SOCS2300
Ethical Debates in the Social Sciences
Course Outline

Course Co-ordinator: Dr Joe Mintoff
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Email: Joseph.Mintoff@newcastle.edu.au
Consultation hours: Wed 1-2pm, Thu 1-2pm

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Course Overview

Brief Course Description
This course is a prescribed course for students enrolled in the Bachelor of Social Science and is also open to all students as an elective. In this course students are introduced to:
(i) the nature of ethics and moral discourse in the social sciences;
(ii) a range of practical ethical issues and moral debates they may encounter in their professional lives; and
(iii) methods for addressing these ethical issues.

Contact Hours
Lecture for 1 Hour per Week for the Full Term
Tutorial for 1 Hour per Week for the Full Term
Tutorials commence in week 2

Course Outline Issued and Correct as at: Week 1, Semester 2 - 2009

CTS Download Date: 1 Jul 2009
Learning Materials/Texts
Mintoff, J (ed). *Ethical Debates in the Social Sciences*, 3rd edn (School Humanities & Social Sciences, 2009).

Course Objectives
On successful completion of this course students will be able to:
1. Demonstrate an understanding of the nature of ethics and moral discourse.
2. Demonstrate an understanding of a range of ethical issues, perspectives and debates relevant to the social sciences.
3. Critically appraise and discuss the relevant literature in written and oral forms.
4. Communicate understanding of ethical issues in written and oral forms, by employing analytical skills enabling them to deal with moral issues and get beyond mere disagreement and ambiguity.

Course Content
The course has two parts.
(i) The first part introduces students to the nature of ethics and moral discourse; the nature of ethical methodology; and the possibilities and limits of ethical discourse and practice.
(ii) The second part concerns a range of practical ethical issues and moral debates students may encounter in their professional lives (such issues may include the ethical review of research, issues arising in the formulation of policy, etc).

Assessment Items
| Essays / Written Assignments | Assignment; 1500 words; due week 13, 30% |
| Essays / Written Assignments | Tutorial Paper; 1500 words; due throughout semester, 30% |
| Essays / Written Assignments | Essay; 2000 words; due mid semester, 40% |

Assumed Knowledge
40 units of study at 1000 level.

Callaghan Campus Timetable
SOCS2300
ETHICAL DEBATES IN SOCIAL SCIENCES
Enquiries: School of Humanities and Social Science
Semester 2 - 2009
Lecture and Tutorial
Tuesday 9:00 - 10:00 [LSTH] Wks 2-13
or Tuesday 10:00 - 11:00 [W243] Wks 2-13
or Tuesday 11:00 - 12:00 [V102] Wks 2-13
or Tuesday 12:00 - 13:00 [V104] Wks 2-13
or Tuesday 10:00 - 11:00 [V03] Wks 2-13

Ourimbah Timetable
SOCS2300
ETHICAL DEBATES IN SOCIAL SCIENCES
Enquiries: School of Humanities and Social Science
Semester 2 - 2009
Lecture and Tutorial
Tuesday 16:00 - 17:00 [O_CS103] Wks 1-13
or Tuesday 17:00 - 18:00 [O_CN2106] Wks 2-13
or Tuesday 18:00 - 19:00 [O_CN2106] Wks 2-13

IMPORTANT UNIVERSITY INFORMATION

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Academic integrity, honesty, and a respect for knowledge, truth and ethical practices are fundamental to the business of the University. These principles are at the core of all academic endeavour in teaching, learning and research. Dishonest practices contravene academic values, compromise the integrity of research and devalue the quality of learning. To preserve the quality of learning for the individual and others, the University may impose severe sanctions on activities that undermine academic integrity. There are two major categories of academic dishonesty:
**Academic fraud** is a form of academic dishonesty that involves making a false representation to gain an unjust advantage. Without limiting the generality of this definition, it can include:

a) falsification of data;

b) using a substitute person to undertake, in full or part, an examination or other assessment item;

c) reusing one's own work, or part thereof, that has been submitted previously and counted towards another course (without permission);

d) making contact or colluding with another person, contrary to instructions, during an examination or other assessment item;

e) bringing material or device(s) into an examination or other assessment item other than such as may be specified for that assessment item; and

f) making use of computer software or other material and device(s) during an examination or other assessment item other than such as may be specified for that assessment item.

g) contract cheating or having another writer compete for tender to produce an essay or assignment and then submitting the work as one's own.

**Plagiarism** is the presentation of the thoughts or works of another as one's own. University policy prohibits students plagiarising any material under any circumstances. Without limiting the generality of this definition, it may include:

a) copying or paraphrasing material from any source without due acknowledgment;

b) using another person's ideas without due acknowledgment;

c) collusion or working with others without permission, and presenting the resulting work as though it were completed independently.

**Turnitin** is an electronic text matching system. During assessing any assessment item the University may -

· Reproduce this assessment item and provide a copy to another member of the University; and/or

· Communicate a copy of this assessment item to a text matching service (which may then retain a copy of the item on its database for the purpose of future checking).

· Submit the assessment item to other forms of plagiarism checking

**RE-MARKS AND MODERATIONS**
Students can access the University's policy at: [http://www.newcastle.edu.au/policylibrary/000769.html](http://www.newcastle.edu.au/policylibrary/000769.html)

**MARKS AND GRADES RELEASED DURING TERM**
All marks and grades released during term are indicative only until formally approved by the Head of School.

**SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES AFFECTING ASSESSMENT ITEMS**

*Extension of Time for Assessment Items, Deferred Assessment and Special Consideration for Assessment Items or Formal Written Examinations* items must be submitted by the due date in the Course Outline unless the Course Coordinator approves an extension. Unapproved late submissions will be penalised in line with the University policy.

Requests for Extensions of Time must be lodged no later than the due date of the item. This applies to students:

· applying for an extension of time for submission of an assessment item on the basis of medical, compassionate, hardship/trauma or unavoidable commitment; or

· whose attendance at or performance in an assessment item or formal written examination has been or will be affected by medical, compassionate, hardship/trauma or unavoidable commitment.

Students must report the circumstances, with supporting documentation, as outlined in the Special
Circumstances Affecting Assessment Items Procedure at:

Note: different procedures apply for minor and major assessment tasks.

Students should be aware of the following important deadlines:

· Special Consideration Requests must be lodged no later than 3 working days after the due date of submission or examination.
· Rescheduling Exam requests must be received no later than 10 working days prior the first date of the examination period.

Late applications may not be accepted. Students who cannot meet the above deadlines due to extenuating circumstances should speak firstly to their Program Officer or their Program Executive if studying in Singapore.

STUDENTS WITH A DISABILITY OR CHRONIC ILLNESS

University is committed to providing a range of support services for students with a disability or chronic illness. If you have a disability or chronic illness which you feel may impact on your studies please feel free to discuss your support needs with your lecturer or course coordinator.

Disability Support may also be provided by the Student Support Service (Disability). Students must be registered to receive this type of support. To register contact the Disability Liaison Officer on 02 4921 5766, email at: student-disability@newcastle.edu.au . As some forms of support can take a few weeks to implement it is extremely important that you discuss your needs with your lecturer, course coordinator or Student Support Service staff at the beginning of each semester. For more information on confidentiality and documentation visit the Student Support Service (Disability) website: www.newcastle.edu.au/services/disability .

CHANGING YOUR ENROLMENT

Students enrolled after the census dates listed in the link below are liable for the full cost of their student contribution or fees for that term.

http://www.newcastle.edu.au/study/fees/censusdates.html

Students may withdraw from a course without academic penalty on or before the last day of term. Any withdrawal from a course after the last day of term will result in a fail grade.

Students cannot enrol in a new course after the second week of term, except under exceptional circumstances. Any application to add a course after the second week of term must be on the appropriate form, and should be discussed with staff in the Student Hubs or with your Program Executive at PSB if you are a Singapore student.

To check or change your enrolment online go to myHub: https://myhub.newcastle.edu.au

STUDENT INFORMATION & CONTACTS

Various services are offered by the Student Support Unit:
www.newcastle.edu.au/service/studentsupport/

The Student Hubs are a one-stop shop for the delivery of student related services and are the first point of contact for students studying in Australia. Student Hubs are located at:

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<tr>
<th>Callaghan Campus</th>
<th>Port Macquarie students</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Shortland Hub: Level 3, Shortland Building</td>
<td>contact your program officer or</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hunter Hub: Level 2, Student Services Centre</td>
<td><a href="mailto:EnquiryCentre@newcastle.edu.au">EnquiryCentre@newcastle.edu.au</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City Precinct</td>
<td>Phone 4921 5000</td>
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<tr>
<td>City Hub &amp; Information Common, University House</td>
<td>Singapore students</td>
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<tr>
<td>Central Coast Campus (Ourimbah)</td>
<td>contact your PSB Program Executive</td>
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<tr>
<td>Student Hub: Opposite the Main Cafeteria</td>
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OTHER CONTACT INFORMATION

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<tr>
<th>Faculty Websites</th>
<th>General enquiries</th>
<th>Callaghan, City and Port Macquarie</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><a href="http://www.newcastle.edu.au/faculty/...">www.newcastle.edu.au/faculty/...</a></td>
<td></td>
<td>Phone: 02 4921 5000</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>Email: <a href="mailto:EnquiryCentre@newcastle.edu.au">EnquiryCentre@newcastle.edu.au</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Rules Governing Undergraduate</td>
<td>Ourimbah</td>
<td>Phone: 02 4348 4030</td>
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<tr>
<td>Academic Awards</td>
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<td>Email: <a href="mailto:EnquiryCentre@newcastle.edu.au">EnquiryCentre@newcastle.edu.au</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Rules Governing Postgraduate</td>
<td>The Dean of Students</td>
<td>Phone: 02 4921 5806;</td>
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<tr>
<td>Academic Awards</td>
<td>Deputy Dean of Students (Ourimbah)</td>
<td>Fax: 02 4921 7151</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rules Governing Professional</td>
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<td>Email: <a href="mailto:resolutionprecinct@newcastle.edu.au">resolutionprecinct@newcastle.edu.au</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Doctorate Awards</td>
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This course outline will not be altered after the second week of the term except under extenuating circumstances with Head of School approval. Students will be notified in advance of the change.

Online Tutorial Registration:

Students are required to enrol in the Lecture and a specific Tutorial time for this course via the Online Registration system. Refer - [http://studinfo1.newcastle.edu.au/rego/stud_choose_login.cfm](http://studinfo1.newcastle.edu.au/rego/stud_choose_login.cfm) NB: Registrations close at the end of week 2 of semester.

Studentmail and Blackboard: Refer - [www.blackboard.newcastle.edu.au](http://www.blackboard.newcastle.edu.au/)

This course uses Blackboard and studentmail to contact students, so you are advised to keep your email accounts within the quota to ensure you receive essential messages. To receive an expedited response to queries, post questions on the Blackboard discussion forum if there is one, or if emailing staff directly use the course code in the subject line of your email. Students are advised to check their studentmail and the course Blackboard site on a weekly basis.

Important Additional Information

Details about the following topics are available on your course Blackboard site (where relevant). Refer - [www.blackboard.newcastle.edu.au](http://www.blackboard.newcastle.edu.au/)

- Written Assignment Presentation and Submission Details
- Online copy submission to Turnitin
- Penalties for Late Assignments
- Special Circumstances
- No Assignment Re-submission
- Re-marks & Moderations
- Return of Assignments
- Preferred Referencing Style
- Student Representatives
- Student Communication
- Essential Online Information for Students
Detailed Course Outline and Assessment Information

Detailed Course Content:
In 2009, SOCS2300 falls into four sections. (I) The first section of the course, from weeks two to four, introduces students to the nature of ethics and moral discourse, and the possibilities and limits of ethics discourse and practice. The remaining three sections introduce a range of practical ethical issues and moral debates social science students may encounter in their professional lives. (II) In the second section, from weeks five to seven, students are given a critical introduction to the principles underlying ethical debates and ethical research in the social sciences. (III) In the third section, from weeks eight to ten, students will be introduced to various specific ethical debates they may encounter in professional life. (IV) And in the final section of the course, students will be introduced to the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research, which details the current social standards for ethical research in the social sciences.

Text:
References for each week’s lecture and tutorial, and primary references for the essays, are contained in the following text (unless otherwise stated). Students are required to have a copy of the text, which is available from Uprint.

Mintoff, J (ed). Ethical Debates in the Social Sciences, 3rd edn (School of Humanities and Social Sciences, 2009).

References:
Students may find the following additional references useful, all of which have been placed in Short Loans or 3-Day Loan.

General Ethics:

Ethics and the Social Sciences:

National Statement:
National Health & Medical Research Council (NHMRC), Australian Research Council (ARC), and Australian Vice Chancellors Committee (AVCC). National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research, (Canberra: AusInfo, 2007), available at http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/publications/synopses/e72syn.htm (1/5/2009), and on Blackboard.

Detailed Assessment Items:
The assessment will consist of the following:
(i) Tutorial Paper, of 1500 words and submitted during a tutorial, **worth 30%**, to be allocated in the week 2 tutorial, due on the allocated date, to BOTH your tutor (Hardcopy) AND TURNITIN (Electronic Copy via Blackboard).

(ii) Essay of 2000 words, **worth 40%**, available in Course Readings and via Blackboard, and due at 4pm Friday in week 10 to BOTH Shortland or Ourimbah Hub (Hardcopy) AND TURNITIN (Electronic Copy via Blackboard).

(iii) Assignment of 1500 words, **worth 30%**, available in Course Readings and via Blackboard, and due at 4pm Friday in week 13 to BOTH Shortland or Ourimbah Hub (Hardcopy) AND TURNITIN (Electronic Copy via Blackboard).

**Non-Repetition of Work.** Students are required to attempt different topics for their tutorial paper and their essay question. For example, if your tutorial paper is on Respect for Persons, then you must not do your essay on this topic. The penalty liable for students found repeating work is to the loss of all the marks for one or other of the two pieces of work on the same topic.

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**WEEK 1** (Lecture Date: 28 Jul)

**Lecture:** Introduction to Ethics

Although we use moral language all the time, little of our discussion directly concerns the truth of the moral principles underlying our discussion. The first lecture introduces the idea of discussion of moral principles, and provides an overview of the course.

**Lecture Reading:** Ethical Debates, ch 1

**Tutorial:** No Tutorial This Week

**SECTION I: MORAL METHODOLOGY**

This section of the course, from weeks two to four, introduces students to the nature of ethics and moral discourse, and the possibilities and limits of ethics discourse and practice.

**WEEK 2** (4 Aug)

**Lecture:** Relativism

One of the indisputable facts of moral life is the way in which moral beliefs and attitudes differ from one society to the next. This fact has tempted many to think that there are no society-independent morality, and that right and wrong depends entirely on the society in which one finds oneself. In this lecture we examine the arguments for and against this claim.

**Lecture Reading** *(Ethical Debates, ch 2)*


**Tutorial:** Tutorials Start This Week

**WEEK 3** (11 Aug)

**Lecture:** Understanding Moral Discussion

The only rational means of addressing disagreements over moral principles and specific cases is argument and counter-argument. This involves talking with, and reading the work of, other people. This lecture discusses some basic techniques for understanding moral argumentation, and illustrates them with Peter Singer's discussion of our obligations to those suffering from absolute poverty.

**Lecture Reading:** Ethical Debates, ch 3

**Tutorial:** Understanding Moral Discussion: Abortion

Student #1:
(a) Describe in your own terms the so-called conservative argument for the wrongness of killing a human fetus. Singer considers a number of suggested dividing lines between a fertilized egg and a child. Explain in your own terms each such suggestion, and his response to it.

Student #2:

(b) Describe in your own terms the so-called Feminist Argument for the liberal position on abortion. What objections does Singer have to this argument? Note: a "utilitarian" claims that if the consequences of performing an action are, on balance, better than the consequences of any alternative, then one is morally obliged to perform that action.

EACH Student:

(c) The answer you need to provide to this question depends on your forming an attitude towards abortion. Say whether you are more inclined to think that abortion is morally wrong, or more inclined to think that it is not morally wrong. And then say why you hold the belief you do, and what you would say in response to the arguments of those (conservatives, or feminists, depending on what your own view is) who would disagree with you.

**Tutorial Reading** *(Ethical Debates, ch 3)*


**WEEK 4 (18 Aug)**

**Lecture:** Evaluating Moral Discussion

After understanding the argument a person gives for their moral views, one needs to determine how good that argument is. This lecture introduces and illustrates some basic techniques for evaluating moral argumentation, again illustrating them with Singer’s discussion of Rich and Poor.

**Lecture Reading:** *Ethical Debates*, ch 4

**Tutorial:** Evaluating Moral Discussion: Abortion

Student #1:

(a) Describe in your own terms how Singer himself chooses to deal with the conservative argument against abortion.

Student #2:

(b) Singer realizes that his own position is susceptible to what he calls “one major objection” (p 169). Describe that objection in your own terms, and Singer’s response.

EACH Student:

(c) The answer you need to provide to this question depends on your forming an attitude towards abortion. Say whether you are more inclined to think that abortion is morally wrong, or more inclined to think that it is not morally wrong. And then:

(i) If you are more inclined to think abortion IS morally wrong, explain in detail how you would respond to Singer’s own objections to the conservative argument on pp. 149-156.

(ii) If you are more inclined to think abortion is NOT morally wrong, explain what you disagree with in the conservative argument on pp. 138-142. Note that: (a) if you are inclined to agree with one of the liberal arguments, then you will need to reply to Singer’s objections to that argument; (b) if you are inclined to agree with Singer, then you may need to investigate the possibility of drawing a morally significant distinction between killing a fetus and killing an infant; (c) if you have some other reason for rejecting the conservative argument, then explain that reason in detail.

**Tutorial Reading** *(Ethical Debates, ch 3)*

As for Week 3.

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**SECTION II: ETHICAL PRINCIPLES**

In this section of the course, from weeks five to seven, students are given a critical introduction to the principles underlying ethical debates and ethical research in the social sciences. **Opening Reading:** [NHMRC, ARC, and AVCC. National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research, (2007), sect 1.**

**WEEK 5 (25 Aug)**
Lecture: Justice: Distributing Things Fairly
Justice in some situation often relates to the fair treatment of people in that situation (so-called 'procedural' justice), or the fair distribution of benefits and burdens (so-called 'distributive' justice). This applies to the situations encountered in the course of social science research, and it applies more generally in debates concerning (eg) social policy. But what is a fair distribution, whether of the benefit of research, or any other benefit? This lecture examines two very different answers to this question.

Lecture and Tutorial Reading (Ethical Debates, ch 5)
Beauchamp, T. 'Justice', in his Philosophical Ethics, 3rd edn, (McGraw-Hill, 2001), ch 9 esp pp 320-335. [For copyright reasons, this chapter is available only in Short Loans.]

Tutorial: Justice: Distributing Things Fairly
Student #1:
(a) Explain in your own terms Nozick's so-called Entitlement Theory of Justice, and what you take to be its implications about the interpretation and plausibility of these clauses.
Student #2:
(b) Do the same for Rawls's Egalitarian Theory of Justice, and in particular for the so-called Difference Principle.
EACH Student:
(c) Decide which view of justice is more plausible by examining the arguments for, and the objections to, each. Consider in relation to the readings.

WEEK 6 (1 Sep)

Lecture: Beneficence: Avoiding Harm and Doing Good
An important ethical principle, applicable both to social research (NS 1.6-9) and more generally to social policy, is to avoid harm and if possible to do good. But what is the right balance between avoiding harm and doing good, and under what conditions might the value of doing good outweigh other values such as justice and respect? By way of examining these questions, in this lecture we discuss a view which places priority on doing the greatest good for the greatest number.

Lecture and Tutorial Reading (Ethical Debates, ch 6)
Beauchamp, T. "Mill and Utilitarian Theories," in his Philosophical Ethics, 3rd edn, (McGraw-Hill, 2001), ch 4, esp pp 101-121, 127-133. [For copyright reasons, only pp 101-121, 127-133 are included in the Course Readings; the complete chapter is available in Short Loans.]

Tutorial: Beneficence: Avoiding Harm and Doing Good
Student #1:
(a) Describe the Case Study ("Health Policy for Hypertension") at the beginning of chapter 4 of Beauchamp's Philosophical Ethics.
Student #2:
(b) Explain Utilitarianism in your own terms.
EACH Student:
(c) Explain what you take to be the implications of utilitarianism about the morality of Weinstein and Stason's "targeted" treatment strategy.
(d) Do the wider benefits of Weinstein and Stason's "targeted" treatment strategy justify neglecting the health needs of the country’s poorest sector? Explain your answer.
(e) More generally, might the wider benefits of some research justify exposing participants to the risk of harm (eg, feelings of fear, being humiliated, damage to personal relationships) for which they receive no compensating benefits? Answer these questions by examining the arguments – particularly those of Smart and Williams – contained in the readings.

WEEK 7 (8 Sep)
Lecture: Respect: Treating People as Ends, not Means
Respect for human beings involves having due regard to their beliefs and welfare, and for their capacity to make their own decisions. This idea is at the heart of an important ethical theory, which claims that the fundamental ethical value is treating people as ends-in-themselves, rather than merely as means to the promotion of some good. This lecture introduces and examines this view.

Lecture and Tutorial Reading (Ethical Debates, ch 7)

Tutorial: Respect: Treating People as Ends, not Means
EACH Student (pick one each):
(a) Detail the first paragraph of Chapter 2.2 ("General Requirements for Consent") from the National Statement. Describe the Case Study ("A Case of Deception in Psychology") at the beginning of chapter 5 of Beauchamp’s Philosophical Ethics (2nd edn).
Student #1:
(b) Explain in your own terms Downie and Telfer’s definition of a person, their Principle of Respect for Persons. Describe one objection they consider to their principle, and their response to that objection. How plausible do you find that response?
Student #2:
(c) Explain in your own terms Beauchamp and Childress’s definition of individual autonomy, their Principle of Respect for Individual Autonomy. Describe one objection they consider to their principle, and their response to that objection. How plausible do you find that response?
EACH Student:
(d) Did the experiment involve disrespect for the experimental subjects? Would that by itself have implied that it was not morally justified?
(c) More generally, what is it to respect someone? Should we always respect people? Why should we respect people? Answer these questions by considering and evaluating the arguments contained in the readings.

SECTION III: ETHICAL DEBATES
In this section of the course, from weeks eight to ten, students will be introduced to various specific ethical debates they may encounter in professional life.

WEEK 8 (15 Sep)
Lecture: Social Debate: Immigration
Immigration is a long-running topic of debate in politics, the media and the social sciences. Immigration raises issues of global justice, respect for individuals and beneficence towards people in other nations.

Lecture and Tutorial Reading (Ethical Debates, ch 8)

Tutorial: Social Debate: Immigration
Student #1:
(a) Describe in your own terms Carens’ arguments for open borders.
Student #2:
(b) Describe in your own terms Isbister’s arguments against open borders.
EACH Student:
(c) The answer you need to provide to this question depends on your forming an attitude towards open borders. Say whether you are more inclined to think that restricted immigration is morally wrong, or more inclined to think that it is not morally wrong. And then:
(i) If you are more inclined to think restricted immigration IS morally wrong, explain in detail how you would respond to Isbister’s arguments.

(ii) If you are more inclined to think restricted immigration is NOT morally wrong, explain what you disagree with in Carens’ arguments.

WEEK 9 (22 Sep)

Lecture: Social Debate: Affirmative Action

Discrimination is generally considered immoral, yet many Western nations use affirmative action programs to provide extra opportunities to people in certain groups based on race, sex or wealth. This "Positive Discrimination" raises issues of justice and beneficence in society. This lecture looks at part of the moral debate for and against affirmative action programs.

Lecture and Tutorial Reading (Ethical Debates, ch 9)


Tutorial: Social Debate: Affirmative Action

Presenter #1:
(a) Describe in your own terms Cohen’s arguments against Affirmative Action.

Presenter #2:
(b) Describe in your own terms Harris & Narayan's arguments for Affirmative Action.

EACH Presenter:
(c) The answer you need to provide to this question depends on your forming an attitude towards affirmative action. Say whether you are more inclined to think that affirmative action is morally wrong, or more inclined to think that it is not morally wrong. And then:
(i) If you are more inclined to think affirmative action IS morally wrong, explain in detail how you would respond to Harris’ arguments.

(ii) If you are more inclined to think affirmative action is NOT morally wrong, explain what you disagree with in Cohen's arguments.

MID-SEMESTER BREAK (28 Sep - 9 Oct)

WEEK 10 (13 Oct)

Lecture: Professional Debate: Whistle-blowing

Organizations depend for their effectiveness on the loyalty and cooperation of their employees. Sometimes, however, organizations do things or pursue policies which are either illegal or immoral, and in such cases the loyalty of conscientious employees is put under severe strain. Whistle-blowing may or may not be necessary. The purpose of this lecture is to examine such dilemmas between loyalty and the public interest, and the morality of whistle-blowing in particular.

Lecture and Tutorial Reading (Ethical Debates, ch 10)


Tutorial: Professional Debate: Whistle-blowing

Student #1:
(a) Define what you mean by whistle blowing. Explain in your own terms the arguments for what De George refers to the "extreme view" against whistle blowing.

(b) What is Duska’s view in relation to the morality of whistle blowing, and why does he hold this view? Duska’s argument applies in the first instance to profit-making organizations, but to what extent (if any) does it apply to not-for-profit organizations such as government departments?
Student #2:
(a) Very briefly explain in your own terms the two views Larmer objects to, and his objections to them. How does Larmer propose to resolve the dilemma between loyalty to an organization and one's responsibility to the public interest?
(b) Explain in your own terms how Vandekerckhove & Commers propose to resolve this dilemma.

EACH Student:
(c) Suppose you are employed by a government department, and describe a situation (actual or hypothetical) in which there is a conflict between public interest and/or morality and the policies the department is pursuing. What, if anything, should you do, and why? Consider in relation to the readings.

SECTION IV: ETHICAL RESEARCH

In this final section of the course, students will be introduced to the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research, which details the current social standards for ethical research in the social sciences.


WEEK 11 (20 Oct)

Lecture: Risk and Benefit
There are two important themes in the ethics of human research. According to the National Statement (2.1), one of these relates the risks and the benefits of that research. The purpose of this lecture is to introduce these notions in more detail, to examine various ways in which risks might be morally balanced against benefits, and to determine the implications of this issue for the conduct of social science research.

Lecture and Tutorial Reading (Ethical Debates, ch 11)

Also, from ch 10:
NHMRC, ARC, and AVCC. National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research: ch 2.1

Tutorial: Risk and Benefit
Student #1:
(a) Explain in your own terms, and with examples taken if possible from the readings, the National Statement's distinction between harm, discomfort, and inconvenience.
(b) Deiner & Crandall (at pp 22-26) consider three different moral principles for determining whether the benefits of research justify the risk of harm involved. State them, and the problems with each.

Student #2:
(c) Explain in your own terms, and with examples taken if possible from the readings, the National Statement's classification of potential harms in research.
(d) Deiner & Crandall (at pp 27 ff) consider a number of different methods for minimizing the risks of harm. Explain them in your own terms.

EACH Student:
(e) Chose an example from the readings which involves risk of substantial harms, and explain how they might be negated, minimized, or managed.

WEEK 12 (27 Oct)

Lecture: Informed Consent
The second important theme in the ethics of human research, according to the National Statement (2.2-3), relates to the notion of informed consent. The purpose of this lecture is to introduce this notion and its moral justification in more detail, and highlight the problems social scientists may face in trying to respect the so-called Principle of Informed Consent.

Lecture and Tutorial Reading (Ethical Debates, ch 12)
Also, from ch 10:
NHMRC, ARC, and AVCC. National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research: chs 2.2, 2.3.

Tutorial: Informed Consent
Student #1:
(a) Explain in your own terms Elms’s key ideas and arguments.
Student #2:
(b) Explain in your own terms Macklin’s key ideas and arguments.
EACH Student:
(c) Is there a difference between the degree of informed consent morally required for social research, and that for medical research? Consider this question in relation to the readings.

WEEK 13 (3 Nov)

Lecture: The National Statement on Social Science Research
The purpose of the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research is "to promote ethically good human research" (p 6), which requires according participants respect and fostering research which is beneficial to the community. The aim of this lecture is to introduce the National Statement (2007), and to discuss how the general moral principles of justice, beneficence, and respect have been interpreted as applying to social science research.

Lecture Reading (Ethical Debates, ch 13)
National Health & Medical Research Council, Australian Research Council, and Australian Vice Chancellors Committee. National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research, (Canberra: AusInfo, 2007), esp chs 3.1, 3.2, 4.2, 4.3, 4.6, 4.7.

Tutorial: The National Statement on Social Science Research
Student #1:
(a) Read the two cases you have been assigned, viz Case 2d ("Pseudo-patient studies: Homan 1986") and Case 5 ("Baking Bread").
Student #2:
(b) Read the two cases you have been assigned, viz Case 6 ("Paddington Station") and Case 9 ("Infiltrating the National Front").
EACH Student:
(c) For each case you have been assigned, briefly describe the research methodology, and apply the National Statement to it, highlighting the precise clauses where the research may be inconsistent with the Statement. What conclusions do you come to on the acceptability of the research, or of the relevant clauses of the National Statement?

Tutorial Reading (Ethical Debates, ch 13)
Case 9, "Infiltrating the National Front", from Homan 1991: 103-4.