

Columbia University
SIPA EMPA Program
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EMPA U6025

Public Sector Ethics

Course Objectives

In this course, we inquire about ethics in the context of the public good. Decisions having an impact on the public are discussed from the standpoint of justice—"what is due" both in human society and from public officers and any others whose action affects the public good. A number of fundamental cross-cultural, cross-national ethics are delineated, both in their personal or private form and in their corresponding public form. Attention is given to individual character and organizational structure, particularly the manifestations of each that constitute forms of action susceptible of ethical evaluation. Ethical failings and their relationship, by way of origin, to basic social institutions are discussed. Guidelines for ethical public policymaking and checkpoints for the ethical evaluation of public sector activity are indicated. The usual grounds in ethical argument and their limitations are also identified, as are several core residual dilemmas, which the policymaker can hardly avoid.

Course Materials

The readings assigned are of three kinds: (1) cases from the Harvard Kennedy School of Government, indicated on the syllabus by "KSG"; (2) excerpts from books, some classical and others contemporary; and (3) journal articles. The cases can be purchased online at www.ksgcase.harvard.edu. (The number of each case is indicated in the body of the syllabus.) The book excerpts and journal articles have been compiled into a coursepack, which is available for purchase at Village Copier. If you choose to purchase any of the books, they are generally available in the university bookstore. All materials are also on reserve in Lehman Library. From time to time, brief additional readings, particularly news articles, may be assigned with the aim of highlighting course themes and questions.

Course Schedule

Class #	Topics and Readings
1	<p>Introduction: Fundamental Definitions of Ethics</p> <p>I. An Analysis of Character: Speaking of Ethical Differences...</p>
2	<p>A. The Regulatory Ethic: The End being Order, with consideration given to Behavior.</p> <p>KSG, "Privacy and Publicity: The Senate Confirmation of Justice Clarence Thomas" (C16-92-1118.0) and Sequel (C16-92-1118.1).</p> <p>James Q Wilson, <u>The Moral Sense</u>, Ch. 8. "Gender". (Free Press, 1993)</p> <p>Plato, <u>Republic</u>, 543c-576d: On Fathers, Mothers, Sons, Behavior and the Degeneration of Regimes. (380's B.C.)</p>
3	<p>B. The Constitutional Ethic: The End being Happiness, with consideration given to Strategy.</p> <p>KSG, "Jesse Helms v. Harvey Gantt: Race, Culture, and Campaign Strategy in the 1990 Senate Battle" (C16-91-1099.0) and Sequel (C16-91-1099.1).</p> <p>John Rawls, <u>A Theory of Justice</u>, Secs. 3-4, 24, 63-68, On Justice as Fairness, the Original Position, and Goodness as Rationality. (Harvard, 1971)</p> <p>Aristotle, <u>Politics</u>, Bk. V.2-4, 10-11: On Equality, Inequality, Strategy and the Subversion of Regimes. (330's B.C.)</p>
4	<p>C. The Revolutionary Ethic: The End being Peace, with consideration given to Method.</p> <p>KSG, "Bringing Terror to Justice: The Extra-territorial Arrest of Fawaz Yunis" (C16-90-960.0).</p> <p>Bruce Ackerman, <u>Social Justice in the Liberal State</u>, Ch. 3, "Citizenship". (Yale, 1980)</p>

Kant, Perpetual Peace, Sec. I; App. I and II: On the Moral Politician, the Political Moralist, Method and Human Harmony. (1795)

- 5 D. The Nationalistic Ethic: The End being the State, with consideration given to Purpose.

KSG, "Terrorism in the Cour d' Assises: The U.S. v. France v. Georges Ibrahim Abdallah" (C16-89-904.0).

Jonathan Glover, Humanity: A Moral History of the Twentieth Century, Pt. 5, "Belief and Terror: Stalin and His Heirs". (Yale, 1999)

Machiavelli, The Prince, Chs. 15-19: On Praise, Blame, Purpose and the Prince. (1513)

II. An Analysis of Structure: Are Rights or Wrongs Guaranteed?

- 6 A. The Ethic of Academic Freedom: Inquiry v. Presumption; with consideration given to Routine.

KSG, "Morley Affair" (C14-76-064).

Frank Sulloway, Born to Rebel, Ch. 12, "Political Trends"; Ch. 13, "The French Revolution". (Vintage, 1996)

Paris, "Moral Education and the 'Tie that Binds' in Liberal Political Theory" (APSR, September 1991).

- 7 B. The Ethic of Accountability: Responsibility v. Excuse; with consideration given to Procedure.

KSG, "Two Oaths of Richard Helms". (C14-83-525)

Dennis F. Thompson, Political Ethics and Public Office, Ch. 2, "The Moral Responsibility of Many Hands" (Harvard, 1987).

Thompson, "Mediated Corruption: The Case of the Keating Five" (APSR, June 1993).

- 8 C. The Ethic of Conscientious Objection: Integrity v. Role Performance; with consideration given to Policy.
- KSG, “Mayor Steve Judy of Coeur d’Alene, Idaho and the Parade Permit Request by Neo-Nazis” (C15-00-1574.0).
- John Kane, The Politics of Moral Capital, Pt. 1, “Moral Capital”. (Cambridge, 2001)
- Burt, “The Politics of Virtue Today: A Critique and a Proposal” (APSR, June 1993).
- 9 D. The Ethic of Professional Expertise: Evidence v. Rationalization; with consideration given to Mission.
- KSG, “The Contemptuous Administrators: Radionuclides Regulation and the Clean Air Act” (CR1-96-1335.0).
- Max Weber, The Methodology of the Social Sciences, Essay I, “The Meaning of ‘Ethical Neutrality’ in Sociology and Economics”, pp. 1-27. (1917)
- Galston, “Liberal Virtues” (APSR, December 1988).
- III. Grounds in Ethical Arguments...Posturing and Positioning
- 10 A. Intellectual Variations: Virtue, Conscience, Custom, Utility, Ideology, Pragmatism.
- KSG, “Ethical Problems in Public Careers: Lying” (C15-80-548.0) and Teaching Note (C15-80-548.T).
- Plutarch, Makers of Rome, Ch. 8, “Brutus”, pp. 223-241. (100 A.D.)
- Jerome Kagan, The Nature of the Child, Ch. 4, “Establishing a Morality”. (BasicBooks, 1984)
- 11 B. Practical Variations: Status, Tenet, Precedent, Preference, Platform, Budget.
- KSG, “Telling the Boss He’s Wrong: George Shultz and Iran/Contra” (C16-94-1254.0).

Bentham, Handbook of Political Fallacies, Intro., Pt. 5, II-IV, On Causes of Fallacies. (1824)

Robert A. Caro, The Power Broker: Robert Moses and the Fall of New York, Ch. 10, “The Best Bill Drafter in Albany”, Ch. 29, “And When the Last Law Was Down”. (Vintage, 1974)

IV. The Trouble with Politics: Three Core Problems

12 A. The Element of Knowledge: Beclouded by Self-Interest

KSG, “Politics of a Covert Action: The U.S., the Mujahideen, and the Stinger Missile” (C15-99-1546.0).

Susan Rose-Ackerman, Corruption and Government, Ch. 11, “Domestic Conditions for Reform”, Ch. 12, “Conclusions”. (Cambridge, 1999)

Stoker, “Interests and Ethics in Politics” (APSR, June 1992).

13 B. The Element of Sufficiency: Undone by Shortfalls.

KSG, “Seeking Neighborhood Revitalization in Philadelphia: Using Tax Credits to Link the Private and Nonprofit Sectors” (C16-00-1578.0).

Alasdair MacIntyre, After Virtue, Ch. 14, “The Nature of the Virtues”. (Notre Dame, 1984)

Stark, “Beyond Quid Pro Quo: What’s Wrong with Private Gain from Public Office?” (APSR, March 1997).

14 C. The Element of Voluntariness: Muddied by Dirty Hands.

KSG, “Twisting in the Wind? Ambassador April Glaspie and the Persian Gulf Crisis:., Pts. A (C16-91-1056.0), B (C16-91-1057.0), and Update (C16-92-1057.1).

Jean-Paul Sartre, No Exit. (1940)

Sir Thomas Malory, Le Morte Darthur, pp. 119-137, 706-750. (1470)

Course Requirements

1. Preparation, attendance and participation. Although our class is much larger than a seminar would be, you are encouraged to offer comments and raise questions. As you prepare for class, try to discern and assess the relevant intersections of the various readings. You should draw upon course readings, current events and independent observation, experience and study, as you discuss the day's topic.
2. Two sets of definitions and commentaries on course materials. On two occasions in the semester, specific terms and quotations from the readings will be given. They should be identified and explained (out of class) and subsequently submitted. These assignments will take the place of quizzes and exams.
3. Draft of an analytical paper. You may choose a topic from personal knowledge, outside material, or course readings. An ethical evaluation of the public issue(s) upon which you choose to focus should be presented in rough form. Your draft should be accompanied by an indication of the sources of your research and should be 5-7 pages long.
4. Final version of the paper. Only about two pages should be devoted to the actual facts of the case you choose to discuss. The remainder of the paper should be devoted to an ethical analysis of the case, including any policy recommendations or models you might offer. Comments on the draft should be taken into account as you revise and complete your work. The final version of your paper should be approximately 15 pages long.