

**Value Systems in Cross Cultural Perspective:**  
**Toward A New Global Ethics**

International Studies 250  
Winter 2019  
Syllabus and Course Policy Statement

**Instructor:** Dr. Stephen Wooten (Pronouns: he, him, his)

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**Teaching Team:**

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**Course Description:**

Gone are the days of truly isolated cultures and communities with their “unique” value systems and worldviews – if they ever really existed at all. Contemporary residents of planet earth live in an increasingly interconnected world where one’s values and actions influence and are influenced by others and by the emerging circumstances we find ourselves within. As we all become more aware of our place within a global community our ways of seeing the world and of evaluating what is “right” and “just” in it are bound to be challenged – by others with alternate values and by new dilemmas or concerns that arise as life unfolds on a wider global scale. In fact, with so much hybridity and cultural mixing, we may even find ourselves of “two (or more!) minds” on a particular issue depending on what values we embrace and prioritize at a given moment or for a given reason. And, we may change our minds over time to boot.

This situation compels us to reflect anew on eternal questions of “what is right?” and “what is just?” and to do so critically and reflexively so that we can be better prepared to understand contemporary global ethical challenges and to act in an informed and thoughtful fashion. This course is designed to help make this process possible. It provides an introduction to the field of “global ethics,” a new and productive way of understanding the ethics and challenges of our global community. The course examines the theory that informs the “global ethics” perspective in order to help us develop a “toolkit” that can be used to better understand and engage with specific real-world concerns and issues – human scale injustice, suffering and threats. The goal is to gain an appreciation for the range of ethical responses people have to challenges we face in our globalized world and to use that appreciation to foster the development of an informed ethical position that conditions our actions. The first part of the course explores theories, approaches and perspectives, while the latter portion examines how this conceptual terrain frames our engagement with real world concerns such as poverty, war, bioethics, climate change and gender justice.

**Learning Outcomes:**

Upon completion of this course you will be able to:

- a) Articulate the key features of the "global ethics" approach.
- b) Discuss and evaluate the three key theoretical approaches to ethics: the moral, political and rights perspectives.
- c) Identify and appreciate the main ethical challenges we face today and the actions that are relevant to our engagement with them.

In addition you will also have an increased the ability to:

- a) Critically analyze academically robust information, data and problems.
- b) Interpret and synthesize academic writing.
- c) Communicate effectively through written and oral communication.

### **Part of the International Studies Undergraduate Core:**

The unique character and focus of the University of Oregon Department of International Studies (IS) is distinctly captured in the phrase “Culture and Development.” We integrate theory and practice, drawing pragmatically from many disciplines to find the best mix of approaches to address rapidly changing and complex global issues in our classes.

Our opening course, INTL 101, Introduction to International Issues, and four introductory level courses (INTL 199: Globalization and the Global Economy; INTL 240: Perspectives on International Development; INTL 250: Value Systems and Cross-Cultural Perspectives/Global Ethics; and INTL 280: Global Environmental Issues) are the intellectual core of the IS major – foundational courses where our students learn to link human security and people-centered social change to questions of culture, belonging and meaning. We conceive of culture in a broad sense that encompasses social, political, economic, and religious institutions, processes and relations, as well as the environment. Each core course has a different emphasis that enables students to cover the range of themes and issues characteristic of the wide universe of international studies.

Students will find these courses share a common purpose of fostering critical and cross-cultural thinking, encouraging them to seek out and understand diverse perspectives on topics such as globalization, development, climate change, free markets and human rights. In the process they will learn to get outside of their preconceived worldviews on these and other matters. These five courses, together, provide the foundation for deeper investigation of issues, regions, and cultures in our 300 and 400 level INTL courses.

### **Course Format:**

This class integrates independent work with collective analysis. Key readings are assigned for each class period and should be completed prior to each meeting. Class sessions will involve a mixture of lecture and discussion. Guided by substantive outline slides, we will engage the material presented in each set of readings in order to draw out key insights and content. You should be prepared to answer framing questions and offer comments on the themes and examples you encounter in the readings. On occasion we will view video clips to aid our explorations. In discussion sections you will analyze concepts and issues relating to the lectures and assigned readings in a smaller, more intimate setting.

### **Readings/Texts:**

Global Ethics: An Introduction by Heather Widdows (2011)

This book was selected as our core text because it offers a unique combination of theory and issues and does so in an accessible, engaging and productive way. First, the author has succeeded in presenting and synthesizing challenging philosophical ideas and insights about “values” and “ethics” in a non-technical, non-specialist way. Second, she is committed to the coupling of theory and practice – to seeing how and why ethics are relevant in the real world. Third, she is a true “globalist” in the sense that she is aware of and sensitive to the interconnections between people, places and processes in our contemporary world. Fourth, she is concerned with inequality and injustice on the local and global scales. Overall, the book combines traditional academic writing with more stimulating and user-friendly components like first person accounts and summary “boxes.” The book is available for purchase at the Duckstore. Discussion sections will involve engagement with supplemental readings and resources. These materials will be uploaded to or linked from Canvas.

### **Requirements:**

Your performance in this course will be evaluated on the following components:

Mid Term Exam: You will complete an in class essay style mid-term exam based on lectures, readings, films and discussions from the first part of the course. (40% of your grade)

Final Exam: You will complete a take at home essay style final exam based on lectures, readings, films and discussions from the last part of the course. (40% of your grade)

Minute Papers: Each week in your discussion section you will complete a short writing exercise called a “minute paper.” Within the first 5 minutes of each discussion you will quickly jot down some thoughts on that week’s assigned material. The ideal response will be about five sentences long and will focus on a specific theory, approach, concept or concern raised in the assigned material for that meeting. Be as substantive as you can in the

short time/space you have. Vague or loose thoughts that are not linked to your assigned materials will not earn you full credit. These “minute papers” will be collected and graded by your GE. GEs will use a simple scale in grading them: 100 = perfect, 95 = very good, 85 = good, 75 = ok, 65 = poor, 0 = missing. We will use these assignments as attendance records as well, so if you are late to your section be sure to at least get your name on a piece of paper and get it submitted when your discussion leader collects the papers. Late in class submissions or submissions without attendance in section will be marked down by 20 points. We will drop your lowest score on these papers. (20% of your grade)

**Policies:**

Missed Assignments

No make ups will be offered for scheduled exams or assignments EXCEPT in the case of a significant illness, injury, or family emergency. If you should run into one of these exceptional situations, you are required to notify me by email BEFORE the scheduled exam or assignment. We will discuss your situation and any possible accommodations that might be warranted.

Attendance and Participation

In order to engage the assigned material thoroughly you should be present in lecture and section. Also, I encourage you to contribute to our classroom discussion periodically. Your comments need not be extensive – but they need to be relevant and informed. Sometimes your contribution might simply come in the form of an exceptionally engaged look or a notable reaction to a point I make or to a comment from one of your peers.

Classroom Culture

In order to create and maintain a focused and productive learning environment we need to agree on some basic elements of classroom etiquette. Ideas for things to include or address?

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Cheating and Academic Dishonesty

All assignments in this class are designed to assess your individual knowledge and understanding of the material covered/presented in the course. Thus, cheating or plagiarism – in any form – will not be tolerated. The work you present must be entirely your own. All individuals involved in an act of academic dishonesty will fail the course and will be reported to the proper University contacts as required. I do not expect to encounter any problems in this area, but feel you should be forewarned.

Diversity, Inclusion and Campus Safety

Our campus is welcoming and responsive. The University is a place where people from different cultures and experiences learn together; understanding and respecting these differences are critical for the University to be a place of open-minded inquiry where, in challenging the boundaries of knowledge, we include and value all members of our community. Students who may have experienced prohibited discrimination or discriminatory harassment including, sexual discrimination, harassment or violence, can find a complete listing of confidential resources both on and off-campus here: <https://safe.uoregon.edu/services>. If you need support reach out and let us know.

Accessible Education

If you have a condition that inhibits learning or evaluation under customary circumstances, please let me know. In addition, please request a letter from the Accessible Education Center (541-346-1155, 164 Oregon Hall) that verifies your disability and states the accommodations that I can make. I will make any reasonable adjustments necessary to improve your learning experience.

Basic Needs

Any student who has difficulty affording groceries, lacks a safe and stable place to live, or is experiencing other problems meeting basic needs is urged to visit this helpful UO specific website:

<https://blogs.uoregon.edu/basicneeds/> and to contact the Office of the Dean of Students Office (346-3216) for

support. Furthermore, if you are comfortable doing so, please let me know about your situation so I can help point you in the right direction for assistance.

### **Class Outline and Schedule**

*(Subject to Change Based on Our Progress – Stay Aware of Shifts)*

#### Week One

Tuesday, 1/8: Syllabus and Introductions  
Thursday, 1/10: What is Global Ethics? The Case Studies (Read Chapters 1 and 2)

#### Week Two

Tuesday, 1/15: Moral Theory  
(Start Chapter 3)  
Thursday, 1/17: Moral Theory  
(Finish Chapter 3)

#### Week Three

Tuesday, 1/22: Political Theory  
(Start Chapter 4)  
Tuesday, 1/24: Political Theory  
(Finish Chapter 4)

#### Week Four

Tuesday, 1/29: Rights Theory  
(Start Chapter 5)  
Thursday, 1/31: Rights Theory  
(Finish Chapter 5)

#### Week Five

Tuesday, 2/5: Global Governance & Citizenship  
(Read Chapter 6)  
Thursday, 2/7: \* **Exam 1 in class**\*

#### Week Six

Tuesday, 2/12: Global Poverty  
(Start Chapter 7)  
Thursday, 2/14: Global Poverty  
(Finish Chapter 7)

#### Week Seven

Tuesday, 2/19: Global Conflict  
(Start Chapter 8)  
Thursday, 2/21: Global Conflict  
(Finish Chapter 8)

#### Week Eight

Tuesday, 2/26: Global Bioethics  
(Start Chapter 9)  
Thursday, 2/28: Global Bioethics  
(Finish Chapter 9)

#### Week Nine

Tuesday, 3/5: Global Environmental and Climate Ethics  
(Start Chapter 10)

Wednesday, 3/7: Global Environmental and Climate Ethics  
(Finish Chapter 10)

Week Ten

Tuesday, 3/12: Global Gender Justice  
(Read Chapter 11)

Thursday, 3/14: Conclusion  
(Read Conclusion)

**Take at Home Final Exam:**

**Posted on Canvas by 12:30 pm on Friday, March 15<sup>th</sup> and due on Canvas by 12:30 pm on Monday 18<sup>th</sup>.**