

FILM/GAM/IT 228-521: Ethics in Computer Games and Cinema

Winter Quarter 2022

Class number: 28273

Section number: 521

REMOTE/ONLINE: Asynchronous

(Updated January 2nd, 2022)

Instructor Information

Sam Bartos

Email: SBartos92@gmail.com (Email Return in up to 48 hours)

Office: LEWIS 1217 (LOOP): Office Hours: T/TH 10:00-11:30am (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/Participation/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 a play-through video students will have viewed ahead of time).

Video Lectures will be posted to the D2L Content Tab at the start of each 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 and video game play-through videos. All films will be available on [ColTube](#) (through D2L). Additional videos will be available through YouTube. Screenings and readings must be completed BEFORE watching video lectures.

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

Students will learn about the following FILMS and VIDEO GAMES...

FILMS

Minority Report

Dear Zachary

Pulp Fiction

A Clockwork Orange

Video Games

Detroit: Become Human

Undertale

GTA V

Hatred

We will also be watching two additional documentaries...

This Film is Not Yet Rated

How Does The ESRB Rate Video Games?

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 have a decent understanding of what 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. Online Students are expected to view the video lecture before completing the worksheet.

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

Each week, students will have until Sunday at Midnight to submit their Ethics Worksheet to D2L.

Response Questions

Each week, ONLINE 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 online students answer every question in order to gain points for the attendance/participation 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 lecture. Please view the lecture online before answering the response questions.

Each week, online students will have until Sunday at Midnight to submit their 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 JANUARY 16th. The last day to withdraw will be FEBRUARY 20th. More information can be found by visiting the following link: <https://academics.depaul.edu/calendar/Pages/default.aspx>

Contact Hours: This course will contain 10 video lectures (1-2 hours each) in addition to online discussion forums every week (response questions). Students will also receive feedback from the instructor on all worksheet and paper assignments through D2L.

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.

COVID-19 Health and Safety Precautions Keeping our DePaul community safe is of utmost importance in the pandemic. Students, faculty and staff are expected to (1) wear a mask as required at all times while indoors on campus; (2) refrain from eating and drinking in classrooms; (3) keep current with their COVID-19 vaccinations or exemptions; (4) stay home if sick; (5) participate in any required COVID-19 testing; (6) complete the online Health and Safety Guidelines for Returning to Campus training; and (7) abide by the City of Chicago Emergency Travel Advisory. By doing these things, we are Taking Care of DePaul, Together. The recommendations may change as local, state, and federal guidelines evolve. Students who do not abide by the mask requirement may be subject to the student conduct process and will be referred to the Dean of Students Office. Students who have a medical reason for not complying with any requirements should register with DePaul's Center for Student with Disabilities (CSD).

Respect for Diversity and Inclusion at DePaul University as aligned with our Vincentian Values At DePaul, our mission calls us to explore “what must be done” in order to respect the inherent dignity and identity of each human person. We value diversity because it is part of our history, our traditions and our future. We see diversity as an asset and a strength that adds to the richness of classroom learning. In my course, I strive to include diverse authors, perspectives and teaching pedagogies. I also encourage open dialogue and spaces for students to express their unique identities and perspectives. I am open to having difficult conversations and I will strive to create an inclusive classroom that values all perspectives. If at any time, the classroom experience does not live up to this expectation, please feel free to contact me via email or during office hours.

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. Please see <https://resources.depaul.edu/teaching-commons/teaching/Pages/online-teaching-evaluations.aspx> for additional information.

Academic Integrity and Plagiarism This course will be subject to the university's academic integrity policy. All students are expected to abide by the University's Academic Integrity Policy which prohibits cheating and other misconduct in student coursework. Publicly sharing or posting online any prior or current materials from this course (including exam questions or answers), is considered to be providing unauthorized assistance prohibited by the policy. Both students who share/post and students who access or use such materials are considered to be cheating under the Policy and will be subject to sanctions for violations of Academic Integrity.

More information can be found at <https://resources.depaul.edu/teaching-commons/teaching/academic-integrity/Pages/default.aspx>.

Posting work on online sites, such as Hero

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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: <http://www.cdm.depaul.edu/Current%20Students/Pages/PoliciesandProcedures.aspx>

Incomplete Grades

An incomplete grade is a special, temporary grade that may be assigned by an instructor when unforeseeable circumstances prevent a student from completing course requirements by the end of the term and when otherwise the student had a record of satisfactory progress in the course. All incomplete requests must be approved by the instructor of the course and a CDM Associate Dean. Only exceptions cases will receive such approval. Information about the Incomplete Grades policy can be found at <http://www.cdm.depaul.edu/Current%20Students/Pages/Grading-Policies.aspx>

Preferred Name & Gender Pronouns

Professional courtesy and sensitivity are especially important with respect to individuals and topics dealing with differences of race, culture, religion, politics, sexual orientation, gender, gender variance, and nationalities. I will gladly honor your request to address you by an alternate name or gender pronoun. Please advise me of this preference early in the quarter so that I may make appropriate changes to my records. Please also note that students may choose to identify within the University community with a preferred first name that differs from their legal name and may also update their gender. The preferred first name will appear in University related systems and documents except where the use of the legal name is necessitated or required by University business or legal need. For more information and instructions on how to do so, please see the Student Preferred Name and Gender Policy at <http://policies.depaul.edu/policy/policy.aspx?pid=332>

Students with Disabilities

Students seeking disability-related accommodations are required to register with DePaul's Center for Students with Disabilities (CSD) enabling them to access accommodations and support services to assist with their success. There are two office locations:

Loop Campus (312) 362-8002
Lincoln Park Campus (773) 325-1677
Email: csd@depaul.edu

Students who register with the Center for Students with Disabilities are also invited to contact Dr. Gregory Moorhead, Director of the Center, privately to discuss how he may assist in facilitating the accommodations to be used in a course. This is best done early in the term. The conversation will remain confidential to the extent possible.

Please see <https://offices.depaul.edu/student-affairs/about/departments/Pages/csd.aspx> for Services and Contact Information.

Course Schedule (Subject to Change)

Week 1 (January 3rd - 9th): Trolley Car Problem and Intro to Morality

Introduction and Trolley Car Problem

The Minimum Conception of Morality

READINGS DUE:

Rachels: Chapter 1

Week 2 (January 10th - 16th): 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, 4.

Plato: "Euthyphro"

Week 3 (January 17th – 23rd): The Social Contract Theory and Ethical Egoism

The State of Nature and the Social Contract Theory

Psychological Egoism, and Ethical Egoism.

READINGS DUE:

Rachels: Chapters 5, 6.

Hobbes: *Leviathan*: Chapter 13

Branden: "Isn't Everyone Selfish?"

Week 4 (January 24th – 30th): Utilitarianism and Kantian Ethics

Utilitarianism.

Kantian Ethics.

READINGS DUE:

Rachels: Chapters 7, 8, 9, 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. See assignment details/rubric on D2L. Papers must be uploaded via D2L Dropbox **by Midnight on Sunday, 2/13.**

Week 5 (January 31st – February 6th): The Ethics of Care and Virtue Ethics

The Ethics of Care

Virtue Ethics

READINGS DUE:

Rachels: Chapters 11, 12, 13.

Singer: “The Drowning Child and the Expanding Circle”

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

Week 6 (February 7th - 13th): How Movies and Games Depict Morality Pt. 1

Morality in Narrative Film: *Minority Report*.

Morality in Video Games: *Detroit: Become Human*.

OUTSIDE SCREENINGS:

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

Detroit: Become Human (Play-Through Video) [[YouTube](#)]

DUE: Ethics Paper #1: Papers must be uploaded to D2L **by Midnight on 2/13.**

Week 7 (February 14th – 20th): How Movies and Games Depict Morality Pt. 2

Morality in Documentary Film: *Dear Zachary*

Morality in Video Games: *Undertale*

OUTSIDE SCREENINGS:

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

Undertale (Play-Through Video) [[YouTube](#)]

Week 8 (February 21st – 27th): Controversial Movies and Games Pt. 1

Controversial Movies: *Pulp Fiction*.

Controversial Video Games: *GTA V*

OUTSIDE SCREENINGS:

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

GTA V (Play-Through Video) [[YouTube](#)]

READINGS DUE:

Shone: *Haneke and Tarantino*

Week 9 (February 28th – March 6th): Controversial Movies and Games Pt. 2

Controversial Movies: *A Clockwork Orange*

Controversial Video Games: *Hatred*

OUTSIDE SCREENINGS:

A Clockwork Orange (Stanley Kubrick, 1971) [[ColTube](#)].

Hatred (Play-Through Video) [[YouTube](#)]

READINGS DUE:

Hatred Articles

ASSIGN: Ethics Paper #2: Write a 5-6-page paper on any ONE movie or video game of your choice. Then answer a list of questions pertaining to the three units discussed in the second half of the quarter. See assignment details/rubric on D2L. Papers must be uploaded via D2L Dropbox **by Midnight on Sunday, 3/20.**

Week 10 (March 7th – 13th): Should Movies and Games Be Censored/Rated?

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

Censorship in Video Games & Course Conclusion

OUTSIDE SCREENINGS:

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

How Does the ESRB Rate Video Games? (No Clip, 2019) [[YouTube](#)].

READINGS DUE: Game Ratings Articles

DUE: Ethics Paper #2: Papers must be uploaded via D2L Dropbox **by Midnight on 3/20.**