

Ethical Theory

Philosophy 6310

Fall 2021

Course Description: We will read three books related to ethical theory. *Grandstanding* is about the use (and abuse) of moral language. *The Philosophical Baby* spans a range of issues, many of which are related to cognitive science and moral psychology. *The Soil Will Save Us* is a foray into environmental ethics, covering everything from regenerative approaches to agriculture to mitigation of climate change. Students may write research papers on any of these topics—or other related areas.

Professor: Dr. Fritz Allhoff
[no email, please use Microsoft Teams]
Moore 3006
Tuesday 12:00-1:00
(269) 387-4503 (w)
wmich.webex.com/meet/fritz.allhoff

Seminar: Tuesday 2:00-3:30, locations TBD.

The current plan is to meet physically until Thanksgiving break; after Thanksgiving break, we will either meet physically or synchronously online. There are also asynchronous course components through e-learning. Course plans subject to revision given health and safety concerns.

Readings: Justin Tosi and Brandon Warmke, *Grandstanding: The Use and Abuse of Moral Talk* (Oxford University Press, 2020).

Alison Gopnik, *The Philosophical Baby: What Children's Minds Tell Us about Truth, Love, and the Meaning of Life* (Picador 2010).

Kristin Ohlson, *The Soil Will Save Us: How Scientists, Farmers, and Foodies are Healing the Soil to Save the Planet* (Rodale, 2014).

Electronics: If/when we meet physically, please do not plan on using devices (e.g., laptops, tablets, smartphones). Bring hard copies of the readings and materials for notetaking.

Grading:	Attendance/Participation	10%
	Reaction Papers	25%
	Discussion Forums	15%
	Annotated Research Bibliography	10%
	Research Paper	40%

Attendance/Participation: Students are required to attend each seminar and to participate. If students miss a seminar, they may turn in a 1,000-word reaction to the assigned readings (half exegetical, half evaluative) at the beginning of the following seminar to avoid a zero for the previous week. They may do this, at most, two times.

Readings Reaction Papers: Over the course of the seminar, students are required to submit *four reaction papers* on the readings; again, these should be 1,000 words, half exegetical, half evaluative. Reaction papers should include approximately ten footnotes to primary source material—i.e., neither substantially more nor substantially fewer—which, at a minimum, should include the week’s reading(s). Use of additional sources is welcome, but not required.

An additional reaction paper should be submitted for *some session of the WMU 10th Annual Medical Humanities Conference*, which will be held on September 24—the schedule will be posted on the [conference website](#). The format for this fifth reaction paper is more flexible (e.g., as there are no assigned readings). Exercise your judgment, but try: (1) to articulate the *issue* the presentation is about; (2) to convey the presenter’s *stance on that issue*; and (3) to *critically evaluate* that stance.

Reaction papers submitted for missed seminars will be counted toward attendance/participation, not this requirement. Reaction papers are due by 11:59 p.m. on the day preceding seminar.

Discussion Forums: For each week, you should make a post reacting to either the theme of that module or to particular readings within it. These posts should be *200-300 words*. You should also *respond* to at least two different posts from your classmates. These responses should be *no fewer than 100 words*.

The original posts must be submitted no later than Friday at 11:59 p.m.; the response posts must be submitted by Monday at 11:59 p.m. Note that these are the Fridays and Mondays *before* we meet for seminar, so plan ahead.

There are *twelve weeks* for which you may do discussion forums. However, only your *ten highest scores* will be counted toward your final grade. You therefore have the option of skipping two weeks entirely—this is also meant to give you some flexibility in case emergencies arise. My recommendation, however, would not be to skip forums early in the semester; save the allowances for any unforeseen eventualities that may arise.

Example:

Friday @ 11:59pm	Discussion post due for module #x
Monday @ 11:59 p.m.	Reply posts due for module #x
Tuesday @ 2:00 p.m.	Seminar meeting for module #x
[...]	[...]
Friday @ 11:59 p.m.	Discussion post due for module #(x+1)
Monday @ 11:59 p.m.	Reply posts due for module #(x+1)
Tuesday @ 2:00 p.m.	Seminar meeting for module #(x+1)
N.B., All written work is due <i>before</i> we meet on the associated material.	

Annotated research bibliography: Before writing their research papers, students will compile a research bibliography that will support the research for their projects. There should be at least twenty academic sources in this bibliography, preferably from a range of disciplines; at least half should be from within the past ten years.

For each of these twenty sources, students should provide full bibliographic information as well as a 100-word précis. Students should also provide an abstract for the paper—of approximately 250 words—at the beginning of the annotated research bibliography.

Research paper: Students will incorporate the annotated research bibliography into a research paper, which should be no fewer than 6,000 words, inclusive of footnotes and exclusive of bibliography. At least twenty sources and forty footnotes are strongly encouraged.

Students wishing to write longer papers (e.g., 9,000+ words) may discuss the prospects of an additional credit with the professor.

Formatting: All written work should be in 11-point font for the body and 10-point font for footnotes; all fonts should be serifed (e.g., Cambria or Times New Roman; not Arial or Calibri). Both the body and footnote text should be fully justified. Spacing should be double, except for block quotes in single.

Written work submitted out of compliance with these requirements—beyond a one-assignment grace period—will be returned to students. It may then be resubmitted as late (see below) once compliant.

Late Work: All work is due to e-learning. Work may be submitted up to a week late for a 10% penalty. Work may be submitted more than one week late only with prior approval of the professor. 'Late' means anything beyond the exact time at which it is due.

Incompletes: Incomplete grades may only be assigned in conformity with [university policy](#), not as general extensions. Should students anticipate requesting an incomplete, they should communicate this to the professor *as soon as is reasonably feasible*. Unnecessary delay in such communication may be relevant in the adjudication of such requests.

Statement on Academic Honesty: You are responsible for making yourself aware of and understanding the policies and procedures in the Graduate Catalog (pp. 25-27) that pertain to Academic Honesty. These policies include cheating, fabrication, falsification and forgery, multiple submission, plagiarism, complicity and computer misuse. If there is reason to believe you have been involved in academic dishonesty, you will be referred to the Office of Student Conduct. You will be given the opportunity to review the charge(s). If you believe you are not responsible, you will have the opportunity for a hearing. You should consult with the professor if you are uncertain about an issue of academic honesty prior to the submission of an assignment or test.

Week	Date	Topic
1	9/7	Tosi & Warmke, §§ 1-2
2	9/14	Tosi & Warmke, §§ 3-4
3	9/21	Tosi & Warmke, §§ 5-6
WMU 10th Annual Medical Humanities Conference on September 24		
4	9/28	Tosi & Warmke, §§ 7-8
5	10/5	Gopnik, §§ introduction, 1
6	10/12	Gopnik, §§ 2-3
7	10/19	Gopnik, §§ 4-5
8	10/26	Gopnik, §§ 6-7
9	11/2	Gopnik, §§ 8-9
10	11/9	Ohlson, §§ 1-2
11	11/16	Ohlson, §§ 3-4
12	11/23	Ohlson, §§ 5-6
13	11/30	Ohlson, §§ 7-8
Annotated Research Bibliographies due December 3		
14	12/7	[make-up class]
15	-	Research Paper due December 17

COVID-19 Syllabus Statement Western Michigan University

Due to the current COVID-19 Pandemic, and consistent with the State of Michigan requirements¹ and the WMU Safe Return plan,² the following safety requirements are in place to minimize exposure to the Western Michigan University community. These guidelines apply to all face-to-face classes held either inside or outside a WMU building. These guidelines are in place to ensure the safety of all students, faculty, and staff during the pandemic. Noncompliance is a violation of the class requirements and the Student Code.³

Face coverings are required for all students and faculty while in class, no matter the size of the space. Following this recommendation can minimize the transmission of the virus, which is spread between people interacting in close proximity through speaking, coughing, or sneezing. The State of Michigan requires wearing a cloth face covering in public settings. For outdoor class settings where social distancing is not possible (i.e., enabling at least six feet space between individuals), face coverings over both nose and mouth must also be worn. During specified classes in which face coverings would prevent required class elements, students may remove masks with instructor permission.

Face coverings must remain in place throughout the class. Any student who removes the mandatory face covering during class will be required to leave the classroom immediately. Instructors will end class if anyone refuses to appropriately wear a mask for the duration of class.

If a student arrives to class without a face covering or if a student fails to adhere to the requirements during a particular class, the instructor has the responsibility to take the following steps, in quick succession:

- While in the hallway, or away from other students, **remind the student**, in a firm yet kind manner, of the face covering requirement and the reason for it: safety. Ask the student to comply.
- If they do not, **remind the student that their non-compliance is a violation of class requirements and of the Student Code of Conduct** (see the first paragraph above) and ask that the student comply.
- If they do not, **ask the student to either comply or to leave the classroom immediately.**
- If the student fails to comply or leave, **dismiss class and report the student to Student Conduct.**

¹ https://www.michigan.gov/whitmer/0,9309,7-387-90499_90705---,00.html.

² <https://wmich.edu/safereturn>.

³ <https://wmich.edu/conduct/code> (see, especially, § B.22).

After class, instructors shall:

- **For students who failed to comply:** Immediately file a report with the Office of Student Conduct (OSC). The OSC will alert the student that they will not be allowed to return to class until the matter is addressed through Western's conduct process.
- **For students who initially violate the requirement, but who chose to comply when addressed:** Consider an email or other communication to remind the student of the requirement for future classes, but also to allow the student to explain their action in a way that might help mitigate it in the future.
- **Immediately communicate a class dismissal to your academic chair/director and Dean** and, as soon as possible, produce a written record of the facts.

Instructors should be confident that referrals to the OSC will be addressed and they will have the University's support as they reinforce Western Michigan University's classroom requirements.

Students who are unable to wear a face covering for a legitimate medical reason must indicate this to Disability Services for Students and accommodations will be determined. Instructors and students will be notified by DSS of any approved accommodations. No accommodations may be made without the approval of DSS.

Face coverings are not a substitute for **social distancing**. Students shall observe current social distancing guidelines in all instructional spaces, both indoors and outdoors. Students should avoid congregating around instructional space entrances before and after class sessions. Students should exit the instructional space immediately after the end of class to help ensure social distancing and to allow for those attending the next scheduled class session to enter.

If directional traffic guidelines are in place for an instructional space, students must follow them. These requirements are necessary because not everyone who is contagious exhibits symptoms of infection. Students who feel ill should not attend class in person and are encouraged to contact a health care provider. Covid-19 testing is available at the Sindecuse Health Center. However, even students who do not exhibit symptoms must abide by face covering and social distancing rules at all times while on campus.