

GOVT 549: Ethics in Government

New Mexico State University
Department of Government

Spring 2012 Course Syllabus

Time: R 6:00 - 8:30 (Science Hall 111)

Instructor: Daniel Scheller, Ph.D.
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Office: Breland 338
Office Hours: M 1:30 - 3:00; R 4:00 - 5:30,
and by appointment

Course Description

This course examines various ethical issues and controversies emerging from the behavior and decisions of public officials within the American political system. The course is both theoretical and applied in the pedagogical approach. We will discuss classical theories of ethics and morality from antiquity to the recent past. Most of the ethical philosophies are rooted in Western tradition since the course focuses on behaviors of individuals acting within the U.S. political system. In addition to classical theories of ethics, we will focus on the “-isms” of current politics and their implications for public policy and administration in the U.S. In this manner, students should become “better” citizens of the U.S. by understanding the true meanings of political ideologies and their implications for government and policy. Finally, the course provides a major focus on ethical challenges and issues for public administrators. Students will use the classical theories to understand codes of ethics and how to apply them to their career situations.

Learning Objectives

1.) By the end of this course, students should have a working knowledge of the theories concerning ethics and how they may apply to government and administrative decisions. Students should be able to analyze current problems in the U.S. government and administration from a number of different ethical perspectives, and they should be able to understand the ethical implications of proposed and current U.S. public policies.

2.) To some extent, students should leave this course with few, if any, answers concerning what is the “correct” or “ethical” policy that the U.S. government should pursue. Students should understand that different ethical paradigms dictate what policy should be enacted and that there is a constant tradeoff among ethical goals in the American governing system.

3.) By the end of the course, students should have also further developed their analytical and critical thinking skills to better prepare themselves to solve problems in any organization (public or private) in which they may have current and/or future employment and be able to present their critiques both orally and in writing.

4.) Students should have a better understanding of political ideologies in the U.S. context and their implications for policy and administration. Students should be better consumers of political knowledge and able to critically analyze political positions and statements.

5.) Students will develop a code of ethics in administration for their use in current/future employment and have a greater understanding of ethical dilemmas in public administration.

Required Texts

Wenz, Peter S. 2007. *Political Philosophies in Moral Conflict*. McGraw-Hill.

Svara, James. *The Ethics Primer for Public Administrators in Government & Nonprofit Organizations*. Jones and Bartlett.

All readings, exams, and assignments will be based upon the indicated editions of these texts. There is no guarantee that older editions will contain the same information.

Other readings will be located online. I will send newspaper/magazine readings weekly and post them on Blackboard to be read for discussion.

Course Requirements

1. Discussion Questions (50 pts.): Each week, you will need to submit 2 thoughtful discussion questions based upon the readings. You will need to submit them to a Discussion Board on Blackboard by 11:59 PM the night before class. Each week is worth 5 pts. Since there are 11 discussion board weeks, I will count your 10 highest scores. There will be no discussion board on March 8 (Midterm), March 22 (Spring Break), April 19 (UAA Conference), May 3 (Dead Week), and May 10 (Final).

2. Midterm (100 pts.): The midterm will be worth 100 points. You will answer 2 essay questions, and will have some options from which to choose. You will have the class period to finish them. No books or notes will be allowed on the Midterm.

3. One-on-One Debate (50 pts.): Once during the semester, you will engage in a one-on-one debate with another student in the classroom. One side will argue the affirmative; one side will argue the negative. You will prepare a 6-7 minute opening statement for your side. You will also give a rebuttal to your opponent's opening statement, and then a defense of your position. The debate will last for approximately 45 minutes. Audience members will be allowed to ask questions during a Q/A period. You will be graded on the quality of your opening statement, rebuttal & defense, and your responses to questions from the audience.

4. Response Paper (100 pts.): You will write a 4-6 page paper on a topic of current application given to the class by the instructor. The paper should summarize the problem, identify ethical

issues, apply ethical theories to the problem, and offer a solution. You should develop/present your code of ethics and apply it to the situation.

5. Final (100 pts.): The final will be worth 100 points. You will answer 2 essay questions, and will have some options from which to choose. You will have the class period to finish them. No books or notes will be allowed on the Final. It is not cumulative.

Grade Components

Discussion Questions	50
Midterm	100
Debate	50
Response Paper	100
Final	100
Total	400

Grading Scale

A+	= 97% - 100%	(388-400)
A	= 93% - 96.99%	(372-387)
A-	= 90% - 92.99%	(360-371)
B+	= 87% - 89.99%	(348-359)
B	= 83% - 86.99%	(332-347)
B-	= 80% - 82.99%	(320-331)
C+	= 77% - 79.99%	(308-319)
C	= 73% - 76.99%	(292-307)
C-	= 70% - 72.99%	(280-291)
D+	= 67% - 69.99%	(268-279)
D	= 63% - 66.99%	(252-267)
D-	= 60% - 62.99%	(240-251)
F	= <60%	(<240)

Students taking the course with the S/U option must earn a B- to earn a Satisfactory grade.

Course Expectations & Policies

Courtesy

Comments and language in class should be professional and courteous. Cell phones are annoying and distracting. Please put them away or have them on vibrate for emergencies. Please arrive on time and refrain from leaving class early. These actions are distracting to the instructor and students.

Assignment Submissions

All assignments and other course material must be turned in to me in hard-copy form. I no longer accept emailed assignments. If you are ill or cannot make the class on the date an assignment is due, you must make arrangements with a classmate to have the hard-copy delivered to me. I make no guarantees that assignments submitted to my office mailbox or assignments slid under my door are actually delivered to me. It is your responsibility to ensure that I receive your materials.

Late Work Policy & Make-Up Exams and Assignments

Since you have ample notice of the due dates of the assignments and their requirements, no extensions will be given for assignments, regardless of excuse. Materials turned in after the indicated due date and time will automatically receive a 20% deduction. Late work will receive an additional 20% deduction for each additional 24 hours that pass in which the assignment is not turned in. I make no guarantees that late work submitted to my office mailbox or assignments slid under my door are actually delivered to me. It is your responsibility to ensure that I receive your materials.

Make-up exams will only be given for the most extenuating circumstances (severe illness, death in immediate family, official university business, jury duty, etc.). I must be informed within 24 hours of the exam date/time for you to be allowed to have a make-up exam. You must provide documentation of the circumstance, and you will not be allowed to take the make-up exam until you have provided documentation that clearly indicates that you were unable to be in class on the exam's date and time.

The date and time of the final exam has been set in accordance with the guidelines stipulated by the university. You should make your travel plans so that they do not conflict with your final exam schedule for your courses. Students will not be allowed to take the exam early or late because they have booked travel plans.

Extra Credit & Study Guides

There will be no extra credit assignments or study guides for this course.

Incompletes

Incomplete grades will not be given except for the most extenuating circumstances. I reserve the right to determine what constitutes an extenuating circumstance in determining whether or not to grant an Incomplete grade.

Student Privacy

Per regulations outlined in the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), I will not discuss your grades, class performance, or any issues dealing with your personal circumstances as they relate to this course with another party that cannot legally access your your collegiate records or legally obtain such information. I will not field phone calls from your parents concerning your performance or circumstances related to this course. Your performance may be discussed with other members of the faculty as it pertains to your progress in the program, consideration for awards/funding, and as it is relevant to other university and department-related considerations.

Academic Misconduct

These excerpts are taken from the NMSU Student Handbook:

Any student found guilty of academic misconduct shall be subject to disciplinary action. Aca-

demisic misconduct includes, but is not limited to, the following actions:

1. Cheating or knowingly assisting another student in committing an act of cheating or other forms of academic dishonesty.

2. Plagiarism is using another person's work without acknowledgment, making it appear to be one's own. Any ideas, words, pictures, or other source must be acknowledged in a citation that gives credit to the source. This is true no matter where the material comes from, including the internet, other student's work, unpublished materials, or oral sources. Intentional and unintentional instances of plagiarism are considered instances of academic misconduct. It is the responsibility of the student submitting the work in question to know, understand, and comply with this policy. If no citation is given, then borrowing any of the following would be an example of plagiarism: a) An idea or opinion, even when put into one's own words (paraphrase); b) A few well-said words, if these are a unique insight; c) Many words, even if one changes most of them; d) Materials assembled by others, for instance quotes or a bibliography; e) An argument; f) A pattern of idea; g) Graphs, pictures, or other illustrations; h) Facts; i) All or part of an existing paper or other resource.

This list is not meant to include all possible examples of plagiarism. See the University Library's web page on plagiarism for further examples. It is your responsibility as a student to understand the university's guidelines concerning plagiarism. I reserve the right to use plagiarism-detection software with any of your submitted work..

3. Unauthorized possession of examinations, reserve library materials, laboratory materials, or other course-related materials.

4. Unauthorized changing of grades on an examination, in an instructor's grade book, or on a grade report; or unauthorized access to academic computer records.

5. Nondisclosure or misrepresentation in filling out applications or other University records in, or for, academic departments or colleges.

The current Student Code of Conduct definition of plagiarism can be found at:

<http://www.nmsu.edu/vpsa/SCOC/misconduct.html>

Student Disability Services

If you have, or believe you have a disability, you may contact the Student Accessibility Services (SAS) Office located in Corbett Center, Room 244, 575-646-6840, or email sas@nmsu.edu. Appropriate accommodations may then be provided for you. All medical information will be treated confidentially. If you have a condition which may affect your ability to exit safely from the premises in an emergency during class, you are encouraged to discuss this in confidence with the instructor and/or the Director of University Disability Services/ADA Coordinator, Diana Quintana, at the SAS Office. Questions regarding the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), the American with Disabilities Amendment Act and/or Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 should be directed to the SAS Office.

Questions regarding NMSU's Non-discrimination Policy and discrimination complaints should be referred to Gerard Nevarez, Office of Institutional Equity, 575-646-3635

Syllabus Change Policy

The contents of this course syllabus are subject to change in the event of extenuating cir-

cumstances.

Course Schedule

Jan. 19: Introduction to Course

Jan. 26: Introduction to Ethics

- Wenz: Introduction. pp. 1-27.
- Svara: Preface & Ch. 1. pp. vii-7.

Feb. 2: Libertarianism

- Wenz: Ch. 3-4. pp. 90-152.

Feb. 9: Libertarianism & Conservatism

- Wenz: Ch. 5. pp. 153-170.
- Friedman, Milton. "Defining Principles: Capitalism and Freedom." From *Conservatism in America since 1930*. pp. 68-90.
- Hayek, F.A. "Why I am Not a Conservative." From *Conservatism in America since 1930*. pp. 180-194.

Feb. 16: Liberalism & Socialism

- Selections from Nancy Lowe's *Dogmas and Dreams*. pp. 36-43.
- Selections from Paul Krugman's *The Conscience of a Liberal*. pp. 57-78; 265-274.

Feb. 23: Administrative Ethics & Duty

- Svara: Ch. 2-3. pp. 9-45.

Mar. 1: Utilitarianism

- Wenz: Ch. 2. pp. 60-89.
- Svara: Ch. 4. pp. 47-72.

Mar. 8: Midterm

No Discussion Board

Mar. 15: Communitarianism, Multiculturalism, & Feminist Issues

- Wenz: Ch. 7. pp. 234-246.
- Selections from Robert Putnam's *Bowling Alone*. pp. 350-363.
- Wenz: Ch. 8. pp. 247-261.
- Wenz: Ch. 9. pp. 288-290; 294-297; 305-310.

Mar. 22: Spring Break - No Class

No Discussion Board

Mar. 29: Rawlsian Justice

-Wenz: Ch. 6. pp. 184-216.

Apr. 5: Codes of Ethics

-Svara: Ch. 5. pp. 73-86.

-Svara: Appendix 3-7. pp. 165-189.

Apr. 12: Ethics Violations, How to Act, & Whistleblowing

-Svara: Ch. 6-8. pp. 87-127.

Apr. 19: UAA Conference - Class TBD

Response Papers Due

No Discussion Board

Apr. 26: Improving Ethics in Public Organizations

-Svara: Ch. 9-11. pp. 129-159.

May 3: Ethics of Interest

-Vote on one of remaining chapters in Wenz book.

-No Discussion Board

May 10: Final Exam

No Discussion Board

Important Dates

Feb. 3: Last day to DROP a course.

Mar. 8: Midterm.

Mar. 12: Last day to DROP a course with a W.

Apr. 19: Response Papers Due.

May 10: Final Exam.