DEPARTMENT OF INTERNATIONAL POLITICS

International Politics & Human Rights MA,
International Politics MA, Global Political Economy
MA and Diplomacy & Foreign Policy MA, 2013-2014

IPM028 Global Ethics: Power, Principle and Politics

Dr Joe Hoover
Office: D522
Phone: 020 7040 8376
joseph.hoover.1@city.ac.uk
Office Hours: TBD
Lectures: TBD
Seminars: TBD
Introduction

Global Ethics is a core module for the MA International Politics & Human Rights, and an optional module for other MA students, that introduces you to ethical questions in world politics. You will consider questions such as:

- Can war ever be ethical?
- What duties do we have to distant strangers?
- Does every human being have inalienable rights?
- Can it be just that our world is so unequal and so many live in severe poverty?
- Can global institutions like the United Nations or the International Criminal Court achieve global justice?

The module combines practical and the philosophical elements to help you develop a critical understanding of the difficult ethical issues of our contemporary world. You will consider the value of human rights, what it means to live in a world filled with severe violence and devastating poverty, the nature of pervasive global inequalities and what it means to think ethically on a global scale both as an individual and as the member of a national community.

Aims and Objectives

In the module you will consider practices of humanitarian intervention and just warfare, development aid and poverty relief, international criminal trials and human rights activism. These contemporary practices will be put in historical perspective and you will be encouraged to critically reflect on how these ethical practices have been developed and carried out. Finally, the module will help you to make your own judgements and reflect critically on world politics.

Learning Outcomes: Subject knowledge and understanding

On successful completion of this module, a student will be expected to be able to:

- Outline and criticize theories of global ethics;
- Apply philosophical understanding to political events and practical dilemmas;
- Apply your understanding of world politics to philosophical and ethical issues;
- Develop strong analytical reading skills, improve your written and oral presentation ability and learn to think critically about issues that bring together theoretical reflection and practical knowledge.
**Teaching Methods**

The course is taught through a series of 10 lectures and 10 seminars. Main ideas and controversies will be presented in the lectures and you will have the opportunity to ask questions and develop your thinking in the discussion-based seminars. It is vital that you read deeply and widely for the course in preparation for the seminars, as they will be student led discussions.

*You are expected to attend all the lectures and all the seminars.* It is also vital that you attend your assigned seminars, as your classmates will be depending on you to contribute to presentations and class discussions.

During the term you will give a short presentation and produce a critical outline on the topic for your assessed essay.

The presentation will be given in class and you will present with a partner, though feedback will be given separately. In the class presentation you will be asked to respond to a set question by applying a theoretical perspective to a real-world event. Schedules for presentation will be worked out in the first seminar.

You will also produce a critical outline in preparation for your assessed essay that will lay out the argument you are making in response to your chosen question. This is not a traditional outline but an outline of the argument you will make, meaning you will have to write it as a series of propositions and conclusions – this outline is intended to stimulate your thinking on the topic of your choice and the actual argument you make in the essay may differ. The outline will be due at the end of the 8th week of the term and feedback will be provided before the end of term.

**Assessment**

The course will be assessed by one 4000-word essay due at the end of the term.

**Deadline for Term 2 Assessed Essay: TBD**

In order to pass the module and acquire the associated credit, you must achieve a module mark of no less than 40%. Compensation is not permitted for failure of this module.

**Essay Questions**

You will develop your own essay questions with the course convenor and it is *vital that have your question approved before you write your essay.*

**Reflective Learning Week (week 6)**

Please note that there will be no IPM028 lectures or tutorials this week. There will be department wide activities for students this week. It also provides you an opportunity to catch-up on coursework and to begin thinking about your assessed essay topic.
Course Literature

Everyone is expected to read for each seminar. Try to read the majority of the Essential Reading each week along with a selection of the Further Reading that you find useful or interesting. Do note that the Essential Reading contains a number of shorter practical readings, please attend to these as well as the longer academic ones. You do not have to read all pieces listed under each topic but you should read widely – some pieces in detail and some just skimmed – until you feel you have a grasp of the subject. Presenters should try to read all of the Essential Reading, and much of the Further Reading. Where a chapter reference for a book is given, it is likely that the rest of the book will also be useful – don’t feel you have to stop at the end of the chapter if you’re gripped by the argument!

The following General texts will be quite useful and the library and bookshop have been asked to stock them. Students are encouraged to buy one or two and to coordinate purchasing so that they have access to a range of them.

General Texts

These texts provide an overview of the material covered on the course and you should consult a selection prior to the start of seminars and in the early weeks. They will also prove useful throughout the term and for exam preparation.

- Duncan Bell (ed.), *Ethics and World Politics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).

Reference Texts

These texts provide background for issues, ideas and thinkers you may not be familiar with; they are intended for reference purposes and are not key texts for the course. They are all available in the library.


• *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* ([http://plato.stanford.edu/](http://plato.stanford.edu/)) is an excellent resource for background information on thinkers or ideas that may be unfamiliar to you. This online resource is written by academics and features extensive citations and further readings. If you use this resource as a reference in your essays, reference the title of the encyclopedia entry, its author, the encyclopedia itself and the url of the entry.

**Journals**

The journal literature is very important in this area of international politics, especially *Review of International Studies, Journal of International Political Theory, International Theory, Millennium, Ethics and International Affairs, Journal of Human Rights*. Less oriented towards mainstream IR, *Human Rights Quarterly* and *Philosophy and Public Affairs* are also important. *Political Theory* and *Contemporary Political Theory* publish cutting-edge work in ‘domestic’ political theory – much of which is highly relevant to IPT. *Ethics* is the best journal to read to keep up to date with the latest developments in (again mostly non-international) ethical thought.

**Office Hours**

TBD
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Dates</th>
<th>Lecture</th>
<th>Tutorial</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>27 – 31 January 2014</td>
<td><strong>Lecture:</strong> What is Global Ethics?</td>
<td><strong>Tutorial:</strong> Course Introduction and discussion of what ethics means</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>3 – 7 February 2014</td>
<td><strong>Lecture and Tutorial:</strong> War! What Is It Good For?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>10 – 14 February 2014</td>
<td><strong>Lecture and Tutorial:</strong> Community, Territory and Exclusion</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>17 – 21 February 2014</td>
<td><strong>Lecture and Tutorial:</strong> Individualism and the Authority of Human Rights</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>24 – 28 February 2014</td>
<td><strong>Lecture and Tutorial:</strong> Global Liberalism Between Order and Violence</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>3 – 7 March 2014</td>
<td>Reflective Learning Week NO LECTURES OR TUTORIALS Department-wide Careers Events</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>10 – 14 March 2014</td>
<td><strong>Lecture and Tutorial:</strong> Resistance and Plural Cosmopolitanisms</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>17 – 21 March 2014</td>
<td><strong>Lecture and Tutorial:</strong> Poverty, Inequality and Hierarchy in the Global Economy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>24 – 28 March 2014</td>
<td><strong>Lecture and Tutorial:</strong> Legalism and its Limits: The Politics of International Law</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>31 March – 4 April 2014</td>
<td><strong>Lecture and Tutorial:</strong> From Global Governance to Global Democracy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>7 – 11 April 2014</td>
<td><strong>Lecture:</strong> Ethics and Uncertainty: Justice as Critical Intelligence</td>
<td><strong>Tutorial:</strong> Module Review Session</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The study of ethics is concerned with questions of the good, of right and wrong, of what we should and should not do. In the study of world politics ethics has often been seen as both inappropriate to a properly “scientific” method and to the nature of international, rather than domestic, politics. Yet, world politics is suffused with ethics. Actors in world politics use ethical language, they seemingly act for ethical reasons, and the scope of world politics implicates nearly everyone as a participant with potential ethical responsibility. In this session we consider what it means to study world politics in ethical terms, what “ethics” means, and how ethics as a subject orients us towards a consideration of the values that guide world politics and how those values are supported and challenged.

**Questions**

1. What is “ethics”?

2. Why has the study of ethics often been considered separately from world politics?

3. How does ethics matter to the study of world politics?

**Essential Reading**


Haile Selassie, “Appeal to the League of Nations” (June 1936).
https://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/selassie.htm

http://www.nazret.com/history/him_un.php


**Further Reading**


Week 2 – War! What Is It Good For?

War is a central ethical concern in world politics because in war the state explicitly sanctions the destruction of human lives. This destruction includes killing, maiming, and imprisonment of individuals; it involves destroying homes, work places, houses of worship, and public spaces, putting the social and natural environment at risk; it involves psychic harm to individuals, cultural harm to communities and harms the order that normally prevails in world politics. Despite all the evils of war, however, it is nearly always pursued in the service of some valued end – there is always an ethic of war at work. Given that war as political violence is always also ethical it is important to study the various ways it has been justified and opposed. In addition, we will also look at the potential of ethics to humanise, limit or prevent war.

Questions

1. What ends does war serve?

2. Can war be ethical despite the destruction it causes? Consider this question in the context of particular wars.

3. How can ethics constrain or prevent war?

Essential Readings


Frantz Fanon, The Wretched of the Earth (London: Penguin, 2001), Chapter 1.


Further Reading


Self-defence is at the heart of the ethics of war, but this justification presumes a social community beyond the individual to which we belong. Further, certain types of violence and exclusion are only allowable when they are committed against outsiders, strangers, foreigners, or the “other”. Since the 18th century the state has been seen as an ethical community that is worthy of defence. The creation of communities, particularly of nation-states, is itself a political act involving violence and exclusion and therefore the ethical value of community is contested and problematic. At the same time that national identity has been associated with exclusion and colonialism, it is also associated with liberation. In this session we will consider why communities have ethical value, why this is problematic and how lines of community are contested.

Questions

1. On what basis can communities have ethical value?

2. How do the exclusions that come with communal identities challenge the idea of community? Respond in terms of migrants, refugees and/or national minorities.

3. Is the nation-state a source of stability and peace or conflict and disorder?

Essential Readings


Further Readings


William E. Connolly, Identity\Difference: Democratic Negotiations of Political Paradox (Minneapolis, MN: Minnesota University Press, 2002).


Michael Walzer, *Thick & Thin: Moral Argument at Home and Abroad* (North Bend, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1994).
While notions of moral universalism have a long history the tradition of thinking of ethics in terms of the individual is a more recent and distinctive phenomenon that is very significant for thinking about world politics. With the advent of social contract thinking and the liberal rights tradition a different basis for political ethics was found in the moral claims that each individual can make on the state. These developments come to an apogee after the Second World War and the elaboration of an individual human rights regime that was seen as a response both to the dangers of amoral raison d’état and collectivist ethics based on racial and national identity. This shift involves placing greater authority in the claims of individuals and the power of the law is a central change in our understanding of the world politics.

Questions

1. How does the move to an individualist ethics alter our understanding and approach to world politics? Use concrete examples.

2. Is the nation-state undermined by a focus on individual rights?

3. What sorts of authority is required to protect individual rights beyond the state?

Essential Readings


(http://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/goldman/works/1940/individual.htm)


**Further Readings**


Since the end of the Cold War the idea of human rights has become increasingly associated with a hegemonic liberal world order – led by the United States. The moralisation of liberal internationalism is based on ideals of representative government, international law and the use of force in defence of global norms. For many these developments heralded a transformation of world politics, towards greater justice, while for others they heralded a new order of legalised hierarchy and moralised violence. In this session we will explore both the visions of a liberal world order set loose after the Cold War and the resistance to liberal hegemony.

Questions

1. Should liberal states have the authority to intervene in other countries to uphold the liberal order? Consider both military and non-military forms of intervention.

2. Are human rights a global ethical standard or an ideological imposition?

3. Can the liberal order be preserved and redeemed through international law?

Essential Readings


**Further Readings**


Week 6 – Reading Week

Events during reading week to be announced.
Given concerns raised about universal notions of individualism and liberalism, it can be tempting to return to a nationalist ethics, to resign oneself to particularism. This, however, is not the only response. In this session we consider alternative ways of conceptualising a political cosmopolitanism, emphasising pluralism and difference, while also considering how a universal ethic can be more responsive to difference. Rethinking these traditions requires engaging with difference on multiple levels, including along lines of race, gender and class, and considering the way hierarchy is resisted and order is challenged.

Questions

1. How is pluralism different from liberal notions of tolerance?

2. Why does a liberal world order inspire resistance? Think about specific grievances or challenges raised.

3. Does a concern for difference undermine notions of order, law and morality?

Essential Readings


*Further Readings*


Week 8 – Poverty, Inequality and Hierarchy in the Global Economy

We live in a world of extreme wealth inequality and in which large portions of the world live in condition of poverty. While there’s little disagreement that the poverty is moral wrong, there is considerable contestation over what sort of practical action conditions of inequality and deprivation demand. Anglo-American philosophy has tended to frame questions of global inequality and poverty in terms of what the wealthy owe the poor – assistance and charity, or reform of an unjust system? There are, however, other framings of the issue in terms of legacies of colonialism and ongoing practices of imperialism that frame the global political economy as hierarchical and exploitative. Also, the notion that there are rich and powerful states that exploit poor and weak states, even when this condition is objected to, ignores economic dynamics within states, especially those that disadvantage women, and reiterates an international hierarchy of North versus South that is increasingly problematic.

Questions

1. What kind of ethical responsibilities do we have for poverty and inequality? Who is the relevant “we”?

2. Can poverty and inequality be addressed through aid?

3. Is the persistence and expansion of poverty and inequality an economic or a political problem?

Essential Readings


**Further Readings**


William Easterly, *The White Man’s Burden: Why the West’s Efforts to Aid the Rest Have Done So Much Ill and So Little Good* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).


David Hulme, *Global Poverty: How Global Governance is Failing the Poor* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2010).


Week 9 – Legalism and its Limits: The Politics of International Law

Notions of national sovereignty and individual rights make appeals to the law. International law, however, is a contested ideal, acting both as a kind of higher moral law above state interest and a technical code intended to coordinate the on-going struggle between equal sovereigns. In this session we consider the power of international law both as a tool of politics and ethics, and how these two faces of the law interact. We will also consider the development of international criminal law in contrast to the inefficacy of international law to address other injustices.

Questions

1. How is the law able to tame politics? Use specific examples.

2. Does power inevitably undermine the justice of the law? Again, use examples.

3. Can the legalisation of international politics lead to a more just world?

Essential Readings


**Further Readings**


As we have seen ethical reflection on world politics leads to a number of different proposals for political change, especially expansions on the state-centric contemporary system. What standards should institutions of global governance be held to? This question has tended to be answered with an appeal to expanding democracy beyond the nation. The move to global democracy, however, generates as many controversies and problems as it solves. Will states give up their sovereignty? Does global democracy promise participation and equality or constraint and hierarchy? What should cosmopolitan institutions look like? In this session we will consider these questions and consider the prospects for global democracy to contribute to a more just world politics.

Questions

1. Is the nation state inadequate to address the ethical dilemmas of contemporary world politics? Give examples.

2. Can global institutions be democratic – in structure and ethos?

3. Is global democracy a new form of imperialism?

Essential Readings


**Further Readings**


In considering the place of ethics in world politics we have seen the way in which the idea of the good or the right is often associated with authority and order, as ethics are presumed to provide us with a guide to acting. Along the way, however, the complicity of ethics in exploitation, hierarchy and power has been revealed as well. In this final session we will consider how ethics are presumed to provide escape from the uncertainty of political struggle, but in fact do not. If we see ethics as always also political, how does this change our understanding of what it means to be good or do right? How does it change our sense of responsibility in world politics?

**Questions**

1. How do our ethics embody and express relationships of power? Try to think of concrete examples.

2. If ethics fail to provide authoritative guide to our actions, can we differentiate between ethics and politics?

3. Is the fact that ethics can only hope to inform rather than dictate our choices a limitation or an opening?

**Essential Readings**


Further Readings


