

**PHILOSOPHY 294-01**  
**CIVIC ENGAGEMENT, ETHICS AND COMMUNITY**  
**Fall 2008**

This course provides a great chance to **get involved** and **be a part of the Twin Cities urban community!** Students will hear from **local leaders and activists**, take **field trips** to **explore neighborhoods** and **visit community organizations**, and have opportunities to engage in **real world, hands-on service**. Along the way we will explore a range of topics in ethics and social/political philosophy through reading, writing and discussion, and reflect and think critically about these and many other questions:

What does it mean to “do good” or “make a difference”? Is civic engagement essential to a good life, and a good society? Do we have moral obligations as citizens to give back to our communities? If so, in what ways? What opportunities (and obstacles) exist for meaningful, effective social involvement? We will analyze arguments that good people are obligated to serve their communities, and that civic engagement is essential to good citizenship, and meaningful participation in democratic government. We will also consider the potential of civic engagement as a means for promoting ideals of social justice and the public good.

This course is open to first year students, and no previous background in philosophy is required.

**Class meetings:** 1:20-2:50 Tuesdays and Thursdays, Humanities 112

**Instructor:** Dr. Amy Ihlan

E-Mail: [ihlan@macalester.edu](mailto:ihlan@macalester.edu)

Office: 1<sup>st</sup> Floor Old Main

Home Phone: 651-635-9152

Cell Phone: 651-336-3930

**Office Hours:** Tuesdays and Thursdays 10:30-11:30 am, or by appointment

**Texts:**

Julian Baggini, *What's It All About? Philosophy and the Meaning of Life*

Harry C. Boyte, *Everyday Politics: Reconnecting Citizens and Public Life*

Paul Hawken, *Blessed Unrest*

Anthony Weston, *A 21<sup>st</sup> Century Ethical Toolbox*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed.

Additional Articles and Materials on Reserve, or on-line

**Class Schedule:**

Because this course will include a variety of guest speakers and field trips, the readings and activities for each class period are subject to change. The class schedule will be maintained on the course Moodle page, and updated regularly. Please check the schedule before each class!

## **Course Expectations and Assignments**

**1. Attendance and Class Participation:** Students are expected to attend all class meetings and participate in class discussions, activities, and trips. Because much of the learning in the course will take place during class discussions, regular attendance and participation are extremely important. In cases of borderline grades, attendance and participation may be taken into account in determining your course grade.

Students will also be required to participate in a minimum of 2 community service activities off-campus, which may need to be scheduled outside of regular class time. For more details, see discussion below in # below.

**2. Reading:** Assigned readings will be listed in the class schedule on the course Moodle page. Note that readings and activities are subject to change, so please be sure to check the Moodle page before preparing for each class. Students are expected to read all assigned materials before class, and be prepared to discuss them. If there are aspects of the readings that you have questions about, please bring your questions to class. No previous background in philosophy is required, so all questions are welcome and make great food for thought and discussion. (So do your opinions about the issues and arguments we will read - please feel free to bring them to class also!)

**3. Assignments:** There will be a series of short assignments over the semester (averaging approximately 1 assignment per week). These will vary in content and format, but will generally be connected to readings or class activities ongoing that week. Most of these will be assigned and turned in electronically, via the Moodle page. See the class schedule on the Moodle page for assignments and due dates.

**4. Community Service Activities:** Students are required to participate in at least 2 community service projects (involving at least 2 hours of service time each). Macalester's Civic Engagement Center will provide resources and help with choosing and scheduling service activities. In addition to participating in service projects, students will write an essay reflecting on their experiences in light of the ideas and readings we will be considering in class. More information about service projects and the reflective essay assignment will be forthcoming.

**5. Paper Project:** Students will write a short philosophical paper arguing for or against the position that civic engagement is essential to a good life and a good society. Guidelines for writing a philosophy paper will be provided. Outside research will not be required for this assignment.

**6. Exam(s):** There will be at least one exam covering the readings, philosophical theories and issues we discuss in class, timing and format to be determined.

## **Grading**

The required assignments will be weighted as follows:

Assignments	30 points
Community Service Participation	20 points
Paper Project	25 points
Exam(s)	25 points
Total	100 points

Course grades will be assigned as follows:

94-100 points	A
90-93 points	A-
87-89 points	B+
84-86 points	B
80-83 points	B-
77-79 points	C+
74-76 points	C
70-73 points	C-
67-69 points	D+
64-66 points	D
60-63 points	D-
Less than 60 points	F

In "borderline" cases, class attendance and participation in discussion may be considered in determining final course grades.

## **Some Additional Campus Resources**

For help with your written assignments:

The Macalester Academic Excellence (MAX) Center, located in Kagin Commons, has peer tutors available for assisting students in all stages of their writing. Hours are 9:00 A.M. - 4:30 P.M., M-F and 7 P.M. - 10 P.M., S-Th. Becky Graham and Jenny White also provide writing assistance to students during the daytime hours, M-F. You may drop in for help or call x6121 (daytime) or x6193 during evening hours to schedule an appointment.

Accommodations for students with disabilities:

Reasonable accommodations are available for students with documented disabilities. Please meet with the Associate Dean of Students, Lisa Landreman, who will serve as the coordinator for services for students with disabilities. It is important to meet with her at the beginning of the semester to ensure that your accommodations are approved and in place to begin the semester successfully. The Associate Dean can be reached in the Office of Student Affairs, 119 Weyerhaeuser, by phone at 651-696-6220, or email [llandrem@macalester.edu](mailto:llandrem@macalester.edu).

**Updated (Final) Course Schedule**  
**Civic Engagement, Ethics and Community**  
**Fall 2008**

**Thursday, August 28**

Welcome and Introduction

**Tuesday, September 2**

*What's It All About?*

Chapter 4 "Here to Help" and Chapter 5 "The Greater Good"

*Ethical Toolbox*

Chapter 5 "Service and Service Learning"

David Brooks, "The Organization Kid"

<http://www.theatlantic.com/doc/print/200104/brooks>

Assignment 1

**Thursday, September 4**

*Ethical Toolbox*

Chapter 1 "Ethics as a Learning Experience"

Chapter 2 "Ethics Avoidance Disorders"

Chapter 10 "The Ethics of Relationship"

Assignment: Discussion Questions for "The Organization Kid"

**Tuesday, September 9**

Public Art Tour -- Meet at Kagin Commons at noon for lunch and preliminary discussion. Please RSVP ASAP with your food preferences. We will go on tour after lunch and return to campus by the end of our regular class time. Please do the readings listed below before Tuesday.

- \* Kertzner, "The Arts and Public Talk"
- \* Public Art Fact Sheet
- \* Declaration of Cultural Human Rights

**Thursday, September 11**

*Ethical Toolbox*

Chapter 1 "Ethics as a Learning Experience" (pp. 3-19)

Chapter 2 "Ethics Avoidance Disorders" (pp. 20-36)

Chapter 10 "The Ethics of Relationship" (pp. 197-219)

\* Assignment 2 (due 9/11) -- Reflections on Public Art Tour

**Tuesday, September 16**

Guest Speaker -- Sister's Camelot

- \* Sister's Camelot Web Site

**Thursday, September 18**

Guest Speaker -- Nan Kari, Jane Addams School for Democracy

Voices of Hope: The Story of the Jane Addams School for Democracy

**Thursday, September 25**

*Ethical Toolbox*

Chapter 19 "You Can Change the World"

Chapter 20 "Communities Making Change"

Assignment 3 (due 9/30)

**Tuesday, September 30**

*Friday Politics*

Preface, Chapter 1, Chapter 3

**Thursday, October 2**

- \* Minnesota Voter Registration Soaring
- \* Suppose They Had an Election and Almost Everybody Came?
- \* Barack Obama, "Why Organize?"
- \* Politics the Wellstone Way

**Tuesday, October 7**

Joint Meeting With Senior Philosophy Seminar (1st half of class)

*What's It All About?*

Chapter 1 "Looking For The Blueprint"  
Stephen Pinker, "The Moral Instinct"

**Thursday, October 9**

- \* Simon Blackburn, "Seven Threats to Ethics"

**Tuesday, October 14**

*What's It All About?*

Chapter 8 "Carpe Diem"

Chapter 9 "Lose Yourself"

Assignment 4 (due Oct. 14)

**Thursday, October 16**

Fall Break -- No Class

**Tuesday, October 21**

*What's It All About?*

Chapter 8 "Carpe Diem"

Chapter 9 "Lose Yourself"

- \* Susan Wolf, "Moral Saints"
- \* Robert Nozick, "Distributive Justice"

**Thursday, October 23**

Take Home Exam #1 Due

*Ethical Toolbox*

Chapter 5, "Theories of Right Action" (pp. 89-94)

William Galston, "Civic Education and Political Participation"

**Tuesday, October 28**

North Minneapolis Field Trip -- rescheduled, with an expanded itinerary:

Noon: Leave Campus

12:30-1:30 Lunch, Cookie Cart, Peace Foundation

1:30-2:30 Visitation Sisters, Juxtaposition (public art)

Return to campus by 3:00

No assigned readings, but please view the following websites:

- \* Cookie Cart
- \* Peace Foundation
- Visitation Sisters
- Juxtaposition

### **Thursday, October 30**

*Ethical Toolbox*

Chapter 7, "Kant's Categorical Imperative" (pp. 137-141)

- \* Immanuel Kant, "Fundamentals of the Metaphysic of Morals"
- \* West Side Citizens Organization
- \* Assignment 5 (due Oct. 30) -- Reflections on North Minneapolis Field Trip

### **Tuesday, November 4**

Election Day

Assignment 6 (due November 5)

### **Thursday, November 6**

President Rosenberg

Eugene Lang, "Distinctively American: The Liberal Arts College"

### **Tuesday, November 11**

Jonathan Rauch, "This Is Not Charity"

Jane Addams, "The Subtle Problems With Charity"

### **Thursday, November 13**

Professor Harry Boyte

Field Trip to University of Minnesota Humphrey Institute for Public Affairs -- please meet in front of Admissions Office by 12:45.

*Everyday Politics* - Chapter 2

Assignment 7 (due Nov. 13)

### **Tuesday, November 18**

*What's It All About?*

Chapter 6 "As Long as You're Happy"

*Ethical Toolbox*

Chapter 8 "The Ethics of Happiness"

Robert Nozick, "The Experience Machine"

Assignment 8 (due November 18)

### **Thursday, November 20**

Peter Singer, "The Singer Solution to World Poverty"

Peter Singer, "Famine, Affluence and Morality"

### **Tuesday, November 25**

Ivan Illich, "To Hell With Good Intentions"

Flannery O'Connor, "The Lame Shall Enter First"

Assignment 9 (due November 25)

Assignment 10 (due November 25)

### **Thursday, November 27**

Thanksgiving Break -- No Class

**Tuesday, December 2**

Work on Participation and Paper Projects

Prepare for Class Presentations

**Thursday, December 4**

Class Presentations on Paper Project and Participation Project

-- Wrap Up, Reflection, Discussion

**Friday, December 5**

Participation Project and Paper Project -- Written Papers Due

**Friday, December 12**

Take Home Exam #2 Due