Professor Evandro Barbosa   Fall Semester - 2024

Department of Philosophy   Federal University of Pelotas

---

* **Class schedule**: Thur 2:00 pm – 6:00pm (in-person) - Room 316 - *IFISP*

* **Office Hours**: by appointment – ebarbosa@ufpel.edu.br

SYLLABUS

1. Course Description

I will offer an overview of the discussion on the theme of vulnerability from three axes, using the most recent academic literature on the topic: i. Justice: integrity/psychological vulnerability of individuals in at-risk situations; ii. Human Rights: social vulnerability of at-risk groups (refugees and individuals in conditions of scarcity like the pandemic); iii. Artificial Intelligence: technological vulnerability for people and groups exposed to technological advances without the due ethical considerations.

* This is a collaborative course and integrate the *Vulnerability: Humans and Technologies* project (CNPq Financial support), therefore it foresees the participation of guest professors who are members of the project throughout the semester to discuss relevant points about the theme.

** The course will use the so-called EMI method - English as a Medium of Instruction.

1.2 Target Audience and Course Expectations

This is a seminar in moral philosophy designed for students who have taken at least some introductory philosophy class. The class will build on students' foundations in philosophical and moral thinking and prepare them for upper-level courses in moral philosophy. The class also aims to strengthen students' philosophical reading and writing skills in Portuguese and English. The goal is for students to become more comfortable understanding contemporary moral issues related to vulnerability, and to become more confident writing sustained pieces of philosophical argumentation that go beyond textual exegesis, and systematically defend their own stance. One of the expectations in this course is that students will produce a piece of work that they can submit to an graduate journal or a conference in philosophy, or that they might use as a writing sample for a philosophy workshop.

2. Goals
- Offer the student a conceptual analysis of vulnerability from different philosophical perspectives.
- Analyze what we call *challenging context* and how it interferes in the moral decision-making of agents;
- Discuss John Rawls' theory of justice in relation to the notion of challenging contexts.
- Discuss John Stuart Mill's utilitarian theory of justice and its relationship with the notion of challenging contexts.
- Introduce you to conceptual resources that are useful for expressing, refining, and developing your moral views about vulnerability.
- Offer you an opportunity to read and wrestle with some of the most insightful papers ever written about ethics and vulnerability related issues.

Professor Evandro Barbosa   Fall Semester - 2024

Department of Philosophy   Federal University of Pelotas

2.2 Student Learning Outcomes

▪ You will become familiar with some canonical texts views, and issues in moral philosophy on vulnerability and related issues.
▪ You will practice the reading, writing, and discussion skills necessary for approaching ethical issues like a moral philosopher.
▪ You will develop a sensitivity for the distinct concerns of moral philosophy / philosophers.
▪ You will develop your ability to write essays which address and give arguments in support of a particular position.

2.3 Attendance and Participation.

This will be determined based on participation in class discussions, Poll responses, web discussion forum contributions, and short written assignments throughout the semester, usually announced in lecture for the next lecture or discussion section. Dialogue is absolutely crucial to philosophy. Merely showing up in the lecture and discussion sections does not count as participating in them. Come to class prepared to ask (and answer) questions and to participate in class discussions! Notably, just showing up is not the same as participating.

Your participation must follow five criteria.

- Attendance and punctuality. I will take attendance at every class meeting and post an attendance log on Cobalto's attendance section. If you think I've made a mistake, please, you should let me know.

- Alertness/attentiveness. This includes being awake, and not being on your computer/tablet/phone for non-class purposes.

- Frequency of participation in class. I understand that class participation is harder for some people than for others, specially in English. If it's particularly difficult for you, please come to office hours or set up an appointment, so that we can together discuss strategies to make it easier for you to contribute.

- Respectfulness of participation. You should be respectful both to the instructor and to your peers in class at all times (e.g. do not talk over others; listen to others and respectfully respond to what they say).

- Preparedness. Assessed by how well your participation reflects having done the reading and thought about it.

3. Assessments or assignments

The following components of this course will contribute to your grade:

▪ **Journal - Reading Responses (no grading)** *-* We'll read a number of pieces this semester. You will be invited to contribute to a *course journal*, in which all students are encouraged to share their viewpoints on the topic under discussion: doubts, questions, observations, etc.

▪ **Seminar Presentations** (50%) *-* You'll be invited to present a seminar for sharing your ideas or discoveries about ethics and pandemic in a way that gives seminar participants an opportunity for discussion. You may conduct your presentation in English or Portuguese according to your skills.

Professor Evandro Barbosa   Fall Semester - 2024

Department of Philosophy   Federal University of Pelotas

- ▪ **Final Paper** (50%) - You will write a paper in Portuguese or English (2500-3000 words ≈ 8-10 double-spaced pages) on a topic of your choice. This final paper will be due on a date determined by the E-Aula and will involve a take-home essay.

CRITERIA	Excellent	Good	Needs Improvement	Unacceptable
Thesis	A clear statement of the main conclusion of the paper.	The thesis is obvious, but there is no single clear statement of it.	The thesis is present, but must be uncovered or reconstructed from the text of the paper.	There is no thesis.
Premises	Each reason for believing the thesis is made clear. It is also clear which premises are to be taken as given, and which will be supported by sub-arguments. **The premises which are taken as given are at least plausibly true.**	The premises are all clear, although each may not be presented in a single statement. It is also pretty clear which premises are to be taken as given, and which will be supported by sub-arguments.	The premises must be reconstructed from the text of the paper. It is not made clear which premises are to be taken as given, and which will be supported by sub-arguments.	There are no premises—the paper merely restates the thesis. Or, if there are premises, they are much more likely to be false than true.
Support	The premises clearly support the thesis, and the author is aware of exactly the kind of support they provide.	The premises support the thesis, and the author is aware of the general kind of support they provide.	The premises somewhat support the thesis, but the author is not aware of the kind of support they provide.	The premises do not support the thesis.

4. Other Class Policies

- **Electronics.** Electronic devices – laptops and tablets, but no phones – are allowed in class only for course-related purposes. However, I reserve the right to rescind this permission if they become a distraction. Whether you bring a laptop to class or not, you should bring paper and a pen in order to complete in-class exercises and activities.
- **Office hours.** I am very happy to meet with you at any point during the semester to discuss your progress in class, to discuss assignments (before and after they are submitted), or to discuss any topics that came up in class. Please feel free to come to my office hours, or to email me to set up an appointment if those times aren't ideal for you.

5. Schedule of Readings (Subject to change – last updated April, 02 – 2024)

*** The texts will be available on Google Drive.**

Week 1: Syllabus / Introduction

Week 2: - TBA

Week 3: - TBA

Week 4: TBA

Week 5: TBA

Week 6: TBA

Week 7: *Discussion*: "Algorithmic injustice and human rights1Injustiça algorítmica e direitos humanos." (Denis Coitinho e André L. O. da Silva) – Unisinos Journal of Philosophy, 2024.

Week 8: *Guest-speaker*: *Denis Coitinho* (Unisinos)

Week 09: TBA

Week 10: Discussion: "Dance Macabre: Levity and morality in a plague year."

(Simone Guble) – Routledge, 2023.

Week 11: *Guest-speaker*: Simone Gubler (University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill)

Week 11: TBA

Week 12: TBA

Week 13: Seminar Presentation

Professor Evandro Barbosa   Fall Semester - 2024

Department of Philosophy   Federal University of Pelotas

Week 14: Seminar Presentation

Week 15: Seminar Presentation

(*) We will have guest speakers to discuss a topic related to the class subject. We will take the pre-presentation class to prepare ourselves for the discussion.

6. Honor Code

You are expected to comply with the UFPel Honor Code, which covers issues such as plagiarism, cheating, unauthorized assistance or collaboration, and other grievous acts of academic dishonesty. Violations of the Honor Code are taken very seriously. Avoid the circumstances so as not to face the responsible higher authorities of the university.

You can familiarize yourself with the UFPel Guideline here (in Portuguese): https://wp.ufpel.edu.br/nate/files/2020/09/GUIA_ESTUDANTIL.pdf

7. References

See Course Folder in Google Drive.