

GEORGE MASON UNIVERSITY
THE SCHOOL OF PUBLIC POLICY

Course title: Ethics and Public Policy – PUBP 753

Semester: Spring 2003, Monday 4:30 – 7:00 p.m.
Arlington, Room 219

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Office Hours: Monday and Tuesday, 2:30-4:00 p.m.

“Discipali Victoria, Gloria Magister.”

(Translation: **“The advancement of the student is the glory of the professor.”** From Epistle 194 of Benedict Gerbertus, a Benedictine monk, who became the first French Pope, Sylvester II, who reigned from 999-1003, A.D.)

Plagiarism: All work must be your own. Inappropriate use of the work of others without attribution is plagiarism and a George Mason University Honor Code violation punishable by expulsion from the University. All students should familiarize themselves with this honor code provision (<http://www.gmu.edu/facstaff/handbook/aD.html>). To guard against plagiarism and to treat students equitably, written work may be checked against existing published materials or digital databases available through various plagiarism detection services. Accordingly,

materials submitted to all courses must be available in electronic format. Kingsley E. Haynes, Dean SPP/GMU.

Course description: An inquiry into the ethical and moral issues in public policy. The course will explore issues that are controversial and often confusing to public policymakers, such as health care, secrecy in government, surrogate motherhood, and disability. Our perspective will be national as well as global; we will deal with the impacts of culture and politics on ethical dilemmas confronting society; and together we will examine the processes by which specific ethical systems are incorporated into governing bodies. Larger issues, such as war and peace, “just and unjust wars,” capital punishment, medical and legal ethics, and communitarian vs. individual liberties, will also be included, with an emphasis on how they affect public policy.

Course requirements: Students will undertake a research paper that focuses on a specific ethical issue affecting public policy, and present the results of that research to the class at the end of the semester. Since the class will be conducted in a seminar format, students are expected to keep up with the reading assignments each week. The outline of the research paper is due on February 17; the midterm assignment will be conducted the week of February 24 and will be due on March 3. The paper will be due on the last day of class, May 5. Grades will be evaluated as follows: 75% for the paper; 15% class contributions; and 10% for the midterm assignment. The course will be taught in a seminar format, with emphasis on student participation in the discussions. Extra articles will either be distributed or can be found on the Net.

Texts:

Sissela Bok, **Lying: Moral Choice in Public and Private Life.**
Vintage, 1999.

Friedrich Durrenmatt, **The Physicists.** Grove Press, 1994.

Amy Gutmann and Dennis Thompson, **Ethics & Politics**, 3rd Edition,
Nelson Hall, 1997.

John Rohr, **Public Service, Ethics and Constitutional Practice,**
University Press of Kansas, 1998.

Susan and Martin Tolchin, **Glass Houses: Congressional Ethics and the
Politics of Venom,** Westview/Perseus, 2001.

Recommended:

Daniel Patrick Moynihan, **Secrecy: The American Experience.**
Yale University Press, paperback, 1999.

Michael Sandel, **Democracy's Discontent – America in Search of
a Public Philosophy.** Harvard University Press/Belknap, 1996.

Class Schedule

**I – January 27 – INTRODUCTION: CONCEPTS OF ETHICS THAT
RELATE TO PUBLIC POLICY**

- *Equity
- *Justice
- *Secrecy
- *Bio-ethics

Assignment:

Rent and view the movie **Breaker Morant**

II – *February 3* – LEADING THINKERS AND CONCEPTS

- *John Rawls
- *Jeremy Bentham
- *Utilitarianism
- *Distributive Justice

Readings:

- Gutmann and Thompson, ch. 6.
- Rawls, John, “Justice as Fairness,” Ch. 3, in John Rawls, **Collected Papers**, edited by Samuel Freeman, Harvard University Press, 1999.
- Rawls, John, “Distributive Justice,” Ch. 7, in John Rawls, **Collected Papers, op. cit.**
- Bentham, Jeremy, “An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation,” Chs. I – V – On the Principle of Utility, pp. 1-42.

Recommended:

- Sandel, chs. 1-2, 5, 8- 9.
- J.J.C. Smart and Bernard Williams, **Utilitarianism for and Against**, Cambridge University Press, 1973.

III – *February 10* – ETHICS FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF THE POLICY MAKING WORLD

- *Professional Ethics in Public Policy
- *Ethics for Public Managers
- *Applying Ethical Theory to Practice

Readings:

- Rohr, Parts I, II & III.

IV– *February 17*– DECEPTION IN PUBLIC LIFE (Outlines Due)

- *Lying
 - *Implications of Deception
 - *Disclosure Laws

Readings:

Bok, Chs. I—VII, XIV.

V– February 24 – MIDTERM ASSIGNMENT –

VI– March 3 -- LYING, cont'd (Midterm Assignments due)

Readings:

Bok, Chs. VIII-XIV, XVI.

VII -- March 10 – SPRING BREAK

VIII – March 17 – DECEPTION AND NATIONAL SECURITY

*Rationales for War

*Just vs. Unjust Wars

*The System of Military Justice

Readings:

Gutmann and Thompson, chs 1-2.

Rawls, “Fifty Years after Hiroshima,” Ch. 25, in John Rawls, **Collected Papers, op. cit.**

Recommended:

R.B. Brandt, “Utilitarianism and the Rules of War,” in Marshall Cohen, Thomas Nagel, and Thomas Scanlon, eds. **War and Moral Responsibility**, Princeton: Princeton University Press.

**IX – March 24 – THE TOOLS OF PUBLIC POLICY ANALYSIS
AND ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS**

- *Risk-benefit Analysis
- *The Ethics of Policy
- *Public Perceptions of “morality”

Readings:

Gutmann and Thompson, chs. 5, 8-9.

**X – March 30 – THE PRACTICE OF SECRECY
AND ITS IMPACTS**

- *Secrecy and the two world wars
 - *Secrecy and the Regulatory Process
 - *Communism, McCarthyism, and their Impact
on the Ethics of Governance
 - *The Culture of Secrecy
 - *The Culture of Openness

Readings:

TBA

Recommended:

Moynihan, chs. 1-8.

Sissela Bok, **Secrecy**, New York: Pantheon, 1982.

**XI & XII – April 7 and April 14 – SCIENCE AND PUBLIC POLICY, &
BIO-ETHICS**

- *Notions of Responsibility
- *Organ Transplantation – HHS Regulations
- *Surrogate Parenting and State Law
- *Cloning
- *Human Experimentation

Readings:

Durrenmatt.
Bok, ch. V.
Gutmann and Thompson, Ch. 6.

Recommended reading:

Jonathan D. Moreno, **Undue Risk: Secret State Experiments on Humans**, New York: W.H. Freeman & Company, 1999.

XIII – April 21 – LEGISLATIVE ETHICS

*Principles
*Politics
*Recent Issues

Readings:

Tolchin, **Glass Houses**.
Gutmann and Thompson, Ch. 3.

XIV– April 28 – LIBERTY, COMMUNITY AND MORALITY

*Privacy Rights
*Religious Liberty
*Affirmative Action
*Abortion Funding
*Civil Disobedience
*Ethics in Comparative Perspective: France and the United Kingdom

Readings:

Rohr, parts IV & V.
Gutmann and Thompson, Chs. 4, 7.

Recommended:

Sandel, chs. 3-4, 6-7.

XV – *May 5* – CLASS PRESENTATIONS
(Papers due. Take home final examination
due in 48 hours.)