

GAM/DC/IT 228 Ethics in Computer Games/Movies

#203 MW 2:40PM - 4:10PM, Levan 301, Lincoln Park

Dr. Bernard Roddy

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Office Hours: LPC, JTR 306: M 1:00 – 2:30 p.m.; T 8:00 – 9:30 a.m.

Summary of the course

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, both for the professional in the field and for the casual user. Several philosophical frameworks will be covered including; Kant's First and Second Categorical Imperatives, Utilitarianism, Social Contract Theory as well as the Ethics of Virtue. Students will use these frameworks to develop a personal code of ethics. In the second half of the course we will concentrate on the application of that code of ethics to the context of digital entertainment and its impact on an individual and society. In the eyes of many, games and movies are often violent, offensive and immoral: what are the ethical bases for these judgments? Implications of certain values embedded in games and movies will be discussed. The issue of balancing individual creativity vs. cultural impact, particularly on children, will be addressed. The course will culminate with the formulation of elements of an ethical code of conduct for a game or movie creator.

Prerequisites

No previous knowledge of computers or philosophy is assumed, or necessary.

Textbooks

Required

1. James and Stuart Rachels, *The Elements of Moral Philosophy*, 8th edition (McGraw Hill, 2015) 978-0-07-811906-4
2. Photocopies of texts by various philosophers posted on D2L.
3. Access to movies posted on DePaul's COL tube

Recommended

1. A flash drive, or other storage.
2. Lunsford, Andrea A. (2015) *The St. Martin's Handbook*. 8th, NY:Bedford Publishing. ISBN-10: 1-4576-6724-X; ISBN-13: 978-1-4576-6724-4
This text is used in DePaul's required writing classes (WRD 103 and 104) and every student should have a copy. It is also available at DePaul's library.
3. A dictionary and thesaurus, which can be found at the library or online.

PID Learning Domain Description & Learning Outcomes

PI Learning Outcomes

1. 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.

3. Students will be able to analyze and interpret the methods used by philosophers in addressing philosophical questions, issues, and/or problems.

4. Students will be able to engage with philosophical topics and figures in their historical context.

Students will develop these skills through weekly reading responses and class discussion.

5. Confront and interpret primary texts from the philosophical tradition.

Students will read sections of original works and discuss them in class and in weekly reading responses.

6. 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.

PID Writing Expectations

Students will be expected to complete a minimum of 10 pages of writing for this course.

This writing may take the form of essays, response papers, reading journals, take-home essay exams, critical analyses, etc. At least one assignment should involve revision, which may count (but only once, not twice) towards the 10-page minimum.

Assignments and Grading

15 points each – Three short papers

20 points each – Two essay exams (midterm and final)

15 points – Attendance and class participation (including in D2L discussions)

Grading Scale:

A 93–100	B+ 87–89	C+ 77–79	D+ 67–69
A- 90–92	B 83–86	C 73–76	D 60–66
	B- 80–82	C- 70–72	F 0–59

Week-By-Week Guide (subject to change)

This syllabus is subject to change as necessary during the quarter.

Check for changes, assignments, and due dates on D2L.

Week 1 Jan. 7 & 9

Relativism: Rachels, Ch. 2

Week 2 Jan. 14 & 16

Subjectivism: Rachels, Ch. 3

Nietzsche excerpts, posted on D2L

Week 3 Jan. 21 & 23

Kant: Rachels, Chs. 9 and 10

Kant excerpts, posted on D2L

Paper 1 due: Wed., Jan. 23 (upload to Submissions in D2L)

Week 4 Jan. 28 & 30

Game Readings, see Discussion questions on D2L

Readings are posted under Content on D2L

Week 5 Feb. 4 & 6

Movie analyses (movie titles to be announced)

Test 1: Wed., Feb. 6

Week 6 Feb. 11 & 13

Utilitarianism: Birsch, Ch. 5

Mill excerpts, posted on D2L

Paper 2 due: Wed., Feb. 13

Week 7 Feb. 18 & 20

Social Contract Theory: Rachels, Ch. 6

Rawls excerpts, posted on D2L

Week 8 Feb. 25 & 27

Virtue Ethics: Rachels, Ch. 12

Aristotle excerpts, posted on D2L

Week 9 Mar. 4 & 6

Beauvoir excerpts, posted on D2L

Week 10 Mar. 11 & 13

Plato dialogue, posted on D2L

Paper 3 due Wed., Mar. 13

Test 2: Mon., Mar. 18, 2:30 p.m. – 4:45 p.m.

Classroom & Grading Policies

Attendance: Students are expected to attend each class and to remain for the duration. Coming 15 minutes late or leaving 15 minutes early constitutes an absence for the student. The overall grade for participation drops one-third after any absence. Three absences for any reason, whether excused or not, **may** constitute failure for the course.

Class Discussion: Student participation in class discussions will be measured in two ways. First, students are highly encouraged to ask questions and offer comments relevant to the day's topic. Participation allows the instructor to "hear" the student's voice when grading papers. Secondly, students will be called upon by the instructor to offer comments related to the reading assignments. Students must keep up with the reading to participate in class discussion.

Attitude: A professional and academic attitude is expected throughout this course. Measurable examples of non-academic or unprofessional attitude include but are not limited to: talking to others when the instructor is speaking, mocking another's opinion, cell phones ringing, emailing, texting or using the internet whether on a phone or

computer. If any issues arise a student may be asked to leave the classroom. The professor will work with the Dean of Students Office to navigate such student issues.

Civil Discourse: DePaul University is a community that thrives on open discourse that challenges students, both intellectually and personally, to be Socially Responsible Leaders. It is the expectation that all dialogue in this course is civil and respectful of the dignity of each student. Any instances of disrespect or hostility can jeopardize a student's ability to be successful in the course. The professor will partner with the Dean of Students Office to assist in managing such issues.

Laptops/Cell Phones/On Call: Out of respect for others in the class, please remember to turn off all electronic devices during class. You may **not** tape the classes. If you bring a cell phone to class, it must be off or set to a silent mode. Should you need to answer a call during class, students must leave the room in an undistruptive manner. Out of respect to fellow students and the professor, texting is never allowable in class. If you are required to be on call as part of your job, please advise me at the start of the course.

Religious Observations & School Activities

Please let your professor know in advance by email if you will be absent or need extensions on assignments due to religious observations or official school activities such as athletic competitions.

Resources for Students with Disabilities

Students who feel they may need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability should contact the instructor privately, during office hours, 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: Student Center, LPC, Suite #370
Phone number: (773)325.1677; Fax: (773)325.3720; TTY: (773)325.7296.

Academic Policies/Absences

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: <https://www.cdm.depaul.edu/Current%20Students/Pages/Enrollment-Policies.aspx>

In the case of illness, or other excused absences, a student may contact the Dean of Students to request a formally approved absence. Upon receipt of documentation, the dean's office will notify all instructors of the student that an approved absence has occurred. The notification will maintain student privacy by not including the reasons for the absence. Contact information may be found at: <http://studentaffairs.depaul.edu/dos/contactus.html>

University Policies

Incomplete Grades

An incomplete grade is given only for an exceptional reason such as a death in the family, a serious illness, etc. Any such reason must be documented. Any incomplete request must be made at least two weeks before the final and approved by the Dean of the College of Computing and Digital Media. Any consequences resulting from a poor grade for the course will not be considered as valid reasons for such a request.

Academic Integrity Policy

This course will be subject to the faculty council rules on the [Academic Integrity Policy](#) web site.

Plagiarism

The university and school policy on plagiarism can be summarized as follows: Students in this course, as well as all other courses in which independent research or writing play a vital part in the course requirements should be aware of the strong sanctions that can be imposed against someone guilty of plagiarism. If proven, a charge of plagiarism could result in an automatic F in the course and possible expulsion. The strongest of sanctions will be imposed on anyone who submits as his/her own work a report, examination paper, computer file, lab report, or other assignment which has been prepared by someone else. If you have any questions or doubts about what plagiarism entails or how to properly acknowledge source materials be sure to consult the instructor.

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 providing 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 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 [Campus Connect](#).