etc...)
  - b. Your summary should include:
    - i. Quotes and Page numbers from the text
    - ii. All of the main concepts and ideas
    - iii. A map of the argument
- b) Highlighting and clarifying the moral complexity of the problem at hand
  - a. Why is this a moral problem? Who are the stakeholders and what is at stake for them? What are the moral premises and conclusions that support each position's view?
  - b. Don't attack individual's moral characters and reduce problems to individual failures.
  - c. Always consider the possible validity of something you disagree with (this is different from playing devil's advocate).
- c) Charitably evaluating each author's position and approach to the moral problem at stake with a proper discussion of their arguments and strong evidence for one's evaluation.
  - a. What are the moral and political strengths and weaknesses of the author's position?
  - b. How well does each author's argument agree with our moral intuition?
  - c. What are the moral implications of rejecting or accepting an author's conclusion?

### **Final Overall Reflection**

At the end of the semester, students will be asked to meet one-on-one with the professor to discuss their learning experience in the course. In preparation for this meeting, students will be asked to submit a final reflection paper addressing their overall learning experience in the class.

**The final reflection paper should be no longer than 3 pages and answer each the following prompts separately:**

- a) Discuss your process as a learner: evaluate your engagement with course content by reflecting on how you handled all aspects of this course. What specific parts of your process worked and what parts would benefit from some adjustments? Why?
  - b) Discuss the products you generated as demonstrations of your learning: evaluate how your work has changed across the semester. Did certain elements improve more than others? Did certain elements become easier or more challenging? Describe.
  - c) What will you do with this knowledge in future semesters? Make a commitment to yourself.
  - d) What have you learned about yourself—as a learner and a member of a learning community—in this course?
  - e) Considering points a-d, what final grade do you believe you deserve and why? What is this grade a reflection of? How is it a fair representation of your learning this semester? Make sure to provide evidence for your reasoning by drawing on your work and participation throughout the semester.
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## **COURSE, PROGRAM, AND UNIVERSITY POLICIES AND OTHER INFORMATION**

### **Attendance Privilege Policy:**

Attendance and participation affect your grade indirectly in this course. Rather than taking away points and coercing you to be in my class, this class's attendance policy works more like a credit score. The more you attend and participate (i.e., the more effort you show) the more exceptions you become privileged to. In other words, if you regularly show up and attend the full class time, participate, and come to my office hours, you will benefit from privileges such as late submission allowances, rounding up of points, excused/unexcused absences, late make ups etc.... However, if you only show up a few times, don't turn in assignments, and are generally absent throughout the semester, you will not be privy to these privileges. This is also how I decide whether to round up your grades at the end of the semester. Such that, if you tried your best but only made an 89% in the course, I will give you a final grade of an A-. But if you were mostly absent and silent throughout the class, then you will receive your original grade of B+.

### **Network Etiquette:**

Remember your "netiquette," or network etiquette. Although you may traditionally interact informally with friends and family when you are online, it is important to note that this is a classroom environment and students must adhere to high standards of academic behavior. This classroom is a safe space for all ideas. Any comments, jokes, or remarks that denigrate the worth of an individual's physical/mental ability, body size, religion, race, creed, ethnic background, sexual preference, or gender are inappropriate and will not be tolerated.

- a. Do not say things in an email or forum post that you would not say face to face.
- b. Be polite, concise, and remember that all-caps signify yelling.
- c. Do not send forwards to the class list or to the professor.
- d. Proofread. Please avoid texting language, lack of punctuation, capitalization, or inappropriate signatures.
- e. Emojis should not be used in graded assignments. You are welcome to use them in informal writing.

### **Email Policy:**

Triton email is the official means of communication at the university. Every communication with the professor should occur through UOG's official email. It should include a subject line and a body text. The email's body should include proper salutation and clear explanation of its nature.

The professor will respond to email within 1-2 business days. The professor will respond to weekend or holiday emails at their own discretion. If you need to reach the professor urgently, hope for the best, but expect the worst (attendance policy qualifies how you can hope better).

**Artificial Intelligence Statement:**

ChatGPT is an amazing tool that will continue to be perfected. That being said, it is by no means perfect and does not have the capacity to write the kinds of assignments I am asking you to write. Think of AI as an assistant. While an assistant is extremely helpful, it cannot do the work for you.

Here are some guidelines for how to use AI in one of my classes:

**Do use AI to:**

- Proofread your essay.
- Help you put thoughts into words.
- Help you think of a word.
- Help you reword sentences.
- Help clarify your flow and syntax.
- Get an idea/Talk it out.
- Help you think of a clever title for your essay.
- Write an email to your professor.

**Don't use AI to:**

- Write your essays/assignments.
- Think of an argument
- Think of a topic for your projects/assignments
- Select primary/secondary resources.
- Summarize a philosophy/philosopher's position.
- Provide an opinion.
- Think of a moral position.

**Plagiarism Statement:**

As per the Student Handbook, students are responsible for turning in their own original work for every class that they officially attend at the University of Guam. Due to this plagiarism is considered academic dishonesty (AKA cheating) and will be rewarded with a failing grade for the assignment (without possibility of making up). The term "plagiarism" includes, but is not limited to, the use, by paraphrase or direct quotation, of the published or unpublished work of another person without full and clear acknowledgment. It also includes the unacknowledged use of materials prepared by another person or agency engaged in the selling of term papers or other academic materials. Any AI produced written work that is not more than 75% original will be considered plagiarized. **EVERY ASSIGNMENT THAT YOU TURN IN WILL BE FILTERED THROUGH Turnitin.com TO CHECK ITS ORIGINALITY.**

**EEO/ADA Statement:**

**ADA Policy and Commitment to Student Learning**

The University is committed to maintaining the campus community as a place of work and study for faculty, staff and students, free of all forms of discrimination and harassment. If you experience harassment or discrimination, then you should report it immediately to the EEO/ADA & Title IX Office, Institutional Compliance Officer (671) 735-2244 located in Dorm 1. For immediate assistance in an emergency call 911.

**ADA Accommodation Services**

If you are a student with a disability who will require an accommodation(s) to participate in this course, please contact the Disability Support Services office to discuss your specific accommodation needs confidentially. You will need to provide me with a Faculty Notification letter from the DSS counselor. If you are not registered, you should do so immediately at the Student Center, Rotunda office #6, ph/TTY: 735-2460, or [uogdss@triton.uog.edu](mailto:uogdss@triton.uog.edu) to coordinate your accommodation



**PI102-01 CONTEMPORARY ETHICAL ISSUES**  
**COURSE CALENDAR**

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COURSE CALENDAR

- Jan. 20 MLK Jr. Day – NO CLASS
- Jan. 22 Introduction to the course
- Jan. 27 Introduction to Philosophy and Ungrading
- Jan. 29 Introduction to Ethics – Morality Play and Moral Philosopher’s Alignment
- Feb. 3 Introduction to Ethics – Consequentialism: Utilitarianism
- Feb. 5 Introduction to Ethics – Deontology: Kantianism
- Feb. 10 Introduction to Ethics – [CHamoru Cultural Value System](#)
- Feb. 12 Discussion Day 1
- Feb. 17 **Read:** Hughes’ “Embracing Change with All Four Arms: Post-Humanist Defense of Genetic Engineering”
- Feb. 19 **Read:** Bortolotti’s “Do We Have an Obligation to Make Smarter Babies?”
- Feb. 24 **Read:** Gyngell and Douglas “Stocking the Genetic Supermarket”
- Feb. 26 **Read:** Allen’s “The Poetry of Genetics: On the Pitfalls of Popularizing Science”
- Mar. 3 NO CLASS – Guam History and CHamoru Heritage Day
- Mar. 5 **Read:** Etieyibo’s “Genetic Enhancement, Social Justice, and Welfare-Oriented Patterns of Distribution”
- Mar. 10 **Discussion 2: Genetic Enhancement and the Designing of the Human Race**
- Mar. 12 **Read:** “12 Million Phones, One Data Set, Zero Privacy” by NYT  
**Watch:** TEDTalk “Glenn Greenwald: Why Privacy Matters”  
**Watch:** “There is Virtually Nothing You Can do to Protect Your Privacy” by NBC News
- Mar. 17 NO CLASS SPRING BREAK
- Mar. 19 NO CLASS SPRING BREAK
- Mar. 24 **Read:** Deleuze’s “Postscript on the Societies of Control
- Mar. 26 **Read:** Floridi and Taddeo’s “What is data ethics?”
- Mar. 31 **Listen:** Chris Gilliard and Neil Selwyn’s “Automated Surveillance in Education”

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- Apr. 2     **Read:** Karnouskos' "Artificial Intelligence in Digital Media: The Era of Deepfakes"
- Apr. 7     **Discussion 3: Artificial Intelligence, Surveillance, and Privacy**
- Apr. 9     **Read:** Don Marquis "Why Abortion is Immoral."
- Apr. 14    **Read:** Judith Jarvis Thomson's "A Defense of Abortion"
- Apr. 16    **Read:** Paltrow et al., "Beyond Abortion: The Consequences of Overturning Roe"
- Apr. 21    **Read:** Minkoff et al., 's "The Two Front War on Reproductive Rights – When the Right to Abortion is Banned, Can the Right to Refuse Obstetrical Interventions Be Far behind?"
- Apr. 23    **Read:** Moazam's "Feminist Discourse on Sex Screening and Selective Abortion of Female Foetuses"
- Apr. 28    **Discussion 4: Abortion, Pregnant Person's Equality, and Pre-Natal Right to Life**
- Apr. 30    Presentation and Discussion Sessions
- May 5     Presentation and Discussion Sessions
- May 7     Presentation and Discussion Sessions
- May 12    Presentation and Discussion Sessions
- May 14    Presentation and Discussion Sessions
- FINAL    End of the Year Meeting

\*During Final Exam Week, the class meets according to the Approved Exam Schedule. All UOG classes are required to meet during Final Exam Week.