

Integrating Philosophy, Politics & Economics

Time Mon, Wed, Fri: 1:00PM–1:50PM
Location Cooke Hall 248
Instruction Mode LEC (Lecture) and P (In Person)
Credits 3.00
Prerequisite PHI 185 (Model-Based Reasoning)

Instructor Professor David Emmanuel Gray
Contact ☎ Park Hall 118, ✉ degray@buffalo.edu
Student Meetings Tue, Thu: 12:00PM–2:00PM, or by appointment

Course Overview

Description

This is a project-based capstone course exploring advanced issues at the intersection of Philosophy, Politics, and Economics (PPE). Each discipline explores complex social problems with its own toolkit, and with its own set of questions. The goal of this course will be to integrate these different approaches into a richer lens on how we can confront complex social issues.

Purposes & Student Learning Outcomes

Integrating PPE is a senior capstone course whose purpose is to have you...

- Complete a group project that
- Challenges you to work together with your classmates
- Using the knowledge and skills that you all have developed throughout the PPE program to
- Make the world a better place.

In order to achieve that purpose, there are five learning outcomes for this course. By this May, you will be able to...

1. Examine a social problem from multiple perspectives,
2. Integrate those insights to devise a solution to that problem,
3. Carry out the necessary steps to implement that solution,
4. Present your work to the general public, and
5. Do all of the above while working as a team with your peers.

In addition, this course also has a secondary purpose of assisting in your professional development, preparing you for life after graduation.

Everything you do in this course has those purposes and learning outcomes in mind. **If you ever feel that what you are doing is not going in those directions, let me know and we will adjust accordingly.**

Learning Resources

There are no textbooks to buy for this course. I have posted all the readings on the course website. The course website will also have assignments and other course materials, along with any updates to our schedule.

Announcements & Other Communication

I will email important information to you throughout the semester, so routinely check your UB email for updates. Otherwise, I will gladly answer your questions, discuss your work, or respond to your concerns. Please see me at my office or get in touch with me via email.

Course Structure

This course will not operate in the same way that the bulk of your other courses do. This course is designed to be project-based and student-directed. As such, my role as instructor is to point you in the right direction and offer guidance where it is needed.

First and foremost, it is your responsibility as a team, to...

- Formulate a clear project that it is feasible to complete over the course of a semester with approximately 100 person hours of work available per student;
- Organize yourselves into a effective team, including a division of labor in a manner that plays to your team members' strengths;
- Develop a team organizational infrastructure to ensure efficient communication, sharing of information, and meeting planning;
- Research issues germane to your project, ensuring that your work is informed by philosophical, political, and economic considerations;
- Organize your output into coherent action; and
- Present your project motivation, results, and assessment in a clear, accessible manner in both a written report and an oral presentation to the instructor, other faculty, and the relevant stakeholders.

Grading

Unless you are notified of otherwise, the grading scale is as follows:

97.0–100.0	A ⁺	87.0–89.9	B ⁺	77.0–79.9	C ⁺	67.0–69.9	D ⁺
93.0–96.9	A	83.0–86.9	B	73.0–76.9	C	63.0–66.9	D
90.0–92.9	A [–]	80.0–82.9	B [–]	70.0–72.9	C [–]	60.0–62.9	D [–]
						0.0–59.9	F

Please note that UB does not allow final course grades to be an A⁺ or a D[–]. Therefore a final course grade of an A⁺ will be assigned an A and a final grade of a D[–] will be assigned a D.

Participation & Attendance

I will take attendance promptly at the start of each class meeting. If you are not sitting in your seat at that time, you will be marked absent. If you show up after that—even if you are only late by 5 seconds—then you will be marked as late. However, if you show up more than 10 minutes late, you remain marked as absent.

Activities

Participation

This course is based on the principle of experiential learning, where you learn not only from me but also from your discussions and interactions with your classmates. Indeed, like any activity, the application of the concepts and tools of PPE is best learned through active engagement.

As a result, the quality of the course depends critically on your individual attention and participation. I expect that for each class meeting you show up on time prepared, take notes, pay close attention to what we are covering, ask questions when confused, positively work with your partners during in-class activities, and, by the end of class, grasp what we accomplished that day. The purpose of us coming together as a class is to learn, practice, and apply the concepts and tools of PPE together.

To help keep you engaged, I will do my best to make our class meetings worthwhile and time well spent. I will also take special care to create an environment where you feel comfortable asking questions and expressing your own views. To get the most out of our class meetings, please *do not confuse this cooperative style of learning with mere conversation or informal, organized chatting*.

What If You Miss a Class Meeting?

Missing an in-class activity, such as a group discussion, under any circumstances does not excuse you from that activity. However, keep in mind that a philosopher's stone may be used to make up for group discussions. So occasionally missing a class meeting may not have significant impact on your final course grade.

In any case, if you miss a class meeting for a reason that is excused according to the university attendance policy (on page 11), you may have the opportunity to complete a make-up assignment. The nature of this opportunity will depend on the precise class meeting missed, as some in-class activities are unique without any meaningful equivalent. However, even if the absence is excused, you must reach out to me via email with your excuse within 72 hours of the absence. Otherwise, you will not be allowed to make up the missed activity.

PPE in Practice Capstone Project

The main purpose of this course is to have you all work together on teams on a semester-long project that seeks to make the world better through concrete social impact. (See page 3 for the details.) This project is assessed through a variety of different, yet mutually reinforcing activities.

Professional Development (10% of Final Grade)

Throughout the semester, you will be assigned professional development activities. The purpose of these is to prepare for your life after graduation while also encouraging you to better understand how the ideas and skills you are applying in your PPE in Practice Capstone Project may prove useful for your future careers.

Team Evaluation (5% of Final Grade)

To encourage you to reflect on—and address as needed—your project team's dynamics, you will submit regular evaluations. Of course, these also help me identify and respond to any concerns early on.

Individual Reflection (15% of Final Grade)

You will also regularly submit write ups that have you reflect on course material as well as your ongoing contributions to your team's PPE in Practice Capstone Project. These also allow me to identify and respond to any concerns early on.

In-Class Discussions/Activities (15% of Final Grade)

Time is set aside during every class meeting for you to engage in discussions and other activities with your classmates, either in small groups or with all of us together as a class. For every group discussion, the group as a whole is assessed together, based on overall completeness and collective effort. Unless you are told otherwise, each class meeting will have up 5 points worth of discussions and activities. These points are meant to be easily earned if you show up and do your part.

ELN Digital Badge (10% of Final Grade)

As part of your PPE in Practice Capstone Project, you will also be earning a digital badge from UB's Experiential Learning Network (ELN). Among other things, this badge is something you can put on your resume, signaling that the work you did for this class had impact outside of the classroom.

Project Milestones (15% of Final Grade)

Nearly every week, your project team will submit a write up that either (a) connects course content to your PPE in Practice Capstone Project or (b) explains how things are progressing. Yet again, these allow me to identify and respond to any concerns early on.

Final Written Report (15% of Final Grade)

At the completion of your PPE in Practice Capstone Project (and the course), your project team will submit a written report about what you all did, what it accomplished, and any lessons learned. (See page 3 for more details.)

Final Oral Presentation (15% of Final Grade)

During finals week, your project team will conduct a 10–15 minute presentation about your project about what you all did, what it accomplished, and any lessons learned. (See page 3 for more details.)

Philosopher's Stones

You initially have 5 philosopher's stones to use during this course.

Earning Stones

If less than 50% of the class shows up on time to a class meeting, then everyone who did arrive on time will earn 0.25 of a philosopher's stone.

If less than 25% of the class shows up on time to a class meeting, then everyone who did arrive on time will earn 0.50 of a philosopher's stone.

Using Stones

One philosopher's stone may be exchanged for...

- 5 points added to your group discussions point total.
- A 48-hour extension for any professional development activity, any team evaluation, any individual reflection, or any Experiential Learning Network (ELN) digital badge activity.

PPE in Practice Capstone Project

Final Team Written Report Due Date

Wednesday, May 7 at 11:59PM, Buffalo (Eastern Standard) Time.

This report has no grace period, so late reports will not be graded unless your team has requested and I have granted a reasonable accommodation.

Final Team Oral Presentation Date

Wednesday, May 14 from 11:45PM to 2:45PM, Buffalo (Eastern Standard) Time, in Cooke Hall 248.

Given the nature of these presentations, they will only be rescheduled under documented, **absolutely catastrophic** circumstances.

Project Task

Make the world better.

Here's What I Want You to Do

During the second week of class (after the enrollment deadline has passed), you will be assigned to a team of 4 to 5 students. At the end of the semester (see the dates above), your team will submit a 2,300–2,700 word report and conduct a 10–15 minute presentation. Before then, though, there will be weekly milestones to complete along the way.

Your main task as a team is to think about how to make the world demonstrably better and then actually do it. That is, you must identify a problem in the world (whether local, national, or global) and address it in some tangible way.

Keep in mind that successfully solving a small, though genuine, social problem is almost certainly a big win! Meanwhile, writing a policy brief that no one (besides me) will read is not very impressive.

To help your team complete its project, it has been provided with \$1,000.

For your final report, your team must answer all of the following questions:

1. **What is the problem that you are addressing? Why this problem? In answering this, make sure the following is clear: (A) which domain (local, national, or global) you are primarily concentrating upon and (B) how understanding and addressing this problem is informed by philosophical, political, and economic considerations.**
2. **Who are the relevant stakeholders for addressing this problem? (That is, who does this problem affect? Whose legitimate cooperation do you need to support your efforts?) What stakeholder support and resistance did you expect? How did this align with what actually happened?**
3. How did you interpret the imperative to make the world better? What values (moral, political, economic, etc.) did you focus on? Why?
4. How did you decide about the tradeoffs between what's most desirable in itself and what's most feasible? What were the economic constraints/scarcities that shaped your response? How did you understand, measure, and assess your opportunity costs?
5. **What theoretical tools from philosophy, political science, and/or economics were helpful for thinking about and addressing this problem?**
6. What data did you need for better understanding and/or addressing this problem? Could you get it?
7. How did you allocate labor in your team? What obstacles (of group dynamics) did you expect to encounter and how did you

preemptively plan to overcome them? What obstacles did you in fact encounter, and how did you then respond?

8. **Did you add value to the world, taking into account the combined costs of your time, effort, and any money spent? How can you commensurate your inputs with your outputs?**
9. **Did you succeed or fail, and by what standards should we judge you? What did you learn? What would you have done differently?**
10. **In light of what you were (and were not) able to achieve, what would be a good next step in making the world better?**

Your final presentation needs to only answer the questions above in **bold**.

Here's Why I Want You to Do It

The purpose of this project is to challenge you to use, in some concrete way, the knowledge and skills that you have developed throughout the PPE program. In particular, the goal is for you to work together with your teammates in a collaborative way to engage with an important social issue.

More specifically, this project is essential for you to achieve the major learning outcomes (from page 1) for this course:

1. Examine a social problem from multiple perspectives,
2. Integrate those insights to devise a solution to that problem,
3. Carry out the necessary steps to implement that solution,
4. Present your work to the general public, and
5. Do all of the above while working as a team with your peers.

Finally, I see all this as fulfilling my deeper mission to cultivate your cognitive and affective capacities for critical reflection and practical deliberation with others while engaging in meaningful, coordinated, and collective action on important social problems. Such skills will serve you extremely well in your future endeavors upon graduation.

Here's How to Do It

In completing this project, you will also be earning a badge from UB's Experiential Learning Network (ELN). This has the advantage of organizing the project into a meaningful sequence.

In particular, your team will be following the PEARL model:

- **Preparation:** Setting goals and intentions, establishing context, and acquiring necessary skills.
- **Engagement:** Making a plan and executing it, while getting feedback from me, other advisors, and the relevant stakeholders.
- **Adding Value:** Making positive impact in collaboration with your core partners and stakeholders.
- **Reflection:** Examining your experiences and achievements through various lenses, creating a narrative that connects the experience with your learning and professional goals.
- **Leverage:** Building on your engagement and experience toward creating even greater impact beyond the project itself.

Beyond that, it is extremely important to emphasize that every project turns out to be at least 100% harder than you would expect. There are always unforeseen obstacles. Teams that start early usually overcome the obstacles; teams that start late usually fail.

In other classes, you might be wait until the night before an assignment is due and still pass, but no one can do this project a week before it's due. Start working on your project earlier than you think you need to.

PPE in Practice Capstone Project (Continued)

Here's How It Will Be Graded

Milestones: Each group milestone will be graded pass/fail. Failed milestones may be redone once (in response to my feedback) in an attempt to pass.

Otherwise, the ratio of passed milestones to the total number of assigned milestones will be normalized to the 100-point scale for determining letter grades (from page 1). This will be your team's base grade for the milestones, which will be the same for everyone on your team.

Final Report: Your team's final written report will receive a grade based on the 100-point scale for determining letter grades (from page 1). This will be your team's base grade for the report, which will be the same for everyone on your team.

Final Presentation: Your team's final oral presentation will also receive a grade based on the 100-point scale for determining letter grades (from page 1). However, this grade will be determined in consultation with other audience members (which will not only include me and your other classmates, but also other PPE faculty and any relevant stakeholders we are able to invite to attend).

Similar to the milestones and final report, this will be your team's base grade for its final presentation, which, again, will be the same for everyone on your team.

Peer Evaluations: At regular intervals, you and your teammates will be doing peer evaluations assessing everyone's individual contributions to the milestones, report, and presentation. As I am able, I will also be

observing and assessing this as well.

These peer evaluations will then be used to determine your *individual* grades for the milestones, the report, and the presentation. That is, your personal grades for each of those three assignments will be modified according to how your teammates (and I) evaluate your personal contribution to them. Your individual grades for those assignments will then be raised or lowered accordingly.

Side Note: Peer evaluations and their impact your individual grades is based on a scheme from Kaufman, Felder, and Fuller (2000), which is adapted from Brown (1995). Their research is persuasive in showing that the scheme is reliable with few problems. Even so, I always reserve the right to disregard any ratings that look faulty, especially in light of what I am able to observe of your team's dynamics.

In any case, we will be talking a lot this semester about teamwork, trying to diagnose and resolve problems with group dynamics early on. As a result, my hope is that such individual modifications will be minimal.

References

- Brown, R. W. (1995). Autorating: Getting individual marks from team marks and enhancing teamwork. *1995 Frontiers in Education Conference Proceedings*, 3C2.15–3C2.18
- Kaufman, D. B., Felder, R. M., & Fuller, H. (2000, April). Accounting for individual effort in cooperative learning teams. *Journal of Engineering Education*, 89(2), 133–140.

I have copies of both these articles if you are interested in reading them.

Course Schedule

wk	Date	Topic/Reading	Activity*
1	1/22 (Wed)	Introduction to the Course & Capstone Project Read the syllabus closely, especially the description of the PPE in Practice Capstone Project (on page 2). I suspect you all will have many questions, which I will want to address in detail.	
	1/24 (Fri)	Brainstorming Problems Brennan, J. (2018). The ethics project: Teaching business ethics through student-created entrepreneurial action. <i>Journal of Business Ethics Education</i> , 15, 285–302. EngageMedia & Video4Change Network. (n.d.). <i>Types of social change</i> . https://toolkit.video4change.org/what-is-impact/types-of-social-change/	
2	1/26 (Sun)		Introductory Survey, Honor Agreement, Team Evaluation #1, and Individual Reflection #1 all due at 11:59PM (midnight).
	1/27 (Mon)	Activity: Queen City Tower	Professional Development #1 due at 11:59PM (midnight).
	1/28 (Tue)		Team Evaluation #2 due at 11:59PM (midnight).
	1/29 (Wed)	Team Dynamics & Decision Making Kantor, D. (2012). Action stances. In <i>Reading the room</i> (pp. 23–47). Jossey-Bass.	
	1/31 (Fri)	Establishing Team Expectations Oakley, B., Brent, R., Felder, R. M., & Elhajj, I. (2004). Turning student groups into effective teams. <i>Journal of Student Centered Learning</i> , 2(1), 9–34	
3	2/3 (Mon)	Team Meetings	Professional Development #2 due at 11:59PM (midnight).
	2/4 (Tue)		Project Milestone #1 due at 11:59PM (midnight).
	2/5 (Wed)	Panel Discussion with Former Capstone Students	Team Evaluation #3 and Individual Reflection #2 all due at 11:59PM (midnight).
	2/7 (Fri)	Guest Speaker Peter Rizzo (UB CAS, 2007), Director of Construction Initiatives, American Foundation for Suicide Prevention.	
4	2/10 (Mon)	Defining a Problem Spradlin, D. (2012, September). Are you solving the right problem? <i>Harvard Business Review</i> . https://hbr.org/2012/09/are-you-solving-the-right-problem EnterpriseWorks/VITA. (n.d.). <i>Low-cost rainwater storage system</i> . https://hbr.org/resources/pdfs/magazine/2012/09/are-you-solving-the-right-problem/EnterpriseWorks-VITA-Challenge.pdf	
	2/12 (Wed)	Team Meetings	Team Evaluation #4 due at 11:59PM (midnight).
	2/14 (Fri)	Guest Speakers Hannah Giarrizzo, Assistant Director, Community Engagement, University at Buffalo. Alivia Smeltzer-Darling, LEAD Coordinator, Community & Civic Engagement, University at Buffalo.	

* All times are for Buffalo (Eastern Standard) Time.

Course Schedule (Continued)

wk	Date	Topic/Reading	Activity*
5	2/17 (Mon)	Team Meetings	Professional Development #3 due at 11:59PM (midnight).
	2/18 (Tue)		Project Milestone #2 due at 11:59PM (midnight).
	2/19 (Wed)	Stakeholder Management Freeman, R. E. (2009). Managing for stakeholders. In T. L. Beauchamp, N. E. Bowie, & D. G. Arnold (Eds.), <i>Ethical theory and business</i> (8th ed., pp. 56–68). Prentice Hall. Vodafone Qatar. (2015). <i>Towards a sustainable journey: Sustainability report 2014</i> . [Business report]. https://www.vodafone.qa/files/dmfile/VodafoneQatarGRISustainabilityReport2014_English.pdf	Team Evaluation #5 and Individual Reflection #3 all due at 11:59PM (midnight).
	2/21 (Fri)	Team Meetings	ELN Digital Badge #1 due at 11:59PM (midnight).
6	2/24 (Mon)	Team Meetings	Professional Development #4 due at 11:59PM (midnight).
	2/25 (Tue)		Project Milestone #3 due at 11:59PM (midnight).
	2/26 (Wed)	Moral Value Timmons, M. (2013). An introduction to moral theory. In <i>Moral theory: An introduction</i> (2nd ed., pp. 1–21). Rowman & Littlefield.	Team Evaluation #6 and Individual Reflection #4 all due at 11:59PM (midnight).
	2/28 (Fri)	Example: The Values of PPE in Social Development Sen, A. (1999). [Chapters 8–9]. In <i>Development as freedom</i> (pp. 189–226). Knopf. <i>Optional:</i> Zoepf, K. (2013, December 23 & 30). Shopgirls. <i>New Yorker</i> , 58–67.	ELN Digital Badge #2 due at 11:59PM (midnight).
7	3/2 (Sun)		Midterm Course Review due at 11:59PM (midnight).
	3/3 (Mon)	Team Meetings	
	3/4 (Tue)		Project Milestone #4 due at 11:59PM (midnight).
	3/5 (Wed)	Social Entrepreneurship Prahalad, C. K. (2014). The market at the bottom of the pyramid. In <i>The fortune at the bottom of the pyramid: Eradicating poverty through profits</i> (Revised & Updated 5th Anniversary ed., pp. 27–46). Prentice Hall.	Team Evaluation #7 and Individual Reflection #5 all due at 11:59PM (midnight).
	3/7 (Fri)	Limits to Social Entrepreneurship Karnani, A. (2009, Winter). Romanticizing the poor. <i>Stanford Social Innovation Review</i> , 7(1), 38–43.	ELN Digital Badge #3 due at 11:59PM (midnight).
8	3/10 (Mon)	Crisis Clinic & Team Meetings	Professional Development #5 due at 11:59PM (midnight).
	3/11 (Tue)		Project Milestone #5 due at 11:59PM (midnight).
	3/12 (Wed)	Opportunity Costs Fernando, J. (2023, October 31). <i>Opportunity cost: Definition, calculation formula, and examples</i> . Investopedia. https://www.investopedia.com/terms/o/opportunitycost.asp	Team Evaluation #8 and Individual Reflection #6 all due at 11:59PM (midnight).
	3/14 (Fri)	Cost-Benefit Analysis Schmidtz, D. (2001). A place for cost-benefit analysis. <i>Philosophical Issues</i> , 11, 148–171.	
9	3/17–3/21	 Spring Break	

* All times are for Buffalo (Eastern Standard) Time.

Course Schedule (Continued)

wk	Date	Topic/Reading	Activity*
10	3/24 (Mon)	Team Meetings	
	3/25 (Tues)		Project Milestone #6 due at 11:59PM (midnight).
	3/26 (Wed)	Effective Altruism MacAskill, W. (2015). Worms and water pumps. In <i>Doing good better</i> (pp. 1–14). Avery.	Team Evaluation #9 and Individual Reflection #7 all due at 11:59PM (midnight).
	3/28 (Fri)	(In)Effective Altruism Manne, K. (2022, June 30). <i>Against swooping in</i> . Substack. https://katemanne.substack.com/p/against-swooping-in	
11	3/31 (Mon)	Team Meetings	Professional Development #6 due at 11:59PM (midnight).
	4/1 (Tue)		Project Milestone #7 due at 11:59PM (midnight).
	4/2 (Wed)	Team Meetings	Team Evaluation #10 and Individual Reflection #8 all due at 11:59PM.
	4/4 (Fri)	Team Meetings	
12	4/7 (Mon)	Team Meetings	Professional Development #7 due at 11:59PM (midnight).
	4/8 (Tue)		Project Milestone #8 due at 11:59PM (midnight).
	4/9 (Wed)	Team Meetings	Team Evaluation #11 and Individual Reflection #9 all due at 11:59PM.
	4/11 (Fri)	Team Meetings	
13	4/14 (Mon)	Team Meetings	
	4/15 (Tue)		Project Milestone #9 due at 11:59PM (midnight).
	4/16 (Wed)	Team Meetings	Team Evaluation #12 due at 11:59PM (midnight).
	4/18 (Fri)	Team Meetings	
14	4/21 (Mon)	Team Meetings	Professional Development #8 due at 11:59PM (midnight).
	4/22 (Tue)		Project Milestone #10 due at 11:59PM (midnight).
	4/23 (Wed)	Team Meetings	Team Evaluation #13 due at 11:59PM (midnight).
	4/25 (Fri)	Team Meetings	

* All times are for Buffalo (Eastern Standard) Time.

Course Schedule (Continued)

wk	Date	Topic/Reading	Activity*
15	4/28 (Mon)	Team Meetings	
	4/30 (Wed)	Guest Speaker Thomas Murdock, Clinical Assistant Professor of Entrepreneurship, Operations Management and Strategy, School of Management, University at Buffalo.	Team Evaluation #14 due at 11:59PM (midnight).
	5/2 (Fri)	Team Meetings	
16	5/5 (Mon)	Team Meetings	
	5/7 (Wed)		Final Written Report due at 11:59PM (midnight).
	5/8 (Thu)		Team Evaluation #15 and ELN Digital Badge #4 all due at 11:59PM (midnight).
17	5/12 (Mon)		ELN Digital Badge #5 all due at 11:59PM (midnight).
	5/13 (Tue)		Final Oral Presentation Slide Deck due at 11:59PM (midnight).
	5/14 (Wed)	PPE in Practice Capstone Project Final Presentations From 11:45AM to 2:45PM in Cooke Hall 248	
	5/15 (Thu)		Team Evaluation #16 and ELN Digital Badge #6 all due at 11:59PM (midnight).
18	5/19 (Mon)		ELN Digital Badge #7 due at 11:59PM (midnight).
	5/22 (Thu)	Final Course Grades Submitted/Posted	

* All times are for Buffalo (Eastern Standard) Time.

Policies

Late Work

Classes become quite overwhelming when deadlines are missed. In such situations, it is easy for work—and anxiety!—to pile up. This is why I expect that your activities are done on time.

That said, there may be times when you cannot get things done as expected. If that happens, **do not panic!** Philosopher's stones are there to help. If the situation is truly extraordinary, please do see me about a reasonable accommodation.

Reasonable Accommodations

You are a human being with all the usual challenges associated with human finitude. Illness, family emergencies, job interviews, other professors, and so on will inevitably lead to legitimate conflicts over your time. If you expect that you will be unable to complete a course activity on time, please notify me as soon as possible and we can agree on a reasonable accommodation.

Please recognize that most reasonable accommodations will require that you use philosopher's stones or do additional work. This is done to keep things fair between you and your classmates—after all you are asking for extra time that they do not get. So when you propose a reasonable accommodation, please reflect on what would preserve that fairness.

Challenging an Activity's Assessment

I am human also: mistakes may occasionally occur when evaluating course activities. Therefore, you have one week after an assessment is returned to challenge it. To do so, you must provide a clear written explanation (email is preferred) outlining your reasons for why there seems to be a mistake. I take all such requests extremely seriously, with a spirit of humility. I will then meet with you, as necessary, to work on resolving things satisfactorily.

Of course, I always encourage you to talk with me about how you may improve on future course activities!

Photography & Recording Etiquette

To maintain an open academic environment that encourages class discussions about potentially controversial, sensitive, and/or personal issues, I ask that you please refrain from taking photographs or making audio and/or video recordings during class.

Mobile Phones, Laptops & Related Technologies

Student interactions with portable technology devices can harm the dynamics of the classroom. Unless I tell you otherwise, you must silence mobile phones prior to class and not use them during class. All laptops should be closed unless you have made prior arrangements with me and have demonstrated that using a laptop is necessary for your learning.

Sharing Course Materials

All my course materials, available digitally or distributed in hardcopy during class, are protected by copyright laws. You may use these materials and make copies for your own personal use, but unauthorized distribution and/or uploading of course materials without my written permission is strictly prohibited.

Academic Integrity

Academic integrity is embodied by commitments to honesty, trust, fairness, respect, diligence, and rigor in the pursuit of knowledge. As a student in this class, academic integrity means following all directions on assignments, clearly distinguishing your own original work from the work done by others in your assignments, and seeking help whenever you are struggling. This is laid out in the academic honor code (on page 10) for this course. You are also expected to sign an agreement to adhere to that code.

In this class, the typical violation of academic integrity involves *plagiarism*. Examples of this include cutting-and-pasting material without proper citation, paraphrasing ideas from external sources—including artificial intelligence (AI) tools—without attribution, and borrowing ideas from a classmate without reference and/or acknowledgment.

To avoid this, you must strive for clarity in your writing in order to distinguish between when you are presenting your own ideas (typically by using first-person pronouns "I", "we", "me", "us", "my", "our", etc.) and when you are presenting someone else's ideas (by properly citing the source). Keep in mind, this includes the ideas of your classmates and any assistance you receive from the Center for Excellence in Writing (CEW) and from me. Please see the course Formatting Requirements for more information on how to properly cite the claims and ideas of others in your assignments.

In general, proper citation lets me know what it is I am evaluating about your writing. Am I evaluating your own original ideas? or am I evaluating your presentation of someone else's ideas? or am I evaluating your expansion on their ideas? All of these tasks are important, so do not be ashamed when you are doing them. I honestly do not expect every single thing you write to be uniquely yours, but I do expect you to be clear and honest about what it is you are doing in your assignments.

To help you facilitate this, every written assignment requires you to include a completed Commitment to Academic Integrity Form. Please remember that **assignments without a properly filled out Commitment to Academic Integrity Form will earn an automatic zero**. Templates for the assignments that include this form are posted on the course website.

While I treat violations of academic integrity on a case-by-case basis, I carefully follow the University at Buffalo's process of consultative resolution. According to this process, when I suspect an academic integrity violation, I first meet with the student for an explanation. If, after that meeting, I remain convinced that there is a violation, I will report it to the Chair of the Philosophy Department, the Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, and the Academic Integrity Office. This protects the student's right to appeal.

Beyond that, I typically impose a penalty that exceeds the penalty of not having done the assignment at all. Again, the student retains the right to appeal any such decision.

In particularly severe cases, or when the student has committed previous academic integrity infractions, there may also be further penalties imposed by the Academic Integrity Office. For more information, please visit their website:

<https://academicintegrity.buffalo.edu>

If you ever find yourself tempted to violate these standards of academic integrity, please seek an alternative course of action. Email me for a reasonable accommodation, or turn in partially completed work. I assure you that the impact will be far more generous in these ways.

Academic Honor Code for Integrating PPE

Students at the University at Buffalo, because they part of a community of scholars, must share its commitment to learning and discovery. The nature of this commitment generates fundamental obligations to the highest standards of academic integrity, honesty, and ethics. Adhering to these principles ensures that the academic endeavors we undertake garner us the greatest personal satisfaction and intellectual gain.

The University at Buffalo academic community is composed of learners—individuals dedicated to an open exchange of ideas and who share their ideas for the purpose of improving knowledge for all people. In order for this academic enterprise to be successful, we must embrace personal, ethical, and moral principles to guide our interactions.

These principles require personal integrity, a commitment to honesty without compromise, as well as truth without equivocation and knowing when to place the good of the community above the good of the self. Obligations once undertaken must be met, commitments kept.

The discovery, advancement, and communication of knowledge are not possible without these commitments. Creativity cannot exist without acknowledgment of the creativity of others. New knowledge cannot be developed without credit for prior knowledge. Without the ability to trust that these principles will be observed, our academic community cannot exist.

The commitment of its faculty, staff, and students to the highest of personal, ethical, and moral standards also contributes to the respect in which the University at Buffalo degree is held. Students must not destroy or otherwise diminish that respect by their failure to meet these standards.

Student Responsibilities

For this course, it is important that no one gains an unfair advantage through academic misconduct. Academic misconduct is any act that does or potentially could improperly distort student grades or other academic records. Such acts include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Possessing, using, or exchanging improperly acquired written or verbal information in the preparation and/or completion of any course activity;
- Unauthorized collaboration with another student or person in fulfilling course requirements;
- Unacknowledged and/or improper use of artificial intelligence (AI) tools in completing any course activity;
- Submission of material that is wholly or substantially identical to that created or published by another person or persons, without adequate citations; and
- False claims of performance or work that has been submitted by the student.

In addition, each student enrolled in this class must sign an honor agreement affirming their commitment to uphold this code. This agreement may reappear for activities to remind everyone of their responsibilities.

Faculty Responsibilities

As the instructor, I am also expected to help create an environment where honesty flourishes. To that end, I will do my utmost to make it known as specifically as possible, on multiple occasions, what constitutes appropriate academic conduct as well as what comprises academic misconduct in this course.

Throughout all this, I will also provide clarification to any student questions concerning any of the above.

University Policies

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

The University at Buffalo is committed to providing reasonable accommodations for equal access to this course for all students. To access accommodation services, you must initiate the request with Accessibility Resources at Student Life.

If Accessibility Resources determines that your request for accommodation is reasonable, they will provide you with an Accommodation Memo. Keep in mind that you will need a new Accommodation Memo each semester. (If you are a returning student and your needs have not changed, you can simply contact Accessibility Resources for an updated Accommodation Memo.)

Once you receive your Accommodation Memo, it is your responsibility to inform faculty and staff of any accommodations that they may need to know about. The Accessibility Resources staff will explain in more detail how (and when) to share this Accommodation Memo with others.

For more information, please visit

<https://www.buffalo.edu/studentlife/who-we-are/departments/accessibility.html>

Sex Discrimination & Sexual Harassment

The University at Buffalo is committed to ensuring that all members of our community can work and learn in a safe environment, free of all forms of discrimination and sexual harassment, including sexual assault, domestic and dating violence and stalking.

For my part, I am committed to preserving a classroom and university environment in which each student can contribute and learn free from discrimination, harassment, and sexual misconduct. I am also committed to supporting survivors and those impacted by intimate partner violence, attempted or completed sexual assault, harassment, coercion, stalking, and so on.

Please note that **all University at Buffalo faculty members are required to report disclosures of sexual misconduct to the Office of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI)**. If you disclose an incident of sexual misconduct to me in- or outside of the classroom (with the exception of disclosures in assignments), I am required to share that with EDI. EDI, will, in turn, reach out to provide support, resources, and the option to meet. EDI will keep all information private, and will only proceed with an investigation with the consent of the student, or if there is a risk to the health or safety to the reporting student or others if the university does not take action.

For more information, please contact the University at Buffalo's Title IX Coordinator at 716-645-2266, or visit

<http://www.buffalo.edu/equity/obtaining-assistance/sex-discrimination-and-sexual-harassment.html>

For confidential assistance, you may also contact a Crisis Services Campus Advocate at 716-796-4399.

Attendance

The university is committed to promoting student responsibility; therefore, there is no rule for student class attendance. However, every class instructor shall provide students a course syllabus during the first week of class that specifies attendance policies and dates and times for classes, exams and all other required activities. Classes are to meet at the time and location listed in the official university course schedule, unless changed with the consent of the entire class. Instructors may take account of unexcused absences in determining course grades. However, participation in various university activities (e.g., athletics) may require class absence.

Students may be justifiably absent from classes due to military obligations, religious observances, illness documented by a physician or other appropriate health care professional, conflicts with university-sanctioned activities documented by an appropriate university administrator, public emergencies, and documented personal or family emergencies. The student is responsible for notifying the instructor in writing with as much advance notice as possible. Instructors may determine a reasonable amount of coursework that should be completed to make up the student's absence. Students are responsible for the prompt completion of any alternative assignments.

If a student absence situation cannot be resolved between the student and the class instructor, or either party feels unfairly treated by the process, the Academic Grievance Policy and Procedures for Undergraduate Students should be followed. For more information, please visit

<https://catalogs.buffalo.edu/content.php?catoid=1&navoid=19#academic-grievance-policy-and-procedures-for-undergraduate-students>

For information regarding procedures for military call-up during the semester, please refer to the Undergraduate Leave of Absence forms. For more information, please visit

<https://catalogs.buffalo.edu/content.php?catoid=1&navoid=19#leave-of-absence>

Attendance on Religious Holy Days

Students who belong to religious faiths that require observance during work or school days will be excused from class without penalty if they have provided advanced instructor notification. If such a requested absence results in a student's inability to fulfill the academic requirement of a course scheduled on that particular day, the instructor must provide an opportunity for the student to make up the requirement without penalty. Students shall not be charged any fees or experience any adverse or prejudicial effects due to absence from coursework due to religious observance.

If a student absence situation cannot be resolved between the student and the class instructor, or either party feels unfairly treated by the process, the Academic Grievance Policy and Procedures for Undergraduate Students should be followed. For more information, please visit

<http://catalogs.buffalo.edu/content.php?catoid=1&navoid=19#academic-grievance-policy-and-procedures-for-undergraduate-students>