

DC/GAM/IT 228 Ethics in Computer Games and Cinema
Winter 2014 | Monday/Wednesday 10:10am – 11:40am | CDM 220

Instructor: James Choi
Office: CDM 220
Office Hours: By appointment
CDM 220 Monday/Wednesday 11:40am - 1pm
LEVAN 305 Tuesday/Thursday 5:50pm – 7:15pm
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Course Description:

Societies function based on normative ethics utilizing common sense to distinguish between ethical and unethical behavior. Most of us are not aware of the underlying theories when arriving at ethical judgments about right and wrong. This course will explore the fast pace of progress in information technologies and digital entertainment which creates an environment, in which ethical challenges are particularly complex.

Goals For This Course:

The goals for the course will be to analyze the impact of digital entertainment on an individual and society and the implications of certain values embedded in games and movies. Elements of the ethical code of conduct for a game or movie creator will be formulated with the issues involved in balancing individual creativity vs. cultural impact.

Learning Domain Description

(Course Number) (Title) is included in the Liberal Studies program as a course with credit in the Philosophical Inquiry domain. Philosophical Inquiry examines the most basic questions of human existence. It considers the fundamental beliefs and convictions that shape what it means to be human, our relationships with others, and the nature of the world itself. Its aim is to develop our critical, imaginative, and analytical abilities, and it enables students to understand various kinds of important intellectual problems from a variety of perspectives and approaches, interpret and assess historical and contemporary texts concerned with these issues, and articulate reasoned judgments about these most basic concerns of human life. Philosophical inquiry is thus committed to the task of reflecting on the ideas and events that make up the cultures, societies, and traditions within which we live and to enhancing our understanding of their significance and complexity. Courses in Philosophical Inquiry support the mission of the Liberal Studies Program by fostering deeper understanding and appreciation of the worlds of meaning and of value and of the enterprise of intellectual inquiry and social dialogue.

Learning Outcomes:

1. Using multiple perspectives, students will be able to address, critically think about, and analyze philosophical questions and problems.
2. Students will be able to evaluate philosophical questions, issues and/or problems using informed judgment. Students will be able to analyze and interpret the methods used by philosophers in addressing philosophical questions, issues, and/or problems.
3. Students will be able to develop an understanding of the historical context of philosophical topics, figures, and texts.
4. Students will be able to write an analytic essay treating a philosophical question, issue and/or problem that forwards an identifiable thesis, argument, and conclusion.
5. Students will be able to address, critically think about, and analyze ethical issues, applying philosophical tools drawn from various ethical traditions to concrete cases pertinent to a variety of subject matters.

Text:

(Recommended Text) *The Elements of Moral Philosophy* by James Rachels and Stuart Rachels – Seventh Edition

Grading:

Midterm Essay	20%
Three Peer Review Papers (1200 words)	25%
Two Ethical Analyses Papers (2400 words)	40%
Participation/Attendance	10%
Final Discussion	5%

A = 110-93, A- = 92-90, B+ = 89-88, B = 87-83, B- = 82-80, C+ = 79-78, C = 77-73, C- = 72-70, D+ = 69-68, D = 67-63, D- = 62-60, F = 59-0

Attendance – Attendance is mandatory. **Anyone who misses 3 classes will not get receive 10% for participation and attendance.** If you have to miss class, contact me PRIOR to class time to discuss excusing the absence. Please email me at james@beachwoodpics.com

Class Participation—Along with showing up, you are expected to join in class discussions, and critique other people's work. Remember, this is your class, you will get out of it what you put in it.

Requesting an incomplete grade:

An incomplete grade may only be assigned to a student if the student has experienced an extenuating circumstance near the end of the term, the student is in good standing in the class, and the request is made in advance. This being said it is solely up to the discretion of the instructor to grant an incomplete.

Assignments and Exercises – Class Work Assignments must be handed in on time. There is a 10% penalty for each day past the due date for up to three days. Then, your assignment will not be accepted.

Written Assignments: Must be typed.

COLWEB—In an attempt to save some trees and cash, most assignments will be turned in via COLWEB. If you are unfamiliar with COLWEB please see me. In some cases, you must print and bring in an assignment. I will indicate in the syllabus how each assignment must be turned into me.

Special Accommodations: If you have any special considerations please see me.

BACK UP YOUR WORK: Failure of computer software and or Hardware will not be accepted as an extenuating circumstance for late projects or incomplete grades so back up your work daily.

Examinations – Students who do not take exams during the regularly scheduled time will receive a failing grade for the exam unless they have contacted the instructor in advance to arrange for a make-up exam. Make-up exams will be administered by the College according to its make-up exam schedule.

Plagiarism – Plagiarism on assignments or cheating on exams are serious offenses and earn the student a failing grade for the class. Please read the Academic Integrity Policy (AIP) at: <http://studentaffairs.depaul.edu/>

Cell Phones—Use of cell phones in the class is prohibited. Please turn your phone off before entering class. Mistakes will happen (to me too), but repeated failure to turn your phone off will result in a lowered grade for the class. Absolutely no texting in class!

Course Lectures/Reading Assignments – The assigned readings offer an opportunity for independent learning that supplements the lectures. Lectures will introduce material not available in the readings, and the readings will explore concepts not mentioned in class. It is not my intention to overwhelm you with reading, but rather to use the textbook as a way to support and reinforce the concepts we learn in class.

Content Changes – Depending on time factors, the assignments projected for the term may require slight alteration or rescheduling. I will contact you via email with any deviations from the syllabus. Please ensure that mail sent to the email address that you provided to the school is readily accessible.

Online Course Evaluations - Evaluations are a way for students to provide valuable feedback regarding their instructor and the course. Detailed feedback will enable the instructor to continuously tailor teaching methods and course content to meet the learning goals of the course and the academic needs of the students. They are a requirement of the course and are key to continue to provide you with the highest quality of teaching. The evaluations are anonymous; the instructor and administration do not track who entered what responses. A program is used to check if the student completed the evaluations, but the evaluation is completely separate from the student's identity. Since 100% participation is our goal, students are sent periodic reminders over three weeks. Students do not receive reminders once they complete the evaluation. Students complete the evaluation online in [CampusConnect](#).

Academic Integrity and Plagiaris - This course will be subject to the university's academic integrity policy. More information can be found at <http://academicintegrity.depaul.edu/>. If you have any questions be sure to consult with your professor.

Academic Policies - All students are required to manage their class schedules each term in accordance with the deadlines for enrolling and withdrawing as indicated in the [University Academic Calendar](#). Information on enrollment, withdrawal, grading and incompletes can be found at: cdm.depaul.edu/enrollment.

Students with Disabilities - Students who feel they may need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability should contact the instructor privately to discuss their specific needs. All discussions will remain confidential. To ensure that you receive the most appropriate accommodation based on your needs, contact the instructor as early as possible in the quarter (preferably within the first week of class), and make sure that you have contacted the Center for Students with Disabilities (CSD) at: csd@depaul.edu.

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Schedule for the Class (Subject to Change)

Week 1

- *Introduction to course material and syllabus review*
- *What is Morality?*
- *The problem of Definition*
- *Reason and Impartiality*
- *The Minimum Conception of Morality*

Week 2

- Subjectivism in Ethics; are there proofs in ethics and moral facts? Morality and Religion, Divine Command Theory and the Theory of Natural Law.; Psychological Egotism, Ethical Egotism, Social Contract theory.
- Peer Review Assignment One: Write a 1200 word paper on the subjects covered in the first two weeks. Explain how the challenges to Moral Philosophy have been logically refuted.

Week 3

- The Utilitarian Approach; The revolution in ethics; the debate over Utilitarianism, the resilience of the theory, the defense of utilitarianism. Are there absolute moral Rules? Kant and the Categorical Imperative, Kant and the respect for persons.

Week 4

- Women philosophers and Virtue theory
- Multi-strategy Utilitarianism
- and Peer Review two: Write a 1200 word paper explaining your view of a "Satisfactory Moral Theory".

Week 5

- Does media influence Society? Does influence imply responsibility?
- The ethical implications of the portrayal of violence and sex in entertainment and the effect such portrayal has on the viewer.
- Documentary and reality programming.

Week 6

- Children's programming. How are cartoons and violence different in the age of digital entertainment? Was violence in cartoons the same as violent video games today?

Week 7

- The introduction of Interactive Media, Computer Games. Violence, stereotyping, cheating?
- Case study San Andreas

Week 8

- Self-Portrayal in a Simulated Life: Projecting Personality and Values and Gaming, addiction in MMOGs.
- The over connected generation. The ethical implications of social networking, IM, texting and Twitter.
- Reality TV

Week 9

- Piracy, MDCA, Fair Use, Computer generated images of Actors, Digital artifacts as real property. How is burning a copy of a CD for a friend different than loaning someone a CD you bought. What is Fair-Use? Digital artifacts in MMOGs as real property, tax and legal implications of business on "Second Life".
- Peer Review Assignment three.

Week 10

- Final project. Discussion of the topics chosen by the class participants as being the most pressing ethical issues facing the Digital Entertainment industry. Students should be prepared for questions following the debate. The arguments must be framed in terms of the ethical outlines covered in the course and reading material.

Final - Monday, March 17th – 8:45am – 11am