Values, Ethics, and Public Policy

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Nature of the Course

The task of policy analysis is sometimes viewed as a technician’s task—a matter of using analytical tools to figure out the most effective way to achieve policy goals. That is certainly an essential part of policy analysis, but it is important to be aware of what it leaves out. It leaves out any attempt to say which goals public policy should try to serve in the first place. To care about public policy is to care about whether policies are good or bad. But good or bad in what sense, in what respects, according to what perspectives or values?

These questions are not answered once and for all when nations are founded. They are a constant part of public policymaking, and finding better ways to answer them is often the most important thing anyone can do to improve public policy. Sometimes, of course, we can trace the failures of public policy to failures of technology—to our inability to identify effective ways of pursuing policy goals that no one doubts are the right ones. But often the failures of public policy result from something more fundamental—from our inability to identify what the goals of public policy should be in the first place, or from the incomplete or inadequate ways in which we have understood them. These failures arise when we have paid too little attention to values like justice, rights, and equality, or when we have failed to understand them in appropriate ways.

Values, Ethics and Public Policy focuses on some of the many ways in which these political and moral values come into play in public policy. It is based on the belief that an understanding of the complex relationship between morality and politics is an important part of the foundation of successful public policies. The course seeks to develop students’ abilities to think reflectively and argue persuasively about the moral and ethical dimensions of politics, public policies and the careers in public affairs. It is a course about learning to make moral arguments by studying how others make moral arguments. This task is a challenging one, and we will rarely arrive at definitive answers to the difficult questions we raise. We will, however, learn how to ask these questions with greater clarity and insight, and we will become familiar with the answers that others have given to them.

CTools Site

The readings for the course, including the optional readings, are available electronically on the course CTools site. In addition to all of the readings, the course website on CTools provides access to the syllabus, assignments, and resources on topics addressed in the course. I will send out emails prior to each class and they will also be posted on CTools.
Class Participation

Class time will usually be devoted to student presentations and class discussion. On most days the class will be divided into two groups and we will meet in different rooms. Regular attendance and participation in class discussions are expected of all students. Students will be expected to have completed and reflected upon the readings prior to class and to have given thought beforehand to handouts/emails containing topics for class discussion.

On the days when the class splits into two groups, students will make short presentations on topics under discussion that day. The format may vary, but in general a student will be responsible for giving a ten minute presentation and answering questions from the rest of the class for several minutes following the presentations. There will usually be two presentations per class and over the course of the term each student will make two presentations. The presentations provide opportunities for students to practice their presentation skills in front of an audience.

Productive class discussions are a key to a successful course and students will be expected to participate regularly. I recognize that some students find it difficult to speak publicly in large classes. This is a skill you should work on, since speaking publicly in large groups is important in most policymaking contexts. At the same time, participation can take many forms, including some that occur outside of class:

- Emails to the instructor, GSI, or other students concerning topics discussed in class
- Attendance at the instructor’s or GSI’s office hours to discuss issues raised in the course
- Sending news articles or internet links about issues raised in the class to the instructor or GSI

Writing Assignments

The course requirements include the following writing assignments:

- Thoughts on your own personal public philosophy, due September 22nd (this assignment will not be graded).
- Policy Memo #1, due October 13th. Students will work in teams of two on this memo.
- Op-ed essay, due November 24th.
- Policy Memo #2, due December 15th.

Grades

Grades will be determined using the following weights:

- Class Presentations - 15%
- Class participation - 20%
Disabilities

If you believe you need an accommodation for a disability, please let me know as soon as possible. As soon as you make me aware of your needs, we can work with the Office of Services for Students with Disabilities to help us determine appropriate accommodations. I will treat any information you provide as private and confidential.

Influenza Preparedness at the University of Michigan

As you are aware, there are good reasons to worry about an H1N1 flu pandemic this fall. The University has established a website that will provide up-to-date information on policies and good practices should the flu strike campus. Please check it if the need arises: http://www.vpcomm.umich.edu/pa/key/flu-H1N1.html

Class Schedule & Readings

I. INTRODUCTION

Class 1: September 8: Introduction and Overview of the Course
Benjamin Cardozo, “An underlying philosophy of life,” from The Nature of the Judicial Process
David Thacher, “Value Rationality in Policy Analysis” (Feb 2004, unpublished)

II. POLITICS AND MORALITY

Class 2: September 10: Domestic Politics and Morality
Dennis Thompson, Political Ethics and Public Office, Chapter 1 (Democratic Dirty Hands)

Class 3: September 15: International Politics and Morality
Stephen A. Garrett, “Political Leadership and the Problem of ‘Dirty Hands’,” Ethics and International Affairs, 1994
Michael Walzer, “Can There Be a Moral Foreign Policy?” in J. Herir, et. al. (Eds.), Liberty and Power (2004)
Joseph S. Nye, Jr, “Toward a Liberal Realist Foreign Policy,” Harvard Magazine, Mar/Apr
2008
Mervyn Frost, “Ethical Competence in International Relations,” *Ethics & International Affairs*, Summer 2009

III. VALUES AND PUBLIC POLICY: THEORY AND APPLICATIONS

**Class 4: September 17: Approaches to Moral Reasoning: “Messing with Mother Nature”**
Stephen Darwall, “Theories of Ethics,” in Frey and Wellman, *A Companion to Applied Ethics*

**Class 5: September 22: Approaches to Moral Reasoning: International Clinical Drug Trials**
Christine Grady, “Clinical Trials,” Hastings Center Briefing Book, 2008
(optional) The Belmont Report
(optional) World Medical Association Declaration of Helsinki

**Class 6: September 24: Utilitarianism**
Dan Brock, “Utilitarianism,” in Tom Regan and Donald VanDeVeer, *And Justice for All*

**Classes 7 & 8: September 29 and October 1: Utilitarianism and Benefit Cost Analysis**
Peter Railton, “Benefit-Cost Analysis as a Source of Information about Welfare,” in Douglas MacLean (Ed.), *Values at Risk*


(optional) The Colbert Report: “Priceless”

(optional) Dilbert on Discounting the Future, Jul 11, 2006

**Class 9: October 6: Justice**

John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*
- Sections 1-6 (Sections 1-5 assigned earlier)
- Sections 10-11
- Section 48

Robert Nozick, *Anarchy, State and Utopia*, Chapter 7 (Section I)

Michael Walzer, *Spheres of Justice*, Chapter 1

“Communitarianism,” *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy,*

**Class 10: October 8: Rights**

Lawrence C. Becker, “Individual Rights,” in Tom Regan and Donald VanDeVeer, *And Justice for All*

**Class 11: October 13: Equality and Education**

Christopher Jencks, “Whom Must We Treat Equally for Educational Opportunity to be Equal?” *Ethics*, Apr 1988

**Class 12: October 15: Global Climate Change**

Robert Hood, “Global Warming,” in Frey and Wellman (eds.), *A Companion to Applied Ethics*


**Class 13: October 22: International Trade and Justice**


**Class 14: October 27: Rationing During a Pandemic**


Lawrence O. Gostin, “Medical Countermeasures for Pandemic Influenza: Ethics and the Law,” *JAMA*, Feb 1, 2006

**Class 15: October 29: Biobanking**
Claudia Mund, “Biobanks—Data Sources without Limits?” Jusletter, Oct 2005

**Class 16: November 3: Sex Offender Registries and Geographic Restrictions**

**Class 17: November 5 and November 10: Liberty and Paternalism**

**Class 18: November 12: Increasing the Supply of Organs for Transplantation**
"Your part or mine? Organ Transplants,” *The Economist*, Nov. 18, 2006
“Organ Procurement: What Are the Questions?” President’s Bioethics Council
Sheldon Zink and Stacey Wertlieh, “Presumptive Donation,” *Critical Care Nurse*, Apr 2006

**Class 19: November 17: Exploitation**
“Exploitation,” *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*

**IV. THE ETHICS OF PRACTICE**

**Class 20: November 19: Professional Ethics in Public Affairs**
David Luban, “Professional Ethics,” in Frey and Wellman (eds.), *A Companion to Applied Ethics*
Michael Pritchard, *Professional Integrity*, Chapter 5

**Class 21: November 24: Codes of Ethics**
American Society for Public Administration Code of Ethics
Los Angeles Ethics Handbook for City Officials
ICMA Code of Ethics With Guidelines

**Class 22: December 1: The Ethics of Program Evaluation**

Dennis Thompson, *Political Ethics and Public Office*, Chapter 7
Matthew Davis and John Lantos, “Ethical Considerations in the Public Policy Laboratory,” *JAMA*, Jul 5, 2000
(optional) American Evaluation Association Guiding Principles for Evaluators

**Class 23: December 3: Professional Ethics and Bureaucratic Politics**

Mark Moore, *Creating Public Value*, Chapter 1
Rosemary O’Leary, *The Ethics of Dissent: Managing Guerilla Government*
  - Introduction (pp. 4-14)
  - Chapter 2 & First Interlude (pp. 26-46)
  - Second Interlude (pp. 64-69)

**Class 24: December 8: Professional Ethics and Bureaucratic Politics**

Martin Wachs, “Ethical Dilemmas in Forecasting for Public Policy,” in Willa Bruce (ed.), *Classics of Administrative Ethics*
  “Ethical Problems in Public Careers: Lying,” cases #1 & 5
Arthur Applbaum, *Ethics for Adversaries*, cases "Legal Aid in Rural California" and "Covert Military Aid for the Nicaraguan Contras"

**Class 25: December 10: Conclusion**