

TRN 303: ETHICS & SOCIETY—HUMAN DIGNITY

TRINITY COLLEGE
UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO
FALL 2018

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Schedule: Thursday 10:00am-12:00pm

Location: Larkin 213

Office Hours: Tues. & Thurs. 12:00-2:00 pm, Larkin 215

Course Description

Human dignity pervades contemporary ethical discourse, serving as a legal and political touchstone in both domestic and international contexts. But despite its prevalence, there is sharp disagreement over the most fundamental questions. What exactly does dignity mean? What does it require of individuals, social institutions, and the law? And how, if at all, should human dignity inform ethical inquiry and public decision-making? This course uses human dignity as an ethical value and frame to illuminate contemporary moral issues. It begins with a brief exploration of dignity's contested meaning before examining three ethical domains where dignity is frequently deployed: equality and social recognition, bioethics, and human rights. Of particular concern throughout the course will be the role of empirical and quantitative evidence in assessing dignitary claims, forming ethical judgments, and resolving legal and political controversies.

Course Objectives

This course is intended to:

- provide students with a survey of the meaning and use of human dignity in contemporary ethical discourse;
- provide an opportunity to critically engage with dignity's utility in both theoretical and practical contexts, equipping students to assess moral, political, and legal arguments;
- develop critical reasoning and both written and oral communication skills; and
- strengthen students' research skills, with particular emphasis on the different stages of research design and execution.

Course Texts

- Michael Rosen. *Dignity: Its History and Meaning*. Harvard University Press, 2012.
 - * Available at the University of Toronto Bookstore and electronically through University of Toronto Libraries
- *Human Dignity and Bioethics: Essays Commissioned by the President's Council on Bioethics*. Washington, D.C., 2008. [Referenced as "HD&B" in the Course Calendar]
 - * Full PDF available [here](#), and individual chapters available [here](#).

Academic Integrity

The University of Toronto treats cases of plagiarism very seriously. The *Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters* outlines the behaviours that constitute academic dishonesty and the procedures for addressing academic offenses. If you have questions or concerns about what constitutes appropriate academic behaviour or research and citation methods, you should seek information from your instructor or other university resources. (See <http://www.utoronto.ca/academicintegrity/resourcesforstudents.html>.)

Accessibility

The University provides academic accommodations for students with disabilities in accordance with the terms of the Ontario Human Rights Code. For information on services and resources, see <http://www.studentlife.utoronto.ca/as>.

Late Penalty Policy

For assignments submitted after the due date, a penalty of 5% per day of lateness will be assessed. For assignments due over the course of the term (e.g., response papers), it is the responsibility of the student to ensure that the minimum number are submitted before the conclusion of the term.

Re-Marking Policy

If you believe an assignment or exam has been incorrectly graded, there is the opportunity for re-marking. To initiate this process, you must submit a brief written statement outlining why you believe you deserve a higher mark. This statement should be submitted no sooner than 2 but no more than 7 days after the assignment or exam is returned. Your assignment or exam will then be remarked in full and the new mark, whether higher or lower than the original, will be final.

Marking Scheme

- Participation: 25%
- Discussion Questions: 10% (2 times in each of weeks 3-5, 6-8, 9-11)
- Response Papers: 30%
 - One in weeks 3-5 (750 words): 5%
 - One in weeks 6-8 (1,000 words): 10%
 - One in weeks 9-11 (1,500 words): 15%
- Final Project: 35%
 - **Option A: Research Proposal**
 - 1-page draft proposal: 2.5%
 - Literature Review or Annotated Bibliography (due Dec. 5): 10%
 - Final Proposal: 22.5%
 - **Option B: Paper**
 - Outline (due Dec. 5): 5%
 - Final Paper (~3,000 words): 30%

Marking Rubric

| Percentage | Letter | Grade Description |
|------------|--------|--|
| 90-100 | A+ | Excellent: Strong evidence of original thinking; good organization; capacity to analyze and synthesize; superior grasp of subject matter with sound critical evaluations; evidence of extensive knowledge base. |
| 85-89 | A | |
| 80-84 | A- | |
| 77-79 | B+ | Good: Evidence of grasp of subject matter; some evidence of critical capacity and analytic ability; reasonable understanding of relevant issues; evidence of familiarity with literature. |
| 73-76 | B | |
| 70-72 | B- | |
| 67-69 | C+ | Adequate: Student who is profiting from his/her university experience; understanding of the subject matter; ability to develop solutions to simple problems in the material. |
| 63-66 | C | |
| 60-62 | C- | |
| 57-59 | D+ | Marginal: Some evidence of familiarity with subject matter and some evidence that critical and analytic skills have been developed. |
| 53-56 | D | |
| 50-52 | D- | |
| 0-49 | F | Inadequate: Little evidence of even superficial understanding of subject matter; weakness in critical and analytic skills; with limited or irrelevant use of literature. |

For further information on grading, please see the University of Toronto Faculty of Arts & Sciences [Grading Policies](#).

RESOURCES

The University of Toronto has many resources to help you succeed in your academic pursuits.

If you are feeling overwhelmed or distressed, help is available. Please contact or visit your college registrar's office. To find your college registrar, go here <http://www.artsci.utoronto.ca/newstudents/nextsteps/contact>.

You may not know about the wide range of excellent **writing** resources on campus. These include:

- **College writing centres:** <http://writing.utoronto.ca/writing-centres/arts-and-science/>. The teaching approach of the college writing centres is described at <http://writing.utoronto.ca/writing-centres/learning/>.
- **Writing at the University of Toronto:** <http://writing.utoronto.ca>.
- More than 60 advice files on all aspects of academic writing are available at <http://advice.writing.utoronto.ca>. A complete list of printable PDF versions are listed at <http://advice.writing.utoronto.ca/student-pdfs/>.
- You may also wish to refer to "**How Not to Plagiarize**" and other resources on documentation format and methods of integrating sources; these are listed in the section at <http://advice.writing.utoronto.ca/using-sources/>.
- The University of Toronto also has an excellent **Writing Plus** workshop series, described at <http://writing.utoronto.ca/writing-plus/>.
- Information about the **English Language Learning** program (ELL) is available at <http://www.artsci.utoronto.ca/current/advising/ell>. One of ELL's programs is the **Communication Café**, which meets weekly at five different times and locations for the first seven weeks of each term for practice with oral skills like class discussion and presentations. ELL also sponsors an online program called **Reading eWriting**, which helps students engage course readings more effectively.

As a student of a Trinity College course, you are welcome and encouraged to use the John W. Graham Library and its extensive resources. There is library staff available to assist you with using the collections and conducting research. The home page of the Graham library is here: https://www.trinity.utoronto.ca/Library_Archives/

You are encouraged to meet with one of the librarians to devise a research topic and develop your final paper. The librarians can also assist you with locating primary sources and constructing a proper bibliography.

Courtney Lundrigan, Instructional and Reader Services Librarian
416-978-2522 x5216
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For a primer on sources and citation, see <https://guides.library.utoronto.ca/citing>

COURSE CALENDAR

Historical & Philosophical Background

Week 1: September 6

- Steven Pinker, "The Stupidity of Dignity"
- Michael Rosen, *Dignity: Its History and Meaning*: pp. 1-54, skim 54-62

Week 2: September 13

- Finish Michael Rosen, *Dignity: Its History and Meaning*: pp. 1-54, skim 54-62
- Jacob Weinrib, "Human Dignity and Its Critics"

Equality & Recognition

Week 3: September 20

- Charles Taylor, "The Politics of Recognition"
- Nancy Fraser, "From Redistribution to Recognition? Dilemmas of Justice in a 'Post-Socialist' Age"

Week 4: September 27

- Martha Nussbaum, "Human Dignity and Political Entitlements" [[HD&B](#)]
- Case Study: Canadian Dignity in Comparative Context
 - Rory O'Connell, "The Role of Dignity in Equality Law: Lessons from Canada and South Africa"
 - *Law v. Canada (Minister of Employment and Immigration)* (1999)

Week 5: October 4

- Michael Rosen, *Dignity: Its History and Meaning*: pp. 63-77 and 104-107
- Case Study: Dignity & Race in the United States
 - Lyndon B. Johnson, "Special Message to the Congress: The American Promise" (March 15, 1965)
 - Ta-Nehisi Coates, "The Case for Reparations"
 - Connor Ewing, "With Dignity and Justice for All?" (excerpt)

Human Rights

Week 6: October 11

- Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948)
- Review Rosen, *Dignity: Its History and Meaning*: pp. 54-62
- Jürgen Habermas, "The Concept of Human Dignity and the Realistic Utopia of Human Rights"
- John Tasioulas, "Human Dignity as a Foundation for Human Rights"

Week 7: October 18

- Sam Moyn, "The Secret Constitutional History of Human Dignity"
- Sam Moyn, "Dignity's Due"
- Case Study: Dignity and the Right to Housing in South Africa
 - *Government of the Republic of South Africa v. Grootboom* (2000)

Week 8: October 25

- Denise Reaume, "Dignity, Choice, and Circumstances"
- Jeremy Waldron, "Dignity and Rank"

Bioethics

Week 9: November 1

- The Hippocratic Oath
- Adam Schulman, "Bioethics and the Question of Human Dignity" [[HD&B](#)]
- Daniel Sulmasy, "Dignity and Bioethics: History, Theory, and Selected Applications" [[HD&B](#)]
- Ruth Macklin, "Dignity is a Useless Concept"

***** No Class Nov. 8 *****

Week 10: November 15

- David Albert Jones, "Is Dignity Language Useful in Bioethical Discussion of Assisted Suicide and Abortion?"
- Reva Siegal, "Dignity and the Duty to Protect Unborn Life"

Week 11: November 22

- Rebecca Dresser, "Human Dignity and the Seriously Ill Patient" [[HD&B](#)]
- Skim "Assisted Suicide and Euthanasia: A Guide to the Evidence"
- Case Study: "Death with Dignity" in Canada
 - *Rodriguez v. British Columbia (Attorney General)* (1993)
 - *Carter v. Canada (Attorney General)* (2015)

Conclusion

Week 12: November 29

- TBA