

TROLLEYS, TORTURE, AND TERROR

INSTRUCTOR: Blake Hereth

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CLASS MEETINGS: MTWThF 1:10-3:20pm, SAV 158

OFFICE HOURS: MF 12-1pm and by appointment

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

What should you do if you see a trolley headed for five innocent people and you can prevent their deaths *only* by diverting the trolley to another track, but doing so will kill one innocent person on that track? Most people think you're morally allowed, but not morally required, to divert the trolley. Are they right? Trolleys are just a fun theoretical tool, but they help us get traction on important philosophical problems of life and death. They reveal our deep moral commitments which we can then apply to issues like torture and terrorism. We commonly make life and death decisions: for example, we donate (or don't donate) to starving populations around the world, stop people from crossing the street, and vote for or against political parties based on their healthcare proposals. Others, such as soldiers and medical professionals, make these decisions even more often and in more significant ways. Doing ethics well means getting the answers right for everyone. The point of this course is to learn a little about how to do it *well* by (1) gaining an understanding of some of the important issues of life and death, (2) becoming familiar with the variety of perspectives, arguments, and people involved in these debates, (3) learning to make valid and sound arguments of your own and applying them to the issues we discuss, and (4) revising your arguments in light of feedback.

COURSE GOALS:

- To get familiar with and understand some central philosophical issues about life and death, such as: obligations not to have children, donating to charities that save lives, whether and why death is bad, stand your ground laws, sexism in self-defense, animal rights, abortion, and healthcare ethics.
- To reconstruct the arguments we find on the issues above and evaluate them charitably and critically.
- To develop arguments of our own that are valid and sound.
- To revise our arguments in light of feedback.

TEXTBOOK:

- None. All readings are available on Canvas.

UW 4.0 SCALE

- At the end of the quarter, I will convert your course grade percentage to the UW 4.0 scale using this metric: 94% and up is a 4.0; 93.5% is 3.9; 93% is 3.8; etc. Each 1% step is a 0.1 step on the 4.0 scale.
- The full 4.0 scale is available on Canvas.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

- Participation (20%): Students should take an active role in class. You should ask questions and listen carefully, complete any writing or viewing exercises, and remain engaged. Two hours per day is long, so I will offer a brief break every day. (If I forget, just remind me!)
- In-Class Logic Exercises (5%): These are handouts designed to help you gain practice making good arguments. We'll work on them in groups during class. (They're easy. Don't freak out.) You get full credit just for trying!
- Questionnaire Script (10%): In groups of 4-5, students will make a questionnaire script (3-4 pages) for their Short Documentary. The idea is to design a script of questions for people you interview, giving them cases and asking them questions about it. You'll write your scripts in your groups on Monday, July 5th, and submit it on Canvas by 11pm that day. Each member of the group needs to submit the questionnaire!
- Short Documentary (20%): In groups of 4-5, students will make a short documentary. The point of the documentaries is to see how others respond to issues raised in the course, including thought experiments and authors' views. Each documentary should be about 10-20 minutes and each student should participate fully, though not every student needs to appear in the video. Students are graded on the quality of their interactions, the production quality, and how well each member of the team participated. When we view the documentaries at the end of Week 4, students will vote on the best documentary, but you can't vote for your own documentary. Students who made the Gold Medal-winning documentary will have their final grades bumped by 0.1 on the 4.0 scale; Silver Medalists by 0.06; and Bronze Medalists by 0.03. The documentaries are due Wednesday, July 17th, at 11pm on Canvas. You can upload them directly or upload a YouTube link. Each member of the group needs to submit the documentary! Viewing and voting will take place July 19th.
- Draft Paper (15%): Each student will write a paper (8 double-spaced pages) on a course topic of their choice. There are two acceptable ways to write this paper. The first way is to develop a new argument for one of the views we've discussed. The second way is to prove that someone else's argument fails. This is due Friday, July 12th, at 11pm on Canvas.
- Odegaard Writing Center Visit (5%): Each student will take an outline or Draft Paper to the Odegaard Writing Center for review. Send me proof of your appointment, and I'll confirm with Odegaard that you showed up. (Note: Get a head start on this! Appointments are more scarce in the summer.)
- Final Paper (25%): This paper should be a longer (10 double-spaced pages), more polished version of the Draft Paper. You should respond to my feedback and feedback from the Odegaard Writing Center. This is due Wednesday, July 24th, at 11pm on Canvas.

ASSIGNMENT POLICIES:

- Late Work: You can't be late for participation stuff and receive credit. No exceptions. I'll make exceptions for non-participatory assignments, but you *must* give me a good excuse before the assignment is due.
- "W" Credit: To pass this course, which carries "W" writing credit, you must submit and pass the Questionnaire Script, the Draft Paper, and the Final Paper. No exceptions.
- Plagiarism: Cases of plagiarism will be sent directly to UW Academic Misconduct. It's your responsibility to know what does, and doesn't, count as plagiarism, but feel free to ask me about it if you're unsure.

DISABILITY RESOURCES FOR STUDENTS (DRS)

- I am committed to the success of every student. If you have a disability or need special accommodation, please contact DRS, 011 Mary Gates Hall, 206-543-8924. Per university policy, all students needing special accommodation need a letter from DRS. Please present it to me so we can discuss your needs for the course.

COURSE CONTENT WARNING:

- Courses like this are bound to include some disturbing stuff. Almost all of the readings discuss killing. Some of them discuss sexual assault. The documentaries are about the murder of an African-American teenager and physician-assisted suicide in Oregon. If you can't be there, or if you're there and you find the discussion too upsetting to stay, you can excuse yourself without any penalty provided that you follow up with me. This is an honor system designed for your benefit, so please don't misuse it.

READING SCHEDULE:

NOTE: All **bolded readings/activities** are required. Non-bolded readings/activities are only recommended. We'll discuss all the scheduled readings, required or not.

WEEK 1 (JUNE 24-28): COURSE INTRODUCTION, LOGIC, & TROLLEY CASES

Readings:

- June 24: **Syllabus, Logic Handout**
- June 25: ***Trolley, Footbridge, Loop Track, and Bert* cases**
- June 26: Thomson, "Turning the Trolley"
- June 27: Nyholm, "**The Ethics of Crashes with Self-Driving Cars: A Roadmap**"
- June 28: No class (Blake at a conference)

WEEK 2 (JULY 1-5): THEORETICAL & APPLIED TROLLEYS

Readings:

- July 1: **Questionnaire Script-Writing Day** (Blake at a conference)
- July 2: **Frowe, "Lesser-Evil Justifications for Harming: Why We're Required to Turn the Trolley"**
- July 3: Strawser, "Moral Predators: The Duty to Employ UAVs"
- July 4: No class

- July 5: **Luck, “The Gamer’s Dilemma: An Analysis of the Arguments for the Moral Distinction Between Virtual Murder and Virtual Pedophilia”**

WEEK 3 (JULY 8-12): STANDING YOUR GROUND

Readings:

- July 8: **Heidi M. Hurd, “Stand Your Ground”**
- July 9: ***3 ½ Minutes, 10 Bullets* (we’ll watch this in class)**
- July 10: Marcia Baron, “Self-Defense: The Imminence Requirement”
- July 11: Kimberly Ferzan, “Defending Imminence: From Battered Women to Iraq”
- July 12: Kimberly Ferzan, “Provocateurs”

WEEK 4 (JULY 15-19): TORTURE, TERROR, & CHOOSE A TOPIC!

Readings:

- July 15: **Uwe Steinhoff, “Torture: The Case for Dirty Harry and Against Alan Dershowitz”**
- July 16: Fritz Allhoff, “Physician Involvement in Hostile Interrogations”
- July 17: Suzanne Uniacke, “Terrorism”
- July 18: **Open Topic Day!**
 - **Choose two** (one will be **required** and the other recommended):
 1. Cappuccio, Peeters, and McDonald, “Sympathy for Dolores: Moral Consideration for Robots Based on Virtue and Recognition”
 2. Beatrice Okyere-Manu, “Overpopulation and the Lifeboat Metaphor: A Critique from an African Worldview”
 3. Blake Hereth, “Animal Rights Pacifism”
 4. Epicurus, *Letter to Menoecus*
- July 19: **Short Documentary Viewing Day!**

WEEK 5 (JULY 22-24): ASSISTED SUICIDE

Readings:

- July 22: ***How to Die in Oregon* (we’ll watch this in class)**
- July 23: **Anita Silvers, “Protecting the Innocents: People with Disabilities and Physician-Assisted Dying”**
- July 24: Dena Davis, “Alzheimer Disease and Pre-Emptive Suicide”

PHIL 345 A
Moral Issues Of Life And Death
Course type: Face-to-Face
Taught by: Blake Hereth
Instructor Evaluated: Blake Hereth-Predoc TA

Evaluation Delivery: Online
Evaluation Form: A
Responses: 9/22 (41% moderate)

Overall Summative Rating represents the combined responses of students to the four global summative items and is presented to provide an overall index of the class's quality:

Combined Median	Adjusted Combined Median
5.0	4.8
(0=lowest; 5=highest)	

Challenge and Engagement Index (CEI) combines student responses to several *IASystem* items relating to how academically challenging students found the course to be and how engaged they were:

CEI: 4.9
(1=lowest; 7=highest)

SUMMATIVE ITEMS

	N	Excellent (5)	Very Good (4)	Good (3)	Fair (2)	Poor (1)	Very Poor (0)	Median	Adjusted Median
The course as a whole was:	9	89%	11%					4.9	4.8
The course content was:	9	89%	11%					4.9	4.8
The instructor's contribution to the course was:	9	100%						5.0	4.8
The instructor's effectiveness in teaching the subject matter was:	9	89%	11%					4.9	4.7

STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

	N	Much Higher (7)	(6)	(5)	Average (4)	(3)	(2)	Much Lower (1)	Median
Relative to other college courses you have taken:									
Do you expect your grade in this course to be:	8		62%	12%	25%				5.7
The intellectual challenge presented was:	8	25%	25%	25%	25%				5.5
The amount of effort you put into this course was:	8		62%	25%	12%				5.7
The amount of effort to succeed in this course was:	8	12%	12%	38%	38%				4.8
Your involvement in course (doing assignments, attending classes, etc.) was:	8	38%	25%	12%	25%				6.0

On average, how many hours per week have you spent on this course, including attending classes, doing readings, reviewing notes, writing papers and any other course related work?

Class median: 12.8 Hours per credit: 2.6 (N=8)

Under 2	2-3	4-5	6-7	8-9	10-11	12-13	14-15	16-17	18-19	20-21	22 or more
		12%			12%	38%	38%				

From the total average hours above, how many do you consider were valuable in advancing your education?

Class median: 10.2 Hours per credit: 2 (N=8)

Under 2	2-3	4-5	6-7	8-9	10-11	12-13	14-15	16-17	18-19	20-21	22 or more
			12%	25%	38%	12%	12%				

What grade do you expect in this course?

Class median: 3.7 (N=8)

A (3.9-4.0)	A- (3.5-3.8)	B+ (3.2-3.4)	B (2.9-3.1)	B- (2.5-2.8)	C+ (2.2-2.4)	C (1.9-2.1)	C- (1.5-1.8)	D+ (1.2-1.4)	D (0.9-1.1)	D- (0.7-0.8)	F (0.0)	Pass	Credit	No Credit
38%	38%	12%	12%											

In regard to your academic program, is this course best described as:

(N=8)

In your major	A core/distribution requirement	An elective	In your minor	A program requirement	Other
12%	50%	25%	12%		

STANDARD FORMATIVE ITEMS

	N	Excellent (5)	Very Good (4)	Good (3)	Fair (2)	Poor (1)	Very Poor (0)	Median	Relative Rank
Course organization was:	9	78%	22%					4.9	1
Clarity of instructor's voice was:	9	100%						5.0	11
Explanations by instructor were:	9	78%	22%					4.9	10
Instructor's ability to present alternative explanations when needed was:	9	89%	11%					4.9	7
Instructor's use of examples and illustrations was:	9	89%	11%					4.9	5
Quality of questions or problems raised by the instructor was:	9	89%	11%					4.9	2
Student confidence in instructor's knowledge was:	9	89%	11%					4.9	16
Instructor's enthusiasm was:	9	100%						5.0	13
Encouragement given students to express themselves was:	9	100%						5.0	9
Answers to student questions were:	9	78%	22%					4.9	12
Availability of extra help when needed was:	9	89%	11%					4.9	6
Use of class time was:	9	78%	22%					4.9	4
Instructor's interest in whether students learned was:	9	78%	22%					4.9	15
Amount you learned in the course was:	9	78%	22%					4.9	3
Relevance and usefulness of course content were:	9	67%	22%	11%				4.8	17
Evaluative and grading techniques (tests, papers, projects, etc.) were:	9	67%	33%					4.8	14
Reasonableness of assigned work was:	9	78%	22%					4.9	8
Clarity of student responsibilities and requirements was:	9	67%	33%					4.8	18

PHIL 345 A
Moral Issues Of Life And Death
Course type: Face-to-Face

Evaluation Delivery: Online
Evaluation Form: A
Responses: 9/22 (41% moderate)

Taught by: Blake Hereth

Instructor Evaluated: Blake Hereth-Predoc TA

STANDARD OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS

Was this class intellectually stimulating? Did it stretch your thinking? Why or why not?

1. This class was very fascinating! All the different cases present really challenged my thinking and intuition. Discussing morality can be difficult sometimes because there is never a right or wrong answer, and there will always be multiple views to a particular cases. It was interesting to hear what my peers views were and how they differed. Sometimes hearing what other peers said or other philosophers say convinces me to change my intuition.
2. The class covers very interesting topics that generally aren't sought. Each question that comes with each topic is very morally engaging and encourages students to think outside the box.
3. As a philosophy course, this class questioned how I thought about the morality of life and death. There were many deep thoughts and examples of studies done by philosophers that made me question my beliefs.
4. Yes I liked the thought experiments
5. This class was very intellectually stimulating, it forced me to think about ethics and morals in new ways
6. The class was honestly very through provoking as a whole. The class discussed a wide array of topics relevant to the outcomes.

What aspects of this class contributed most to your learning?

1. Blake is probably the most funny, engaging, and energetic teacher I've had at UW! A course on the morality of death was not so dark with his energy :) I also really enjoyed the group discussions as I was able to hear opposing beliefs! Watching all of the different clips and documentaries were cool and interesting as well!
2. Discussions within the class.
3. The professor did an excellent job with keeping the class engaged, even though the class itself was very long. There were many questions, examples, and discussions that contributed to the deep thinking brought from a philosophy course. I especially thought that the professor contributed to my learning by staying neutral when asking questions about morality. It encouraged me to stay honest and feel no embarrassment when having a different thought than the majority.
4. Everything
5. The thought experiments and in class discussions and pizza
6. The in class discussions, discussing our stance on some of the though experiments/topics.

What aspects of this class detracted from your learning?

1. Nothing!
2. -
3. Nothing really detracted from my learning. I noticed that the professor tends to read the slides word by word, but he makes sure to explain and give further information afterwards so it's not that big of an issue.
4. None
5. Tangents
6. None.

What suggestions do you have for improving the class?

1. Everything was perfect! It could be because it was a summer course, so a smaller class size, which made it much easier for discussions. I also think the long 2-hour class made it easier to incorporate clips and group activities/discussions into lecture material.
2. -
3. Maybe rearrange the seats into a circle. I think the class gives great opportunities to have deep discussions and it would be a bit easier when everyone can see each other well.
4. None!
5. More pizza
6. None.

IASystem Course Summary Reports summarize student ratings of a particular course or combination of courses. They provide a rich perspective on student views by reporting responses in three ways: as frequency distributions, average ratings, and either comparative or adjusted ratings. Remember in interpreting results that it is important to keep in mind the number of students who evaluated the course relative to the total course enrollment as shown on the upper right-hand corner of the report.

Frequency distributions. The percentage of students who selected each response choice is displayed for each item. Percentages are based on the number of students who answered the respective item rather than the number of students who evaluated the course because individual item response is optional.

Median ratings. IASystem reports average ratings in the form of item medians. Although means are a more familiar type of average than medians, they are less accurate in summarizing student ratings. This is because ratings distributions tend to be strongly skewed. That is, most of the ratings are at the high end of the scale and trail off to the low end.

The median indicates the point on the rating scale at which half of the students selected higher ratings, and half selected lower. Medians are computed to one decimal place by interpolation.¹ In general, higher medians reflect more favorable ratings. To interpret median ratings, compare the value of each median to the respective response scale: *Very Poor, Poor, Fair, Good, Very Good, Excellent (0-5); Never/None/Much Lower, About Half/Average, Always/Great/Much Higher (1-7); Slight, Moderate, Considerable, Extensive (1-4)*.

Comparative ratings. IASystem provides a normative comparison for each item by reporting the decile rank of the item median. Decile ranks compare the median rating of a particular item to ratings of the same item over the previous two academic years in all classes at the institution and within the college, school, or division. Decile ranks are shown only for items with sufficient normative data.

Decile ranks range from 0 (lowest) to 9 (highest). For all items, higher medians yield higher decile ranks. The 0 decile rank indicates an item median in the lowest 10% of all scores. A decile rank of 1 indicates a median above the bottom 10% and below the top 80%. A decile rank of 9 indicates a median in the top 10% of all scores. Because average ratings tend to be high, a rating of "good" or "average" may have a low decile rank.

Adjusted ratings. Research has shown that student ratings may be somewhat influenced by factors such as class size, expected grade, and reason for enrollment. To correct for this, IASystem reports **adjusted medians** for summative items (items #1-4 and their combined global rating) based on regression analyses of ratings over the previous two academic years in all classes at the respective institution. If large classes at the institution tend to be rated lower than small classes, for example, the adjusted medians for large classes will be slightly higher than their unadjusted medians.

When adjusted ratings are displayed for summative items, **relative rank** is displayed for the more specific (formative) items. Rankings serve as a guide in directing instructional improvement efforts. The top ranked items (1, 2, 3, etc.) represent areas that are going well from a student perspective; whereas the bottom ranked items (18, 17, 16, etc.) represent areas in which the instructor may want to make changes. Relative ranks are computed by first standardizing each item (subtracting the overall institutional average from the item rating for the particular course, then dividing by the standard deviation of the ratings across all courses) and then ranking those standardized scores.

Challenge and Engagement Index (CEI). Several IASystem items ask students how academically challenging they found the course to be. IASystem calculates the average of these items and reports them as a single index. *The Challenge and Engagement Index (CEI)* correlates only modestly with the global rating (median of items 1-4).

Optional Items. Student responses to instructor-supplied items are summarized at the end of the evaluation report. Median responses should be interpreted in light of the specific item text and response scale used (response values 1-6 on paper evaluation forms).

¹ For the specific method, see, for example, Guilford, J.P. (1965). *Fundamental statistics in psychology and education*. New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, pp. 49-53.