

SOSC 3850: ETHICS AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS

Tuesdays & Thursdays, 16:30 – 17:50, Room 4582 (lifts 27-28)

Instructor	Teaching Assistants
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Course Description

This course studies the ethical dimensions of public affairs. The overarching theme is to explore the moral debate surrounding some pressing public issues in today's world. The first part introduces the essential moral concepts and theories for reasoning in ethics and public affairs. The second part discusses a selection of disputed public issues through the application of moral concepts and theories. By the end of the course, students will benefit with the knowledge and skills necessary for discussing public affairs from the perspective of ethics.

Intended Learning Outcomes

By the end of this course, students will be better equipped to:

1. Explain the key ideas and issues in ethics and public affairs.
2. Analyze and evaluate moral arguments underpinning the issues of public affairs.
3. Apply relevant concepts and theories to discuss the issues of public affairs.
4. Exercise independent and critical judgments as well as formulate and communicate arguments effectively.

Class Schedule

WEEK	ONLINE LECTURE	TUESDAY CLASS	THURSDAY CLASS
1	Module 0: Course and Blended Learning Introduction		
	Lecture 0	--	Class 0 [Feb 1]
2	Module 1: Introduction – Moral Reasoning and Public Affairs		
	Lecture 1	NO CLASS	Class 1 [Feb 8]
3	NO LECTURE	--	NO CLASS
4	Module 2: Reasoning with Consequences (1)		
	Lecture 2	Class 2 [Feb 20]	NO CLASS
5	Module 3: Reasoning with Consequences (2)		
	Lecture 3	Class 3 [Feb 27]	NO CLASS
6	Module 4: Reasoning with Obligations (1)		
	Lecture 4	Class 4 [Mar 5]	NO CLASS
7	Module 5: Reasoning with Obligations (2)		
	Lecture 5	Class 5 [Mar 12]	Class 6 [Mar 14]
8	Module 6: Reasoning with Obligations (3)		
	Lecture 6	Class 7 [Mar 19]	NO CLASS

9	Module 7: Reasoning with Virtues and Vices		
	Lecture 7	Class 8 [Mar 26]	NO CLASS
10	NO LECTURE	Class 9 [Apr 9] – TEST 1	Class 10 [Apr 11]
11	Module 8: Case Study (1) – Bioethics		
	Lecture 8	Class 11 [Apr 16]	NO CLASS
12	Module 9: Case Study (2) – Economic Justice		
	Lecture 9	Class 12 [Apr 23]	NO CLASS
13	Module 10: Case Study (3) – Animal Ethics		
	Lecture 10	Class 13 [Apr 30]	Class 14 [May 2]
14	Module 11: Case Study (4) – Emerging Technologies		
	Lecture 11	Class 15 [May 7]	Class 16 [May 9]

Note: Test 2 will take place during the examination period – exact date and time to be decided by the University. Class schedule and topics may be adjusted to facilitate students' learning.

Assessment and Grading

Assignment / Weighting		Requirements
Category A: Group Assignments		
Case Development × AI <i>Alignment with ILOs 1, 3 & 4</i>	15%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Each student team will create a video case <u>in no more than 5 minutes</u>. They will identify ONE public affair issue with ethical controversies taking place in any part of the world and develop a detailed narrative featuring relevant plots and characters. Each team will make use of generative AI tools to assist in the preparation, such as setting out scenarios, simulating character dialogues, and/or enhancing storylines. Each team will make a progress presentation in Class 6 (Mar 14). They will demonstrate the key findings from the AI tools and their critical responses to the findings. <u>Each presentation should NOT exceed 5 minutes.</u> The video case should be submitted by 23:59, Mar 31 (Sun).
Case Analysis × AI <i>Alignment with ILOs: 1, 2, 3 & 4</i>	15%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Each student team will create a critical analysis of a peer team's video case as assigned. The analysis should be presented in the format of a video <u>for no more than 10 minutes</u>. Similarly, each team will make use of generative AI tools to assist in the preparation, such as extracting relevant information, generating potential recommendations, and/or providing insights. Each team will make a progress presentation in Class 14 (May 2), demonstrating, similarly, the key findings from the AI tools and their critical responses to the findings. <u>Each presentation should NOT exceed 5 minutes.</u> The video case analysis should be submitted by 23:59, May 12 (Sun).

Category B: Individual Assignments		
Test 1 & Test 2 <i>Alignment with ILOs: 1, 2, 3 & 4</i>	60% (30% each)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Both tests are open-book tests. Part I contains short questions; Part II contains a structured question. The time allowed for completion is, approximately, 30 minutes for Part I and 30 minutes for Part II. The two parts are timed separately. Test 1 will take place in Class 9 (Apr 9). Test 2 will take place during the examination period in May 2024, and the exact date and time will be decided by the University. Students must complete the test in person. <u>Under no circumstances can the test be completed outside the test venue.</u> In case of medical/family emergencies or unavoidable duties, students must present appropriate evidence to request for 'make-up' arrangements.
Canvas MC Quizzes <i>Alignment with ILOs: 1 & 2</i>	10%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All quizzes are open-book assessment tasks. Before completing each quiz, students should watch the relevant online lecture videos. Students will complete a total of 11 quizzes. Each quiz contains 8 questions. <u>Only ONE attempt is allowed for each quiz.</u> Students should complete each quiz by 14:00 of the day on which the corresponding class takes place. For example, the deadline for the quiz of Module 2 is 14:00, Feb 20 (Tue), i.e., the same day on which Class 2 takes place. <u>Students' performances in the BEST 10 quizzes will be graded.</u> Each question in a quiz is worth 0.125 point.

Note 1 **Bonuses will be allocated as follows:**

- Class attendance:** 3 points maximum (NB: attendance will be taken on an ad hoc basis.)
- Class participation:** 2 points 'by default' (NB: active participation in class is assumed; points will be deducted if there is evidence of inactive participation.)
- Self-reflection:** 5 points (NB: Students will write a 500-word self-reflection in Class 15; 5 points will be awarded for an adequate reflection.)

Note 2 **Penalty:** For late submission, no submission or no show, mark penalty will apply. For confirmed cases of plagiarism, cheating and abuse of generative AI tools, severe sanctions will be imposed.

Note 3 **Prevention of Free Riding:** Each group should attach detailed division of labor for all group-based assignments. The score of each individual student may be adjusted based on the division and quality of labor.

Important Dates

Date / Time	Task	Date / Time	Task
Feb 17 / 23:59	Grouping confirmation	May 2 / in class	Progress presentations for 'case analysis × AI'
Mar 14 / in class	Progress presentations for 'case development × AI'	May 9 / in class	Self-reflection
Mar 31 / 23:59	Submission of video cases	May 12 / 23:59	Submission of video case analyses
Apr 9 / in class	Test 1	Examination period	Test 2

Course Reading

Textbooks (Reserved at HKUST Library)

- [T1] Barbara MacKinnon and Andrew Fiala (2018) *Ethics: Theory and Contemporary Issues* (9th edition), Boston, MA: Cengage Learning [NB: Essential text for the entire course].
- [T2] Russ Shafer-Landau (2019) *A Concise Introduction to Ethics*, New York: Oxford University Press [NB: Useful text for Modules 1-7].

Useful Online Resources

- Annabelle Lever and Andrei Poama (2019) *The Routledge Handbook of Ethics and Public Policy*, London: Routledge.
- Gordon Graham (2011) *Theories of Ethics: An Introduction to Moral Philosophy with a Selection of Classic Readings*, New York/London: Routledge.
- Jonathan Boston, Andrew Bradstock and David Eng (eds) (2010) *Public Policy: Why Ethics Matters*, Acton, ACT: ANUE Press.
- *The Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy*, <http://plato.stanford.edu/>

Other Learning Resources (Reserved at HKUST Library)

- Anthony Weston (2018) *A 21st Century Ethical Toolbox* (4th edition), New York: Oxford University Press.
- David Morrow (2018) *Moral Reasoning: A Text and Reader on Ethics and Contemporary Moral Issues*, New York: Oxford University Press.
- Jonathan Wolff (2020) *Ethics and Public Policy: A Philosophical Inquiry* (2nd edition), London: Routledge.
- Julian Baggini and Peter S. Fosl (2007) *The Ethics Toolkit: A Compendium of Ethical Concepts and Methods*, Oxford; Malden, Mass.: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Mark Timmons (2017) *Disputed Moral Issues: A Reader* (4th edition), New York: Oxford University Press.
- Richard Burnor and Yvonne Raley (2018) *Ethical Choices: An Introduction to Moral Philosophy with Cases* (2nd edition), New York: Oxford University Press.

Reading List

Module	Topic	Primary Reading	Supplementary Reading
1	Introduction – Moral Reasoning and Public Affairs	[T1], ch. 1	[T2], ch. 1 & 2
2	Reasoning with Consequences (1)	[T1], ch. 4	[T2], ch. 6
3	Reasoning with Consequences (2)	[T1], ch. 5	
4	Reasoning with Obligations (1)	[T1], ch. 6	[T2], ch. 7
5	Reasoning with Obligations (2)	[T1], ch. 7	[T2], ch. 5 & 8
6	Reasoning with Obligations (3)		
7	Reasoning with Virtues and Vices (2)	[T1], ch. 8 & 9	[T2], ch. 10 & 11
8	Case Study (1) – Bioethics	[T1], ch. 12	*See Canvas
9	Case Study (2) – Economic Justice	[T1], ch. 14	
10	Case Study (3) – Animal Ethics	[T1], ch. 17	
11	Case Study (4) – Emerging Technologies	[T1], ch. 18	

Teaching and Learning

This course will experiment with an innovative pedagogy for social science and public policy education – the ‘case × generative AI’ method. The development and implementation of this pedagogy is supported by the Education and Generative Artificial Intelligence (EDGE-AI) Fund at HKUST. For further information, students may contact the course instructor or one of the teaching assistants.

Course Communications

All announcements are made through the course website on Canvas <<https://canvas.ust.hk/>>. For e-mail communications, students should allow at least 3 working days for a reply. **All e-mail enquiries regarding any of the course assessments should be made at least 48 hours before their respective due dates.**

Class Rules

Students should avoid using mobile phones except for class activities. **Video/sound recording is NOT allowed.** If there is a genuine need for video/sound recording, students must seek permission from the course instructor *before* the class begins.

Academic Honesty

Plagiarism and cheating are very serious offences. Students are reminded of the consequences for violating University’s regulations governing academic integrity and honesty. For details of the regulations, please visit <<https://registry.hkust.edu.hk/resource-library/academic-integrity>>. For advice on avoiding plagiarism and copying, please visit <<http://libguides.ust.hk/writing/style-man>>.

Feedback on Assessment Tasks

The teaching team aims to provide feedback on students’ assessment tasks within 10 working days of their submission.

Generative AI Tools

There are no restrictions on the use of generative AI for assessment tasks. However, students should understand that generative AI tools should only be used as *tools* and should NOT be a substitute for students’ own work. Students must certify that the work submitted in their assignments is their own original work, except where they have acknowledged the use of external sources or assistance, including generative AI tools.

Quality Assurance

Students are welcome to offer comments and suggestions on the course. The principal concern of this course is students’ learning, and therefore, the instructor may modify the schedule if this will facilitate their learning.

Last revised: January 25, 2024