**FILM/GAM/IT 228-303: Ethics in Computer Games and Cinema**

**Spring Quarter 2020**

**Class number: 30066**

**Section number: 303**

**REMOTE/ONLINE**

 **(Updated March 30th, 2020)**

**Instructor Information**

Sam Bartos

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Office: ZOOM: Office Hours: T/TH 3:30-5:00pm (by appointment)

**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. However, the fast pace of progress in information technologies and digital entertainment creates an environment, in which ethical challenges are particularly complex. In the eyes of many, games and movies are violent, offensive and immoral. This course will concentrate on analyzing the impact of digital entertainment on an individual and society. Implications of certain values embedded in games and movies will be discussed. Elements of the ethical code of conduct for a game or movie creator will be formulated. The issue of balancing individual creativity vs. cultural impact particularly on children will be discussed. (For more information about the course: <https://d2l.cdm.depaul.edu>).

**Learning Domain Description**

FILM/GAM/IT Ethics 228 is included in the Liberal Studies program as a course with credit in the Philosophical Inquiry domain. Courses in the Philosophical Inquiry domain address conceptual issues fundamental to reflection on such philosophical topics as metaphysics (e.g., being and nonbeing, the one and the many, the nature of reality, same and other, self and other); epistemology (e.g., the nature and possibility of knowledge, different ways of knowing, knowledge vs. opinion, truth and falsity); ethics (e.g., right and wrong action, good and bad, objectivism and relativism in ethics, social and political philosophies, the idea of value, the problem of evil); and aesthetics (e.g., the nature of beauty, aesthetic value, the possibility of aesthetic valuation). Courses address questions of how such topics impinge upon, shape, and challenge student lives.

**Required Text**

Rachels, James and Stuart Rachels. *The Elements of Moral Philosophy,* 9th ed. New York: McGraw-Hill Education, 2019.

Additional readings, including primary texts from philosophers, will be provided on D2L.

**Learning Outcomes (and how they will be met)**

1. By the end of the course, students will be able to address, critically think about, and analyze philosophical questions and problems, which will be achieved through the writing of papers (minimum of 10 pages) and completion of weekly worksheets.
2. Students will be able to evaluate philosophical questions, issues, and/or problems using informed judgment, which will be achieved through a variety of learning methods, including the reading of philosophical texts, the viewing of various films, and completion of weekly response questions.
3. Students will be able to analyze and interpret the methods used by philosophers in addressing philosophical questions, issues, and/or problems, which will be achieved by evaluating ethical issues in media, more specifically through relating basic ethical frameworks to larger moral topics in video games and movies.
4. Students will be able to engage with philosophical topics and figures in their historical context, which will be achieved through readings, lectures, and writing assignments.
5. Students will be able to confront and interpret primary texts from the philosophical tradition, which will be achieved through a selection of philosophical readings, starting with secondary sources and then primary texts.
6. Students will be able to write analytic essays (totaling a minimum of 10 pages), treating philosophical questions, issues, and/or problems, each of which will provide an identifiable thesis, argument and conclusion. This will be achieved through an understanding of content, including readings, lectures, and PowerPoint notes.

**Grading Scale**

A 93-100 %, A- 90-92 %

B+ 87-89 %, B 84-86 %, B- 80-83 %

C+ 77-79%, C 74-76 %, C- 70-73 %

D+ 67-69 %, D 60-66 %

F 0-59%

**Grade Breakdown**

Ethics Papers: **150 Points** (75 Points each) - There will be TWO of these.

Ethics Worksheets: **100 Points** (10 Points each) – There will be TEN of these.

Attendance/Response Questions: **50 Points** (5 Points per week)

TOTAL: **300 Points**

**[Ethics Papers will be 5-6 Pages].**

**Course Policies**

**Course Format & Readings/Outside Screenings**

During the course, we will spend the first five weeks discussing basic ethical frameworks and then spend the last five weeks looking into specific topics in ethics and media. During those last five weeks, the first half of each lecture will be devoted to movies (based on a film students will have viewed ahead of time) and the second half will be devoted to video games (based on an article students will have read ahead of time).

Video Lectures will be posted to the D2L Content Tab once per week. Class texts must be read ahead of time so that students can understand lecture material. Some readings will come directly from our book, and others will be posted to D2L under Content.

Students will also need to view several films. All films will be available on ColTube (through D2L). Screenings and readings must be completed BEFORE watching Video Lectures.

[DISCLAIMER**:** *Assigned features include adult language, violence, & sexual content.*]

Films students will need to view are as follows…

*Minority Report*

*Dear Zachary*

*Pulp Fiction*

*Taxi Driver*

*This Film is Not Yet Rated*

**Class Participation**

Each week, students will be responsible for reading class texts, listening carefully to lecture information, and then completing Response Questions and Worksheets through D2L. It is very important that you complete all assignments through D2L. Students will also be expected to write TWO papers for this class.

**Writing Assignments**

Students will be expected to complete a minimum of 10 pages of writing for this course. This will come in the form of two large papers (5-6 pages each). Students are expected to turn in papers on D2L.

A few weeks ahead of time, I will put up the guidelines to writing assignments on D2L.. It is up to the student to read these guidelines carefully and make sure they know exactly what is required of them to write a satisfactory paper. For each writing assignment, I will be grading based on how clearly you’re able to exposit philosophical information and how strong an argument you’re able to form when it comes to expressing your own philosophical opinion, as well as basic mechanics (i.e. spelling, grammar, and punctuation). Please allow 1-2 weeks for the return of written papers.

Written assignments must be submitted via D2L and must be submitted on time in order to receive full credit. For each day a paper is late, 10% will be taken off.

**Ethics Worksheets**

Each week, students will be given a worksheet, made up of just a few questions relating to that week’s topic(s). Each worksheet will be fairly simple. I only give them to make sure students understand the basic ideas behind the topics we go over each week.

Ethics Worksheets can be found under the Content Tab. Each week, I will upload a new worksheet in reference to that week’s video lecture. Please view the video lecture before completing the worksheet.

Students are expected to write their answers to each question in a WORD of PDF document, which can then be submitted to the Submissions Tab on D2L.

Students will have until Saturday at 11pm to submit each Ethics Worksheet to D2L.

**Response Questions**

Each week, students will also be responsible for answering 2-3 Response Questions. These will pertain to the video lecture and PowerPoint, and will only require short paragraph responses. It is important that students answer every question in order to gain points for the attendance portion of their grade.

Response Questions can be found under the Discussions Tab. Each week, I will upload 2-3 new Discussion Questions, in reference to that week’s video lecture. Please view the video lecture before answering the response questions.

Students will have until Saturday at 11pm to submit Response Questions to D2L.

**Additional Policies**

**Drop Dates:** Note: The last day to drop this class with no penalty (100% tuition refund if applicable and no grade on transcript) will be APRIL 13th. The last day to withdraw will be MAY 15th.

**Incompletes:** For information on DePaul’s incomplete policy, please visit the following link: <https://www.cdm.depaul.edu/Current%20Students/Pages/Grading-Policies.aspx>

**Additional Information**

**Changes to Syllabus**

This syllabus is subject to change as necessary during the quarter. If a change occurs, it will be thoroughly addressed during class, posted under Announcements in D2L and sent via email

**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](https://campusconnect.depaul.edu/).

**Academic Integrity and Plagiarism**

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](http://oaa.depaul.edu/what/calendar.jsp). Information on enrollment, withdrawal, grading and incompletes can be found at [http://www.cdm.depaul.edu/Current%20Students/Pages/PoliciesandProcedures.aspx](https://www.cdm.depaul.edu/Current%20Students/Pages/PoliciesandProcedures.aspx).

**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:  Lewis Center 1420, 25 East Jackson Blvd.  Phone number: (312)362-8002  Fax: (312)362-6544  TTY: (773)325.7296

**Course Schedule (Subject to Change)**

**Week 1 (March 30th): Trolley Car Problem and Intro to Morality**

Introduction and Trolley Car Problem

The Minimum Conception of Morality

READINGS DUE:

Rachels: Chapters 1 (Read this before viewing the SECOND HALF of the first video lecture).

**Week 2 (April 6th): Relativism, Subjectivism, and Religious Ethics**

Cultural Relativism, and Ethical Subjectivism.

Religious Ethics: Divine Command Theory, and Natural Law Theory.

READINGS DUE:

Rachels: Chapters 2, 3, and 4.

Plato: “Euthyphro”

**Week 3 (April 13th): The Social Contract Theory and Ethical Egoism**

The State of Nature and the Social Contract Theory.

Psychological Egoism and Ethical Egoism.

READINGS DUE:

Rachels: Chapter 5, 6.

Hobbes: *Leviathan*: Chapter 13

Branden: “Isn’t Everyone Selfish?”

**Week 4 (April 20th): Utilitarianism and Kantian Ethics**

Utilitarianism.

Kantian Ethics.

READINGS DUE:

Rachels: Chapters 7, 8, 9, and 10.

Mill: *Utilitarianism*: Chapter 1.

Kant: *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*: Passage from Section 2.

**ASSIGN**: **Ethics Paper #1:** Write a 5-6-page paper on any TWO moral frameworks and then write about how those frameworks would view any ONE movie or video game of your choice. Then, argue either for or against those framework’s responses to your film/game. See assignment details/rubric on D2l. Papers must be uploaded via D2L Dropbox **by 11pm on Saturday, 5/9**.

**Week 5 (April 27th): The Ethics of Care and Virtue Ethics**

The Ethics of Care

Virtue Ethics

READINGS DUE:

Rachels: Chapters 11, 12 and 13.

Singer: “The Drowning Child and the Expanding Circle”

Aristotle: *Nicomachean Ethics:* Book I: Sections 1-6.

**Week 6 (May 4th): How Movies and Games Depict Morality Pt. 1**

Morality in Narrative Film: *Minority Report.*

Morality in Video Games: *Ultima IV, Manhunt.*

READINGS DUE:

Zagal: “Ethically Notable Videogames: Moral Dilemmas and Gameplay”

OUTSIDE SCREENING:

*Minority Report* (Steven Spielberg, 2002) [ColTube].

**DUE: Ethics Paper #1:** Papers must be uploaded via D2L Dropbox **by 11pm on 5/9**.

**Week 7 (May 11th): How Movies and Games Depict Morality Pt. 2**

Morality in Documentary Film: *Dear Zachary*

Morality in Video Games: Moore Article

READINGS DUE:

Moore: “Making Moral Choices in Video Games”

OUTSIDE SCREENING:

*Dear Zachary* (Kurt Kuenne, 2008) [ColTube].

**Week 8 (May 18th): Moral Responsibility of Media Authors Pt. 1**

Moral Responsibility of Film Directors: *Pulp Fiction*.

Moral Responsibility of Video Game Creators: *GTA San Andreas*

READINGS DUE:

Spiegel: “Interview with Michael Haneke”.

Devane and Squire: “The Meaning of Race and Violence in Grand Theft Auto”.

OUTSIDE SCREENING:

*Pulp Fiction* (Quentin Tarantino, 1994) [ColTube].

**Week 9 (May 25th): Moral Responsibility of Media Authors Pt. 2**

Moral Responsibility of Film Directors: *Taxi Driver*

Moral Responsibility of Video Game Creators: *Hatred*

READINGS DUE:

*Hatred* Articles

OUTSIDE SCREENING:

*Taxi Driver* (Martin Scorsese, 1976) [ColTube].

**ASSIGN**: **Ethics Paper #2:** Write a 5-6-page paper on ONE ethical idea discussed in the last five weeks of class and then relate that idea to that week’s Game article and Film. Clearly exposit the ethical idea and provide your own philosophical opinion. See assignment details/rubric on D2l. Papers due **by Final’s Week: June 12th at 11pm.**

**Week 10 (June 1st): Should Movies and Games Be Censored/Rated?**

Censorship in Film: *This Film is Not Yet Rated*

Censorship in Video Games, and Class Conclusion

READINGS DUE:

Game Ratings Articles

OUTSIDE SCREENING:

*This Film is Not Yet Rated* (Kirby Dick, 2006) [ColTube].

**DUE: Ethics Paper #2:** Papers must be uploaded via D2L Dropbox **by 11pm on 6/12**.