

NURS 905: ETHICS AND SOCIAL JUSTICE (ONLINE)

Loyola University of New Orleans

Dr. Ben Bayer

Summer 2015

Course description

Questions about justice are questions about the obligations we have towards other people, and about what we deserve from them. Questions about *social* justice are questions about what we owe and deserve as members of a society, about how a proper social system should be structured. It seems we cannot answer questions about social justice without raising basic questions about *ethics*—about what is the right vs. the wrong way to live, in general. This course explores some basic ethical theories and how they are applied to questions about social justice. It places special emphasis on controversies about social justice in the biomedical field and encourages students to think critically about received wisdom about their own social and political beliefs.

Course goals, objectives & outcomes

Upon successful completion of this course, the student will be able to:

1. Understand basic philosophical theories of justice and related moral concepts.
2. Learn to communicate their own views of justice to others, as informed by their understanding of prominent philosophical theories.
3. Apply a philosophic theory to a major controversy in biomedical ethics and health care policy.
4. Write a professional research paper that exhibits their understanding of philosophic theory and its application to this controversy, drawing on published academic research.

Grading

40%: Weekly online discussion

10%: Weekly journal entries

50%: Final paper

Required text

- *Justice: What's the Right Thing to Do?*, by Michael Sandel. (Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, 2009; paperback edition, 2010: ISBN 978-0-374-5320-5)

This book is available at the Loyola Bookstore and widely available from online booksellers.

Paper assignment

This assignment is about staking out a position on a controversial topic, considering an objection to that position, and then making an *original* response to that objection. Write between 2,800 and 3,500 words (8-10 pages, double-spaced, 1 inch margins, 12 point font) on a *topic of your choice*, responding to **each** of the following prompts, *in the order in which they are presented below*:

1. **Select** a major *controversy* in biomedical ethics or health care policy that interests you, and **describe** the two major sides of the question: why do people generally argue for one side of the controversy, and why do others disagree with them? You might select one of the case studies we discussed in class, but you are free to select an example we did not discuss that is of special interest to you. (10 points)
 - In the course of describing the controversy, you should reference some contemporary facts and figures that quantify the scope of the problem the controversy concerns. You should cite the source of your knowledge about these facts by citing at least one *published academic journal*. See **Notes about references** below for more on how to do this.
2. **Select** one of the major *theories of justice* we have studied in this course that you think is the most persuasive (2). Be sure to **describe** the major *thesis* of this theory, and also the basic *reasons* the philosopher who is associated with it gives in defense of the theory (preferably, the premises in an argument). (10 points)

3. **Select** the side of the controversy you described in (1) that you think is supported by the theory of justice you've chosen in (2). Explain why you think this theory supports this position on the controversy. (5 points)
4. **Describe** a major *objection* to the *theory of justice* you selected in (2) to defend your theory in the previous step, (3). This objection should be either an objection to one of the premises of the argument for the theory discussed in class, or an independent objection to the overall conclusion of the theory (for instance, the claim that the conclusion of the theory has some absurd implication). (10 points)
5. **Respond** to the objection you have just articulated (in (4)) to defend the theory of justice you chose in step (2), in order to defend your position on the controversy (which you staked out in step (4)). This is the portion of the paper where you should be saying something *original*. Even if the philosophers we studied had something to say in defense against the objection in step (4), you should not just repeat their response, but respond to possible responses to their response, or otherwise say something to new push the conversation forward. (15 points)

LECTURE AND READING SCHEDULE

Week 1: Monday, May 25th

- READ: Sandel Ch. 1, Doing the Right Thing
- WATCH ON BLACKBOARD: Recorded Lecture 1
- READ: Sandel Ch. 2, Utilitarianism
- WATCH ON BLACKBOARD: Recorded Lecture 2
- WRITE: Online discussion period ends: **Wednesday, May 27th**
- WRITE: Journal entries due: **Saturday, May 30th**
- Optional supplementary lectures by Sandel:
<http://is.gd/D81jdV>
<http://is.gd/TtuatH>

Week 2: Monday, June 1st

- READ: Sandel Ch. 3, Libertarianism
- WATCH ON BLACKBOARD: Recorded Lecture 3
- WRITE: Online discussion period ends: **Wednesday, June 3rd**
- WRITE: Journal entries due: **Saturday, June 6th**
- Optional supplementary lectures by Sandel:
<http://is.gd/INSoN9>
<http://is.gd/f4BU2e>

Week 3: Monday, June 8th

- READ: Sandel Ch. 4, Markets and Morals
- WATCH ON BLACKBOARD: Recorded Lecture 4
- WRITE: Online discussion period ends: **Wednesday, June 10th**
- WRITE: Journal entries due: **Saturday, June 13th**
- Optional supplementary lectures by Sandel:
<http://is.gd/STAvT0>

Week 4: Monday, June 15th

- READ: Sandel Ch. 5, Immanuel Kant
- WATCH ON BLACKBOARD: Recorded Lecture 5
- WRITE: Online discussion period ends: **Wednesday, June 17th**
- WRITE: Journal entries due: **Saturday, June 20th**

- Optional supplementary lectures by Sandel:
<http://is.gd/Mwcx7H>

Week 5: Monday, June 22nd

- READ: Sandel Ch. 6, John Rawls
- READ: Sandel Ch. 7, Arguing Affirmative Action
- WATCH ON BLACKBOARD: Recorded Lecture 6
- WRITE: Online discussion period ends: **Wednesday, June 24th**
- WRITE: Journal entries due: **Saturday, June 27th**
- Optional supplementary lectures by Sandel:
<http://is.gd/GW1Z7N>
<http://is.gd/xp6iwb>

Week 6: Monday, June 29th

- READ: Sandel Ch. 8, Aristotle
- WATCH ON BLACKBOARD: Recorded Lecture 7
- WRITE: Online discussion period ends: **Wednesday, July 1st**
- WRITE: Journal entries due: **Saturday, July 4th**
- Optional supplementary lectures by Sandel:
<http://is.gd/iUh2gf>
<http://is.gd/BEZVEb>

ONE PARAGRAPH TOPIC PROPOSAL DUE: Friday, July 3rd, 11:59pm (Central U.S. Daylight Time)

Week 7: Monday, July 6th

- READ: Sandel Ch. 9, Dilemmas of Loyalty
- WATCH ON BLACKBOARD: Recorded Lecture 8
- WRITE: Online discussion period ends: **Wednesday, July 8th**
- WRITE: Journal entries due: **Saturday, July 11th**
- Optional supplementary lectures by Sandel:
<http://is.gd/npyvLE>

OPTIONAL OUTLINE SUBMISSION DUE: Friday, July 10th, 11:59pm (Central U.S. Daylight Time)

Week 8: Monday, July 13th

- READ: Sandel Ch. 10, Justice and the Common Good
- WATCH ON BLACKBOARD: Recorded Lecture 9
- WRITE: Online discussion period ends: **Wednesday, July 15th**
- WRITE: Journal entries due: **Thursday, July 16th**
- Optional supplementary lectures by Sandel:
<http://is.gd/6n0g6k>

FINAL PAPER DUE: Friday, July 17th, 11:59pm (Central U.S. Daylight Time)