

**QUEST 1: IDS 2935  
ETHICS & THE PUBLIC SPHERE  
SPRING 2021**

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**COURSE LEADERS**

**Instructor**

Professor Jennifer Rothschild (Philosophy)

Contact: [jrothschild@ufl.edu](mailto:jrothschild@ufl.edu)

Office Hrs: Mondays and Wednesdays 2:00-3:30 pm (and by appointment)

Zoom Meeting Room for Office Hrs: <https://ufl.zoom.us/j/3170033942>

To reserve an appointment during office hours, send an email at least 24 hours prior to the requested meeting. During office hours, open time slots are available for drop-ins.

**Teaching Assistant**

Hana Mitchell (Graduate Student in Philosophy)

Contact: [mihana.mitchell@ufl.edu](mailto:mihana.mitchell@ufl.edu)

Office Hrs: Thursdays 11:30-2:30 (and by appointment)

Zoom Meeting Room for Office Hrs: <https://ufl.zoom.us/j/5813248145>

Hana will lead your Friday classes, keep attendance, grade your papers, and do many other things besides. She is your email contact for questions about administrative matters in the course.

**COURSE DETAILS**

**Time and Location**

Lecture:	MW Period 6 (12:50-1:40p)	All lecture and discussion meetings will happen via Zoom. Links available in Canvas course page (under Zoom Conferences).
Discussion:		
Sec 28042	F Period 3 (9:35 – 10:25 am)	
Sec 28043	F Period 4 (10:40 – 11:30 am)	
Sec 28046	F Period 5 (11:45 am – 12:35 pm)	

Quest 1 Theme: Justice and Power

General Education: Humanities, Writing (2,000 words)

(Note that a minimum grade of ‘C’ is required for General Education credit)

Class resources, announcements, updates, and assignments will be made available through the class Canvas site ([www.elearning.ufl.edu](http://www.elearning.ufl.edu)).

**COURSE DESCRIPTION**

In this course, we will consider what it means to build and maintain an ethical public sphere, where ‘public sphere’ includes our public spaces, actions, and discourse, as well as our institutions (government, military, educational, etc.), leaders (political and otherwise), media, and more. Our primary ethical lens will be a set of virtue concepts: honesty, justice, courage, and humility. Using these concepts as anchors, we will explore such questions as: how do we find honest media in the contemporary climate? What work do we need to do to bring justice to our

public institutions and spaces, both locally and globally? Why is courage so important for good public leadership? What is the place of humility in learning, or in effective political discourse? Our methods will be drawn from traditions in the humanities and anchored in philosophical ethics. Our sources will be multi-disciplinary and vary in form: the readings will be speeches, film, literature, newspaper and magazine articles, art, history, and so on; we will engage thinkers who are academics, activists, soldiers, and more; and we will have the opportunity to meet for discussion with four guest lecturers. The crucial skills we will emphasize throughout the class include identifying the moral dimensions of public problems; critically evaluating traditions and perspectives; appreciating the diversity of perspectives on controversial issues; thinking beyond one's own interests; and approaching disagreement with open-mindedness and a willingness to be rationally persuaded. The class is thus for students from any major who want to explore public moral challenges in rigorous, creative ways. Assignments will include short writings on the ethical topics and a capstone project in which students work together on a project that will grow out of our discussions on justice.

### **QUEST 1 AND GEN ED DESCRIPTIONS AND STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES**

**Quest 1 Description:** Quest 1 courses are multidisciplinary explorations of truly challenging questions about the human condition that are not easy to answer, but also not easy to ignore: What makes life worth living? What makes a society a fair one? How do we manage conflicts? Who are we in relation to other people or to the natural world? To grapple with the kinds of open-ended and complex intellectual challenges they will face as critical, creative, and self-reflective adults navigating a complex and interconnected world, Quest 1 students use the humanities approaches present in the course to mine texts for evidence, create arguments, and articulate ideas.

#### **Quest 1 SLOs:**

- Identify, describe, and explain the history, theories, and methodologies used to examine essential questions about the human condition within and across the arts and humanities disciplines incorporated into the course (Content).
- Analyze and evaluate essential questions about the human condition using established practices appropriate for the arts and humanities disciplines incorporated into the course (Critical Thinking).
- Connect course content with critical reflection on their intellectual, personal, and professional development at UF and beyond (Critical Thinking).
- Develop and present clear and effective responses to essential questions in oral and written forms as appropriate to the relevant humanities disciplines incorporated into the course (Communication).

**Humanities Description:** Humanities courses provide instruction in the history, key themes, principles, terminology, and theory or methodologies used within a humanities discipline or the humanities in general. Students will learn to identify and to analyze the key elements, biases and influences that shape thought. These courses emphasize clear and effective analysis and approach issues and problems from multiple perspectives.

#### **Humanities SLOs:**

- Identify, describe, and explain the history, underlying theory and methodologies used in the course (Content).

- Identify and analyze key elements, biases and influences that shape thought within the subject area. Approach issues and problems within the discipline from multiple perspectives (Critical Thinking).
- Communicate knowledge, thoughts and reasoning clearly and effectively (Communication).

**Writing Description:** The Writing Requirement (WR) ensures students both maintain their fluency in writing and use writing as a tool to facilitate learning. The writing course grade assigned by the instructor has two components: the writing component and a course grade. **To receive writing credit a student must satisfactorily complete all the assigned written work and receive a minimum grade of C (2.0) for the course.** It is possible to not meet the writing requirement and still earn a minimum grade of C in a class, so students should review their degree audit after receiving their grade to verify receipt of credit for the writing component.

**Writing Evaluation:**

- This course carries 2000 words that count towards the UF Writing Requirement. You must turn in all written work counting towards the 2000 words in order to receive credit for those words.
- The instructor will evaluate and provide feedback on the student's written work with respect to content, organization and coherence, argument and support (when appropriate), style, clarity, grammar, punctuation, and other mechanics.

**COURSE OBJECTIVES AND GOALS**

**Student Learning Outcomes:**

Reflecting the curricular structures of Quest 1 and these Gen Ed designations, after taking Ethics and the Public Sphere students will be able to:

1. Identify, describe, and explain how the resources available in the humanities can help with becoming a more informed and engaged citizen. **(Content SLOs for Gen Ed Humanities and Q1)**
2. Identify and analyze the histories of and relations among different theoretical frameworks in humanistic traditions of thought **(Critical Thinking SLOs for Gen Ed Humanities and Q1)**
3. Identify, analyze and evaluate moral themes in public discourse **(Critical Thinking SLO for Gen Ed Humanities)**
4. Analyze and evaluate the particular, public ethical issues that we discuss in the course **(Critical Thinking SLO for Gen Ed Humanities)**
5. Analyze, evaluate, and critically reflect on connections between course content and their intellectual, personal, and professional development at UF and beyond **(Critical Thinking SLO for Q1)**
6. Develop and present clear and effective responses to essential questions about important public ethical issues in oral and written forms appropriate to the relevant humanities disciplines incorporated into the course **(Communication SLO for Gen Ed Humanities and Q1).**

## TEXTS AND MATERIALS

Students are required to have the day's assigned reading readily available during class meetings. Failure to do so may result in loss of participation points.

Most of our required materials will be available through the class Canvas page (under Files, or listed as links on the syllabus). Materials which are news or magazine articles are publicly available and easy to find with an internet search for the title of the piece; I recommend you read such pieces in their original online sources whenever possible.

### **Required**

Books:

1. Joseph Conrad, *Lord Jim* (Independent Publisher, 2020) ISBN-13: 979-8638284138

Documentary Films (available for rent on Amazon for less than \$5 each):

2. *The Fog of War: Eleven Lessons from the Life of Robert S. McNamara*, Errol Morris
3. *The Act of Killing*, Joshua Oppenheimer

## GRADE DISTRIBUTION AND GRADING POLICIES

- |   |                |
|---|----------------|
| 1. Participation                        | 20%            |
| 2. 3 Short Papers (900-1100 words each) | 60% (20% each) |
| 3. Capstone Project                     | 20%            |

### **Grading Scale**

This course will employ the following grading scale:

A	4.0	94-100
A-	3.67	90-93
B+	3.33	87-89
B	3.0	84-86
B-	2.67	80-83
C+	2.33	77-79

C	2.0	74-76
C-	1.67	70-73
D+	1.33	67-69
D	1.0	64-66
D-	0.67	60-63
E	0.0	0-59

If your total number of points for the course falls between two grades in the end, we will round to the nearest mark. X.5 rounds up; for example, 93.5 percent of all points will earn you an A. Any 93 below 93.5 is an A-.

UF policy on assigning grade points:

<https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/grades.aspx>

## GRADED WORK AND ASSIGNMENTS

**You must complete all the assigned work in order to pass the class.**

## **Participation and Attendance**

You must come to class on time and prepared. This means keeping current on the reading assignments and being aware of the course schedule and activities, as presented in this syllabus, discussed in class, and announced on the course website. It also means having the day's reading in class with you. Consistent high-quality class participation—in large and small groups—is expected. “High-quality” in this case means:

- informed (i.e., shows evidence of having done assigned work),
- thoughtful (i.e., shows evidence of having understood and considered issues raised in readings and other discussions), and
- considerate (e.g., takes the perspectives of others into account).

Unexcused absences from more than four classes will negatively affect your participation grade. For each unexcused absence beyond the fourth, you will lose 10% of your participation grade (e.g. a 100% will become a 90%).

Requirements for class attendance and make-up exams, assignments, and other work are consistent with university policies specified at:

<https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/attendance.aspx>.

## **Short Papers and Capstone Project**

Over the course of the semester students will be asked to write three original papers (900-1100 words each), which will combine to satisfy a 2000 word General Education requirement. Please see the course schedule for due dates.

All papers must be typed, double-spaced with one-inch margins, page numbers, and 12 point Times New Roman font. You must include a word-count at the top of your first page. Please also include your name, the date you hand in the assignment, and title and staple your essays.

Each paper is to be uploaded onto the course's e-learning site in Canvas. The papers will be graded electronically, and returned to you electronically. We will consider allowing you to turn in a paper late without penalty only if you have a valid and documented reason for doing so. If you turn in a paper without a valid or documented reason, 1/3 of a letter grade will be deducted for each day it is late (including weekend days!).

One short paper will cover the honesty unit, and will engage a news media article analyzed in connection with our readings and in-class discussions. A second short paper will engage the justice unit, and will ask students to research and profile an issue of ethical relevance and an organization working to promote justice on that issue. The third short paper will ask students to write a speech engaging concepts of public virtue (and courage in particular).

The capstone project requires students to do three things:

1. Rework their justice assignment into a submission for a class book. The book will profile justice-promoting organizations students think worth noticing, supporting, or getting involved with.
2. Students will also be expected to take on roles in the project of compiling the book: editing submissions, finding images, promotion and distribution of materials, and so on.

3. Writing a short reflection paper.

## **COURSE POLICIES AND STUDENT RESOURCES**

### **Attendance Policy**

Students are expected to attend class regularly and to arrive on time. Unexcused absences from more than four classes will negatively affect your participation grade. For each unexcused absence beyond fourth, you will lose 10% of your participation grade (e.g. a 100% will become a 90%).

If you are absent for an excused reason, you will not lose any points and the absence will not exhaust one of your free absences. In most cases you need documentation of the excuse (see below). Excused absences are limited to the following cases:

- *Health.* If your physical or mental health causes you to miss class, a note from your doctor or from the Dean of Students *within one week of the absence* will count as documentation for this.
- *Personal Reasons.* The Dean of Students will send me a note of excuse if you have personal reasons for needing one, such as a death in the family or an ongoing medical issue. I need your note from the DOS *within one week of the absence*. Note: I do not get involved in adjudicating good personal reasons from bad ones. I let the DOS handle that.
- *Some UF Activities* are excused absences. You must provide a note for activities absences *prior to the day of absence*. Notes may come from the activity supervisor, such as a coach. Regular activities absences will lead to make-up assignments.
- *Religious observances.* See your TA at the beginning of the semester about this.
- Any absence Professor Rothschild agrees to count as excused. If you think you have an exceptional case, ask your TA and your TA will pass your request along.

All other absences are typically unexcused, including some very good reasons to miss a class, like career or family events. I support your interest in these things, and understand why you might prioritize them over class, but that does not make them excused absences.

Requirements for class attendance and make-up exams, assignments, and other work are consistent with university policies specified at:

<https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/attendance.aspx>.

### **Late Work**

Work is due as specified in the syllabus. Late work is subject to a 1/3 grade penalty for each 24-hour period it is late (e.g., a paper that would've earned an A if turned in in class on Monday becomes an A- if received Tuesday, a B+ if received Wednesday, etc., with the weekend counting as two days).

If you have a foreseeable conflict with a due date for any reason, including activities, religious observances, and so on, you should make alternative arrangements with your TA well in advance so that we can set an early deadline. Computer errors (including disk, printer, or e-mail problems) are not acceptable excuses for late work.

Extensions on written work without penalty are granted by Professor Rothschild only, and will

only be considered if you have a documented reason for your request, and if you take the initiative to make contact as soon as the need arises.

### **Zoom Policies**

The participation portion of your grade for this class will be calculated on the basis of your attendance and your participation in class activities. Since the pedagogical approach of this course depends heavily on student engagement and interaction, you are required, at a minimum, to participate in class activities through the audio function of Zoom.

A good discussion course depends upon our being able to assess your attention and reactions and uptake of the material, and on fellow students being able to see engagement from one another. We therefore request your video presence in all class meetings. Students unable or unwilling to turn on cameras for some or all meetings may ensure a full attendance grade by coming to two office hours appointments over the course of the semester to talk about the content of the course; at least one of these must be with Professor Rothschild.

Zoom sessions will not be recorded by the instructor and may not be recorded by students. As in all courses, unauthorized recording and unauthorized sharing of recorded material is prohibited.

### **Academic Honesty**

UF students are bound by The Honor Pledge, which states, "We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honor and integrity by abiding by the Honor Code. On all work submitted for credit by students at the University of Florida, the following pledge is either required or implied: "On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment." The Honor Code (<http://www.dso.ufl.edu/scsr/process/student-conduct-honor-code/>) specifies a number of behaviors that are in violation of this code and the possible sanctions. Furthermore, you are obligated to report any condition that facilitates academic misconduct to appropriate personnel. If you have any questions or concerns, please consult with the instructor.

Plagiarism on any assignment will automatically result in a grade of "E" for the course.

Plagiarism is defined in the University of Florida's Student Honor Code as follows: "A student shall not represent as the student's own work all or any portion of the work of another.

Plagiarism includes (but is not limited to): a. Quoting oral or written materials, whether published or unpublished, without proper attribution. b. Submitting a document or assignment which in whole or in part is identical or substantially identical to a document or assignment not authored by the student." Students found guilty of academic misconduct will be prosecuted in accordance with the procedures specified in the UF honesty policy.

### **Students Requiring Accommodations**

Students with disabilities requesting accommodations should first register with the Disability Resource Center (352-392-8565, [www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/](http://www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/)) by providing appropriate documentation. Once registered, students will receive an accommodation letter which must be presented to the instructor when requesting accommodation. Students with disabilities should follow this procedure as early as possible in the semester.

**Course Evaluation**

Students are expected to provide feedback on the quality of instruction in this course based on 10 criteria. These evaluations are conducted online at: <https://evaluations.ufl.edu>. Evaluations are typically open during the last two or three weeks of the semester, but students will be given specific times when they are open. Summary results of these assessments are available to students at: <https://evaluations.ufl.edu/results>.

**Class Demeanor**

Students are expected to arrive to class on time, give the class your full attention the entire class period, and behave in a manner that is respectful to the instructor and to fellow students. Opinions held by other students should be respected in discussion, and conversations that do not contribute to the discussion should be kept to a minimum.

Please silence your other devices, email notifications, and all other background noise so far as you are able. Please keep your microphones on mute when you are not talking.

**Materials and Supplies Fees**

There are no additional fees for this course.

**Counseling and Wellness Center**

Contact information for the Counseling and Wellness Center: <http://www.counseling.ufl.edu/cwc/Default.aspx>, 392-1575; and the University Police Department: 392-1111 or 9-1-1 for emergencies.

**Writing Studio**

The writing studio is committed to helping University of Florida students meet their academic and professional goals by becoming better writers. Visit the writing studio online at <http://writing.ufl.edu/writing-studio/> or in 302 Tigert Hall for one-on-one consultations and workshops.



## COURSE SCHEDULE

COURSE CONTENT AND SCHEDULE IS TENTATIVE AND SUBJECT TO CHANGE  
 ASSIGNMENT DEADLINES INDICATED IN **BOLD**

TOPIC	(WK) DATE	READINGS & ASSIGNMENTS	
Introduction to Practical Ethics	(1) Jan 11	Introduction and Overview of Course	
	(1) Jan 13	Anthony Weston, Ch. 1, "Getting Started"	
	(2) Jan 18	No class - HOLIDAY	
	(2) Jan 20	Anthony Weston, Ch. 2-3 "Beyond Authority" & "Ethical Theories"	
What is the Public Sphere?	(3) Jan 25	Immanuel Kant, "What is Enlightenment?" Adriana Cavarero, "A Revolution in Happiness" <i>NYT</i> (Opinion)	
	(3) Jan 27	Hannah Arendt, "On Humanity in Dark Times: Thoughts about Lessing"	
What is (Public) Virtue?	(4) Feb 1	Aristotle, excerpts from <i>Nicomachean Ethics</i>	
	(4) Feb 3	Kristján Kristjánsson "A Framework for Character Education in Schools," Jubilee Centre Eric Liu, "We're Not 'All in It Together'; But we could be, if we rise to the moment" <i>The Atlantic</i> (Opinion)	
Honesty	(5) Feb 8	Roberts and West, "The Virtue of Honesty: A Conceptual Exploration" Christian Miller, "Motivation and the Virtue of Honesty: Some Conceptual Requirements and Empirical Results"	
	(5) Feb 10	Harry Frankfurt, "On Bullshit"	
	(6) Feb 15	Guest Lecturer: April Hines Librarian, College of Journalism and Communications Read: Antino Kim et al, "Rating News Sources Can Help Limit Spread of Misinformation," <i>The Conversation</i> EJ Dickson, "How I Accidentally Started a Wikipedia Hoax..." <i>Daily Dot</i> Caitlin Dewey, "How a 13-year-old's one-line blog post became a worldwide meme," <i>The Washington Post</i>	
	(6) Feb 17	C.S. Lewis, "Men Without Chests" Video, "Why statistics should make you suspicious," Christiane Amanpour interviews David Spiegelhalter, <a href="https://edition.cnn.com/videos/tv/2019/04/01/amanpour-david-spiegelhalter-statistics.cnn">https://edition.cnn.com/videos/tv/2019/04/01/amanpour-david-spiegelhalter-statistics.cnn</a> Video, "The era of blind faith in big data must end," Cathy O'Neil TED talk, <a href="https://www.ted.com/talks/cathy_o_neil_the_era_of_blind_faith_in_big_data_must_end?language=en">https://www.ted.com/talks/cathy_o_neil_the_era_of_blind_faith_in_big_data_must_end?language=en</a>	
	(7) Feb 22	Film: <i>The Fog of War: Eleven Lessons from the Life of Robert S. McNamara</i> , Director Errol Morris Film: <i>The Act of Killing</i> , Director Joshua Oppenheimer	

	(7) Feb 24	Hannah Arendt, "Lying in Politics: Reflections on The Pentagon Papers"  <b>Paper #1 on Honesty due by Sunday, February 28<sup>th</sup> at 11:59 pm</b>
Justice	(8) Mar 1	Timothy Snyder, excerpts from <i>Our Malady: Lessons in Liberty from a Hospital Diary</i>
	(8) Mar 3	Ursula Le Guin, "The Ones Who Walk Away From Omelas" Margaret Drabble, ch. 1 of <i>The Witch of Exmoor</i>
	(9) Mar 8	Guest Lecturer: Tobita Chow Director, Justice is Global (a project of People's Action) Read: George Black, "Your Clothes Were Made by a Bangladeshi Climate Refugee," <i>Mother Jones</i> Hadas Thier, "Activists Demand Rich Countries Suspend Patent Laws and Share Vaccines Freely," <i>In These Times</i>
	(9) Mar 10	Martin Luther King, Jr., "Letter From Birmingham Jail" Malcolm Gladwell, "Small Change: Why the revolution will not be tweeted," <i>The New Yorker</i> Raquel Willis, "How Stacey Abrams Channelled Her Anger Into Change," <i>them</i>
	(10) Mar 15	Thessaly La Force et al. "The 25 Most Influential Works of American Protest Art Since WWII" Susan Neiman, "Monumental Recognition," ch. 7 of <i>Learning from the Germans</i>
	(10) Mar 17	Susan Neiman, "Rights and Reparations," ch. 8 of <i>Learning from the Germans</i> Ta-Nehisi Coates, "The Case for Reparations," <i>The Atlantic</i>  <b>Paper #2 on Justice due by Sunday, March 21<sup>st</sup> at 11:59 pm</b>
Courage	(11) Mar 22	G.E.M. Anscombe, "Mr. Truman's Degree" Kenneth P. Nolan, "Courage" Dewan and Oppel, "We Expect Police to Be Brave For Us. But What Happens When They're Not?" <i>New York Times</i> 30-Second Video, "9/11 Comment Bill Maher Got Fired For," <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rNMhNJDRnhU">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rNMhNJDRnhU</a>
	(11) Mar 24	No Class – UF RECHARGE DAY
	(12) Mar 29	Guest Lecturer: Lieutenant Commander (LCDR) Robert Jameson, Department Head at HSM-48 (Helicopter Maritime Strike Squadron), US Navy To see LCDR Jameson's work watch a short video: <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1FRlBeKuvnk">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1FRlBeKuvnk</a>  Read: Katie Lange, "Medal of Honor Monday: Army Capt. Ed Freeman" Steven Pressfield, passage from <i>Gates of Fire</i> MAD Moore, "Aristotle's Courage: A Clear & Short Explanation"

		LT Sarah McGuire, “Blocks, Blocks, Blocks,” <i>Aviation</i> Webpage on Naval Operational Risk Management (decision- making): <a href="https://nps.edu/web/safety/orm">https://nps.edu/web/safety/orm</a> James Fallows, “2020 Time Capsule #11: ‘Captain Crozier’” <i>Atlantic</i>
	(12) Mar 31	Graduation Speeches: Ed Helms at Knox (2013), <a href="https://www.knox.edu/news/knox-college-commencement-2013/commencement-speaker-ed-helms">https://www.knox.edu/news/knox-college-commencement-2013/commencement-speaker-ed-helms</a> Amal Clooney at Vanderbilt (2018), <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9JmeixoS024">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9JmeixoS024</a> David Foster Wallace at Kenyon (2005) (audio only) <a href="https://fs.blog/2012/04/david-foster-wallace-this-is-water/">https://fs.blog/2012/04/david-foster-wallace-this-is-water/</a>  <b>Capstone Contribution due Thursday, April 1<sup>st</sup> at 11:59 pm</b>
	(13) Apr 5	Joseph Conrad, <i>Lord Jim</i> , first third
	(13) Apr 7	Joseph Conrad, <i>Lord Jim</i> , second third
	(14) Apr 12	Joseph Conrad, <i>Lord Jim</i> , final third  <b>Paper #3 on Courage due Friday, April 16<sup>th</sup> at noon</b>
Humility	(14) Apr 14	Guest Lecturer: Elise Murray Dykhuis, Senior Research Scholar, Program for Leadership and Character, Wake Forest University  Readings TBA
	(15) Apr 19	Plato, <i>Apology</i>
	(15) Apr 21	Concluding discussion  <b>Capstone Reflection Papers due Sunday, April 25<sup>th</sup> at 11:59 pm</b>

No final exam.