

IDSS 4400-02

# Interdisciplinary Ethics

**Instructor:** Dr. Kieran Aarons  
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**Meeting:** Wed 430pm, Room B 2215  
**Office hours:** C3370, Wed 230-4pm & by appointment

## Description

This course examines ethical issues via multiple disciplinary perspectives with an explicitly interdisciplinary analysis. Students will learn ethical decision-making and evaluate the ethical implications of social and institutional structures, with a particular emphasis on translating ethics across disciplinary and cultural differences.

## Instruction Methods

The mode of instruction for this course is a combination of lectures, formal and informal writing, combined with a variety of web-based assignments and exercises with an emphasis on horizontal written dialogue, peer support, and instructor feedback.

## Texts

All required and optional texts are available through our course Blackboard page. Although files will be provided in PDF format, I recommend that you print out all PDF reading assignments and take notes on them, as it leads to better learning and memory of the text. Reading for this course requires careful attention and critical engagement, so schedule your time accordingly.

## Assignments

Midterm and Final	50%
Peer review	10%
Weekly discussion boards	40%

## Discussion Boards (10%)

Each week I will give you a few questions related to our readings. As you read for the week, think about these questions and do your best to answer them in a paragraph or two (roughly 500 words). These are not supposed to be hard: just read carefully, reflect a bit, and write fearlessly. Forum posts are to be submitted via Blackboard, and are graded “credit/no credit.”

## Late Policy

Late and missed assignments are permitted only in cases of documented illness, family emergencies, or natural disaster, and only if you alert the instructor about it (in person or via email) in a timely manner.

## Grading Rubric

<b>A</b>	100-93	<b>C</b>	77-73
<b>A-</b>	92-90	<b>C-</b>	72-70
<b>B+</b>	89-88	<b>D+</b>	69-68
<b>B</b>	87-83	<b>D</b>	67-63
<b>B-</b>	82-80	<b>D-</b>	62-60
<b>C+</b>	79-78	<b>F</b>	59-

## Schedule

### The Ethical Significance of Difference

#### Week 1:

Dates: **Aug 29-Sept 2**  
Work: None  
Texts: Course Syllabus;  
- hooks, "Marginality as Site of Resistance" (in-class reading);  
- Le Guin, "The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas"  
Watch: Adichie - "[The Danger of a Single Story](#)"

#### Week 2:

Dates: **Sept 5-9**  
Work: Discussion Board #1 (double post, for weeks 1 and 2)  
Texts: - Benedict, "Patterns of Culture"  
- Midgley, "Trying Out One's New Sword"  
- Rachels, "The Challenge of Cultural Relativism"

### Ethical Theories

#### Week 3:

Dates: **Sept 12-16**  
Work: Discussion Board #2  
Texts: - Mill, excerpts from *Utilitarianism*;  
- Kant, "The Categorical Imperative"  
- O'Neill, "A Simplified Account of Kant's Ethics"

#### Week 4:

Dates: **Sept 19-23**  
Work: Discussion Board #3  
Texts: Aristotle, excerpts from *Nicomachean Ethics*  
Baier, "The Need for More than Justice"  
Held, *The Ethics of Care* (selections)

### Contemporary Interventions

#### Week 5:

Dates: **Sept 26-30**  
Work: Discussion Board #4  
Texts: - Russell, "In Praise of Idleness"  
- Google, "The Selfish Ledger" (short video + Verve article on it)  
- Chamayou, "A Crisis In Military Ethos"

#### Week 6:

Dates: **Oct 3-7**  
Work: Discussion Board #5  
Text: Dorlin, "Reprisals" (from: *Self-Defense. A Philosophy of Violence*)

*Midterm assignment posted online*

**Week 7:**

Dates: **Oct 10-14**  
 Work: *Peer review of midterm paper*  
 Texts: - Prole.info, "Abolish Restaurants"  
 Watch: - Anonymous, "May 1st: Why I will strike"

*Complete Draft of Midterm for Peer Review due at start of class Oct. 12th  
 Final revised version of Midterm due Sunday, Oct 16th, 10pm*

**Intersections of Class, Patriarchy, and Race****Week 8:**

Dates: **Oct 17-21**  
 Work: Discussion Board #6  
 Texts: Marx, "Value, Price, and Profit" (selections)  
 Watch: Crenshaw, "[The Urgency of Intersectionality](#)" (watch the talk)  
 Federici, "[Marx and Feminism](#)" (watch the filmed interview, then read the article that follows)

**Week 9:**

Dates: **Oct 24-28**  
 Work: Discussion Board #7  
 Texts: - Martinot - "Motherhood and the Invention of Race"  
 - Davis, "Reflections on the Black Woman's Role in the Community of Slaves"  
 - We Charge Genocide, "UN Shadow Report"  
 Listen: - Baraka, "Dope"; "Why is We Americans"

**Speaking for Others****Week 10:**

Dates: **Oct 31-Nov 4**  
 Work: Discussion Board #8  
 Texts: - Linda Alcoff, "The Problem of Speaking for Others" (*Read the Introduction, Section I, Section III, and the Conclusion; you can skip Section II*). A helpful video commentary on Alcoff is [here](#);  
 - Haggerty, "Speaking for Others: Epistemology and Ethics"

**Structural Injustice and Political Responsibility****Week 11:**

Dates: **Nov 7-11**  
 Work: Discussion Board #9  
 Texts: Young, "Political Responsibility and Structural Injustice"

**The Social Construction of Gender****Week 12:**

Dates: **Nov 14-18**  
 Work: Discussion Board #10  
 Texts: - Gleeson, "[Judith Butler: The Early Years](#)";  
 - Butler, "'[We need to rethink the category of woman](#)'"; "[Why is the idea of 'gender' provoking backlash the world over?](#)";  
 - Stoltenberg, "[Why I stopped trying to be a real man](#)";

**Week 13:**Dates: **Nov 21-25***No class: Thanksgiving Holiday*Work: *Discussion Board #11 covers this week and next weeks' material, and is due 12/01*Watch: Spade, "Trickle Up Social Justice" [[Part I](#), [Part II](#)];Spade, "Critical Trans Politics and the Limits of Law" [[Link](#)]*Note: Dean Spade often speaks very quickly. I recommend using the "speed" setting on YouTube, and watching these on .75x speed.***Week 14:**Dates: **Nov 28-Dec 2**

Work: Discussion board #11 (covering weeks 13 &amp; 14) due Thurs 12/1 10pm; replies due Sunday

Texts: Spade, "What's Wrong with Rights?," "Administering Gender"

*Final essay assignment posted online***Week 15: Class wrap up, final paper peer review workshop**Dates: **Dec 5-9**

Texts: None

Work: Final Essay peer review assignment:

*Complete draft of final paper for peer review due at start of class Dec 7th.****Final paper due Friday Dec 9th, 10pm via Blackboard.*****UNIVERSITY-WIDE POLICIES****Disability Statement:**

GSU is committed to providing all students equal access to University programs and facilities. You may be eligible for academic accommodations if you have a documented physical, psychiatric (anxiety, depression, bipolar disorder, AD/HD, post-traumatic stress, or others) or a neurological disability such as a learning disability, autism or TBI. You must register and provide documentation with Access Services for Students with Disabilities (ASSD) (<https://www.govst.edu/disability-services/>) before faculty members are required to provide appropriate accommodations. For more information or to register, please contact ASSD at [assd@govst.edu](mailto:assd@govst.edu) or 708-235-3968. To aid in creating an accessible learning environment for students with disabilities contact ASSD before or during the first week of classes.

**Title IX Statement:**

Consistent with GSU Policy 78, Title IX and Anti-Sex Discrimination, Harassment and Retaliation Policy, Title IX regulations make it clear that violence and harassment based on sex and gender is a Civil Rights offense subject to the same kinds of accountability and the same kinds of support applied to offenses against other protected categories, such as race, national origin, etc... The University has a duty to prevent harassment, post policies against it, to investigate complaints, and to take prompt action to stop harassment when it occurs. Contact the Governors State University Title IX Coordinator to report any incidents at [titleixofficer@govst.edu](mailto:titleixofficer@govst.edu) or call 708.534-4100 and ask to speak to the Title IX Coordinator. For complete Title IX information and resources, visit: <https://www.govst.edu/TitleIX/>

**Emergency Preparedness Statement:**

In case of emergency, the University's Alert System will be activated. Students should maintain updated contact information using the link on the homepage of the myGSU portal. In addition, students are encouraged to familiarize themselves with the Emergency Procedures posted in each classroom. Detailed information about the University's emergency management plan, information about how to update your contact information, and the Campus Safety Booklet can be found at <http://www.govst.edu/emergency>.

**Academic Honesty Statement:**

Students are expected to fulfill academic requirements in an ethical and honest manner. This expectation pertains to the following: use and acknowledgement of the ideas and work of others, submission of work to fulfill course requirements, sharing of work with other students, and appropriate behavior during examinations. These ethical considerations are not intended to discourage people from studying together or from engaging in group projects. The University policy on academic honesty appears in the catalog appendix, which can be found on the website at <https://catalog.govst.edu/>

**COVID-19 Statement:**

The posted campus Operating Plan is the framework which guides campus decisions regarding Covid-19 protocols. Effective Summer 2022, a layered prevention strategy that sets public health precaution levels at green-yellow-red will guide campus operations. When set at a yellow or red level masking is required in the classroom. When set to a red level, courses will move to remote instruction.

Any student who fails to follow required safety procedures including the posted procedures for COVID 19, or to comply with university employees' instructions will be considered to be violating Student Conduct Rules (Policy 4 Student Conduct Policy) and is subject to disciplinary action that may include removal from a class or removal from campus. Updates related to COVID-19, the current Public Health Precaution Level, and the most up to date safety information are available on the COVID updates and the Campus Operating Plan at <https://www.govst.edu/COVID-19/>.

**Students with disabilities** who require accommodations should contact disability services at <https://www.govst.edu/disability-services/>. Students, who are impacted by COVID 19 and need adjustment to class requirements, are responsible to send a written request to the instructor as soon as possible for approval.

**Student Health & Well-Being Statement:**

As a student, you may experience situations or challenges that can interfere with your learning and personal well-being. These might include strained relationships, stress, unstable housing situations, hunger, alcohol/drug problems, feeling down, or loss of motivation. GSU has many resources to help with these or other issues you may experience. Free, confidential mental health and medical services are available on campus by contacting the Counseling & Wellness Center at 708.235.7334 or <https://www.govst.edu/wellness/>. Assistance with personal difficulties, including hunger and housing instability, is available by contacting GSU4U at <https://www.govst.edu/gsu4u>.