Cosmopolitan Ethics and the Challenge of Moral Motivation

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ERASMUS MUNDUS MASTER OF GLOBAL STUDIES PROGRAM
UNIVERSITY OF LEIPZIG
Tuesday, June 6 – Friday, June 16, 2017

Course Description: Cosmopolitan ethics are widely understood to provide a much needed moral framework to guide human interactions in an era of rapidly increasing global interdependence. At the same time, it is clear that the principles of cosmopolitan ethics face very serious political challenges – from the 2016 U.S. election to the Brexit vote to the rise of nationalist political movements in Europe and other parts of the world. The first part of this course introduces students to the key debates in cosmopolitan moral theory, in particular the principle that all human beings hold two sets of ethical obligations toward all other human beings, regardless of their citizenship or any other features of their identity. Those ethical obligations include positive ethical duties to provide assistance to other people in need of help and negative ethical duties to not cause harm or to benefit from the suffering of other people. The course will examine and debate both the theoretical and practical implications of these ethical duties.

The second part of the course confronts one of the core challenges facing cosmopolitan ethics: the question of how to motivate ordinary people to act on the cosmopolitan ethical obligations which they hold towards other human beings. As the political philosopher Andrew Dobson emphasized, “the cerebral recognition that we are all members of a common humanity seems not to be enough to get us to ‘do’ cosmopolitanism” (2006: 182). Similarly, Lukas Meyer has pointed out that “there is no tight connection between understanding what morality requires and being moved to do what morality requires” (2000: 631). The course will examine both the challenges of motivating cosmopolitan behaviour in everyday life and the strategies proposed by cosmopolitan theorists, psychologists and global justice activists to motivate cosmopolitan action.

Learning Objectives: By the end of this course, students will be able to:
▪ Critically analyse contemporary debates about cosmopolitan ethics.
▪ Develop their own strategies to motivate cosmopolitan behaviour based on critical analysis of cosmopolitan theory and research on the psychology of communication.

Assignments and Evaluation
▪ Seminar Participation: 10%
▪ Reading Responses: 30% (3 x 10% each)
▪ Group Project 10%
▪ Seminar Paper proposal No mark, but required to receive a mark for the paper.
▪ Final Seminar Paper 50%
ASSIGNMENTS AND EVALUATION

Participation (10%)
▪ Participation grades are not based on attendance – although you must be present in order to participate. Participation grades are based on the extent to which you engage actively in an informed and respectful manner in seminar discussions. A good participation grade requires not only that you make regular contributions to seminar discussions, but also that those contributions be informed by and make reference to course readings and previous seminar discussions. Just talking a lot does not constitute effective participation. This means that you must complete the assigned readings and daily writing assignments before each class and come to class prepared to engage in a critical discussion of the readings. Participating effectively also means that you do not dominate the discussion and respect the ideas and interventions of other students. I will assign mid-term participation grades at the end of the first week so that you can assess how your participation in the course is being evaluated.

Reading Responses (3 x 10% = 30%)
▪ Because this is a seminar course in which discussion of ideas is the central means of learning, it is essential that all students not only complete the required readings before each class, but also grapple with questions about them before each seminar discussion. The best way to do this is by writing, which forces you to think systematically about your perspectives on a set of readings and to commit your ideas to paper - before each seminar.
▪ Each student is required to submit 3 reading responses, on alternating days. Half the class will submit responses for seminars 2, 4 and 6. The other half will submit responses for seminars 3, 5 and 7.
▪ Students should submit reading responses by email prior to the start of each seminar.
▪ Each reading response should be 300-400 words. The reading responses should identify and analyse the central argument(s) of each assigned reading and the ways in which the readings relate to each other. The response should also try to make connections with other readings in the course – where they seem particularly relevant. You may also wish to incorporate responses to one or more of the discussion questions listed on the course outline.
▪ Reading responses will be evaluated and returned to students the day after they are submitted.
▪ Because the purpose of the reading responses is to demonstrate that students have thoughtfully engaged with assigned readings before each seminar, late reading responses will not be accepted.

▪ Academic Paper Proposal
The proposal should include a) a short paragraph on the proposed topic for your paper + b) a proposed bibliography of at least 8 sources that you plan to consult for your paper. There is no mark for the paper proposal, but it is extremely important in order for me to give you effective feedback on your topic before you begin writing.

▪ Seminar Paper (50%)
The paper should address some aspect of the central course theme. The paper could examine in-depth the topic from one particular seminar class or could explore aspects of cosmopolitan theory and moral motivation that extend beyond course reading and discussion. The paper should draw
on the required reading for the course as well as appropriate outside sources. Papers should incorporate at least 12 sources. Papers should be approximately 4,000 words. Professor Cameron will be accessible by email for consultations on the seminar paper following the final class.

Papers should include appropriate references and bibliography. The preferred format for the papers is Times New Roman 12 point font, single-spaced, with 1” margins.

- **Group Project: Motivating Cosmopolitanism (10%)**
  This project requires students to work in groups of 2-3 to develop and present a practical strategy designed to motivate cosmopolitan behaviour. Students will present and discuss the strategies in the final class. The presentation of strategies of cosmopolitan motivation should clearly reflect the principles of cosmopolitan ethics and research on the challenges of moral motivation but should focus on practical initiatives that would inspire cosmopolitan action in everyday life. The proposals could focus on strategies to motivate cosmopolitan behaviour among any age group (e.g. small children to elderly adults), any level of geography (from neighbourhood to national level to global level), within a specific community (e.g. university students, religious community) and could involve a wide range of interventions, from social media to street theatre.

  The proposals will be evaluated on the basis of the following criteria:
  
  i) Consideration of the relevant scholarly literature on cosmopolitan motivation
  ii) Explanation of how the relevant scholarly literature relates to the specific practical proposal.

  The basis for evaluation will be an oral presentation to the rest of the class on Friday, June 16. All students in each group will receive the same grade for the presentation.
Week 1: Cosmopolitan Ethics

Seminar 1 – Introduction to Cosmopolitan Ethics
Tues, June 6, 9:00 - 11:00

Reading:

Additional suggested reading:

Discussion questions: What are the core principles of cosmopolitanism? According to cosmopolitan theorists, what ethical duties do all humans owe to all other humans? What are the practical implications of these ethical duties, that is, what kinds of behaviour do they require of people?

Seminar 2: Cosmopolitan ethics – Positive duties of assistance
Weds, June 7, 15:00 - 17:00

Reading:

Additional suggested resources:
▪ Peter Singer. Video clip – The Examined Life (10 minutes) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gVViICWs4dM

Discussion questions: How should positive ethical duties be understood in the context of contemporary globalization? What are the practical implications of the positive duties that Singer outlines? Are acts of charity based on positive ethical duties sufficient to fulfill the moral requirements of cosmopolitanism? Do you agree or disagree with Peter Singer’s argument that charity is an obligation? Why (not)? How does Kuper respond to Singer’s argument? Where do you stand in this debate?
**Seminar 3: Cosmopolitan ethics – Negative duties to not cause harm**  
Thurs, June 8: 11:00 - 13:00

**Reading:**

**Discussion questions:** How should negative ethical duties be understood in the context of contemporary economic globalization? What are the practical implications of these duties? What duties or obligations does a human right to be free from severe poverty impose on affluent ‘citizens of the world”? What are the implications of a human right to be free from severe poverty for both rights holders and duty bearers?

**Seminar 4: Critical perspectives on Cosmopolitanism**  
Friday, June 9: 13:00 -16:00

**Group 2: Reading – Post-colonial critiques of cosmopolitanism**

**Discussion Questions:** In spite of its global ambitions, is cosmopolitanism an inherently Western philosophy? Can it ever hope to be universally accepted if its roots are in Western philosophy – and if it is perceived as an imposition of the West? Is cosmopolitanism also elitist – i.e. a world view for globally mobile upper middle classes and elites? Or – do alternative forms of non-Western and non-elitist cosmopolitanism also exist? How do these authors address these questions?
Week 2: The Challenges of Cosmopolitan Motivation

Seminar 5: The Challenge of Moral Motivation and the ‘Thick Cosmopolitan’ Response
Mon, June 12, 15:00-17:00

Reading:

Discussion Questions:
▪ What are the ‘problems of motivation’ discussed by these authors? Why do they argue that cosmopolitan ethics fail to motivate people to engage in cosmopolitan behaviour? What is the difference between thick and thin forms of cosmopolitanism? What kinds of actions would you categorize as thick and thin cosmopolitanism? Do you agree that Dobson’s conception of ‘thick’ global citizenship is sufficient to address the problem of motivation that he discusses? What is Lenard’s response to the strategies of moral motivation that Dobson and other ‘thick’ cosmopolitans propose?

Seminar 6: Critiques of ‘Thick Cosmopolitanism’ and Alternative Approaches
Tues, June 13, 9:00-11:00

Group 1: Critical perspectives on ‘Thick Cosmopolitanism’
▪ Faulkner, Nicholas. 2016. “Motivating cosmopolitan helping: Thick cosmopolitanism, responsibility for harm, and collective guilt” International Political Science Review (Published on-line only as of July 11, 2016).

Group 2: Statist and ‘Rooted’ approaches to cosmopolitan motivation

Additional suggested reading:

Discussion Questions: What critiques of ‘thick cosmopolitanism’ do these authors present? What alternative approaches do they present to motivate cosmopolitan behaviour? Do you agree or disagree with their arguments? Why (not)?
Seminar 7: Alternative Strategies of Motivation: Insights from Psychology  
Weds, June 14: 15:00-17:00

Reading:

Discussion questions: What strategies of communication do these authors advocate are necessary to motivate humans to act on our ethical obligations towards other people? What evidence do they provide to support their arguments? Do these strategies of communication meet the tests of cosmopolitan ethics? Are you persuaded by these strategies of ‘motivational communication’? Why (not)? How do Paul Bloom’s arguments differ from those of the other authors?

Thurs, June 15: NO CLASS: Students prepare group projects for presentation on June 16.

Seminar 8: Presentation of Group Projects – Strategies of Cosmopolitan Motivation  
Fri, June 16, 13:00-15:00

- In this class students will present their group projects on practical strategies of cosmopolitan motivation. The class collectively analyse each project in relation to assigned reading for the course.