Objective

The objective of this class is to examine the historical and contemporary effects of morality on society. We consider four substantive themes:

First, how do the moral codes that societies follow (to some degree) emerge in the first place? We will address this theme through a study of the emergence of moral claims based the concept of "human rights."

Second, assuming that societies always change, how are moral orders and goods maintained over time? We will address this theme through a study of moral freedom as a fundamental good that helps define the moral order of contemporary American society.

Third, moral orders sometimes collapse, and subsequently require reconstruction or repair. What are the prospects for bringing about moral repair? When are some means of moral repair preferred over others? Is moral repair always possible? We will address this theme using a comparative case study approach, examining a range of possibilities from "getting even" to "forgiving."

Finally we consider the claim that international order is no order at all but rather is a realm of independent and self-interested actors, a place where no holds are barred. Is there a place for morality and justice in international affairs? We will address this theme through case studies dealing with prohibitions against international assassination and against aerial bombing. The cases we examine are historical but their contemporary relevance is obvious and the historical readings will help us think through what is at stake in current affairs.

Remember, these themes provide only an introduction to a vast subject. They are not comprehensive. Yet tackling them should prepare us to continue studies of morality and society in other classes and in independent studies of our own.
Required Texts


Requirements

First, everyone is expected to do the readings assigned before class begins and to be ready to discuss the major arguments of the assigned readings during class. It is a good idea to take notes on your reading. Do not hesitate to read ahead.

Second, I expect you to write three papers, three to five pages in length. Each paper will assess your mastery of the readings in one of the major sections of the course. Your essay will address one of several topic questions that I will distribute one week before the paper due date. Each essay should clearly state its thesis, offer reasons why the thesis should be believed, and give evidence from the readings to back up the reasons.

Students taking the course for graduate credit will be required to do additional work worth an additional fifty points. See the instructor for further information.

Grading

Class attendance and participation count for 10% of your final grade. If you come to class on time (when roll is called), you receive full credit.

Paper grades count for 90% of your final grade. Each essay will earn a maximum of 30 points. I will assess the clarity of your prose (yes, grammar, spelling and composition "count") and the persuasiveness of your argument (that is, the quality of your thesis, the aptness of the reasons you give for it, and the thoroughness of your evidence). These papers must be the product of your own thought, not the product of collaboration with others. Final grades on each paper are subject to an oral examination.

Note Well: I do not accept late papers.
The final grade is calculated based on a 100-point scale in the usual fashion (90-100=A; 80-89=B; etc.).

(For graduate students the final grade is calculated based on a 150-point scale, also in the usual fashion, so 135-150=A; 120-134=B; etc.)

Supplemental Information

A Reminder from the Faculty Senate

The Faculty Senate advises that the following reminder be included in the course syllabus:

Handouts in this course are copyrighted. By "handouts," I mean all materials generated for this class, which include but are not limited to syllabi, quizzes, exams, in-class materials, etc. Because these materials are copyrighted, you do not have the right to copy them, without express written permission to do so.

As commonly defined, plagiarism consists of passing off as one's own the ideas, words, writings, etc. which belong to another. In accordance with this definition, you are committing plagiarism if you copy the work of another person and turn it in as your own, even if you should have the permission of that person. Plagiarism is one of the worst academic sins, for the plagiarist destroys the trust among colleagues without which research cannot safely be communicated.

If you have any questions regarding plagiarism, please consult the latest issue of the Texas A&M University Student Rules, under the section "Scholastic Dishonesty."

Aggie Honor Code

"An Aggie does not lie or cheat or tolerate those who do."

We expect our actions in this class to embody the spirit as well as the letter of the Aggie Honor Code. If you have any questions about the code or Honors Council Rules and Procedures, please consult the "Know the Code" website found at http://www.tamu.edu/aggiehonor/.

Americans with Disabilities Act

The Americans with Disabilities Act is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you believe you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please contact the Office of Support Services for Students with Disabilities in room 126 of the Student Services Building. The telephone number is 845-1637.
Course Outline

I. The Just and the Good

Aug 27 The Utility of Justice


Aug 29 The Good We Seek


II. Emergent Norms: The Case of Human Rights

Sep 3 The Self-Evident "Rights of Men"
Reading: IHR (pp. 15-34)

Sep 5 Cultivating Moral Empathy
Reading: IHR (pp. 35-69)

Sep 10 Abolishing Torture
Reading: IHR (pp. 70-112)

Sep 12 Declaring Human Rights in France and America
Reading: IHR (pp. 113-145)

Sep 17 What Followed from This?
Reading: IHR (pp. 146-175)

Sep 19 Nonsense on Stilts
Reading: IHR (pp. 176-214)

First Paper Due

A hardcopy of your paper is due in the Sociology Office, ACAD 311, before 5:00 pm on Monday, September 24th.
III. Maintaining Moral Order: The American Good of Freedom

Sep 26  American Virtue and Vice  
Reading: MF (pp. 1-62)

Oct 1  Self Control Without Guilt or Judgment  
Reading: MF (pp. 63-96)

Oct 3  Ambivalent about Truth and Forgiveness  
Reading: MF (pp. 97-166)

Oct 8  Human Destiny, Character, and Self-Determination  
Reading: MF (pp. 167-197)

Oct 10  Balancing Freedom and Authority  
Reading: MF (pp. 167-231)

IV. Prospects for Moral Repair: After Justice Fails

Oct 15  When Moral Orders Fail  
Reading: BV&F (pp. 1-8)

Oct 17  Either/Or: Get Even or Acquit?  
Reading: BV&F (pp. 9-24)

Oct 22  Legal Proceedings  
Reading: BV&F (pp. 25-51)

Oct 24  Truth Commissions  
Reading: BV&F (pp. 52-90)

Oct 29  Reparations  
Reading: BV&F (pp. 91-117)

Oct 31  Remembering and Forgetting  
Reading: BV&F (pp. 118-147)

Nov 5  Movie: Death and the Maiden

DOM (pp. 3-75)
Second Paper Due

A hardcopy of your paper is due in the Sociology Office, ACAD 311, before 5:00 pm on Thursday, **November 7th**

V. Morals and International Relations: A Non Sequitur?

- **Nov 12**  
  Morals in International Affairs  
  Reading: EOD (pp. 1-26)

- **Nov 14**  
  Power and Principle  
  Reading: EOD (pp. 27-46)

- **Nov 19**  
  Assassination  
  Reading: EOD (pp. 47-86)

- **Nov 20**  
  Aerial Bombing to 1945  
  Reading: EOD (pp. 87-146)

- **Nov 21**  
  *Documentary: Pray the Devil Back to Hell*

- **Nov 26**  
  Aerial Bombing since 1945  
  Reading: EOD (pp. 147-180)

- **Nov 28**  
  What Role for International Ethics?  
  Reading: EOD (pp. 181-196)

Final Paper Due

A hardcopy of your paper is due in the Sociology Office, ACAD 311, before 5:00 pm on Friday, **December 7th**