

COLLECTIVE ACTION: ETHICS AND POLICY

Stanford University

Spring 2014

3-5 Units; PublPol 304a, EthicSoc 180m, Phil 73

Tuesdays and Thursdays 10:00am-noon in Studio One, d.school

Course Website: www.budolfson.com/teaching/collectiveaction

Primary Instructor: Mark Bryant Budolfson, budolfson@stanford.edu

Mark's Office: Room 377, Crown Law (the older law building that contains the law library)

Mark's Office Hours: Tuesdays 2-3:30pm and by appointment

DESCRIPTION

Individually rational actions can give rise to results that are collectively irrational. For example, the collective result of our consumption decisions is to warm the planet, destroy the world's fisheries, and increase reliance on factory farming. In light of this, what should we do about such collective action problems? Our focus will be on understanding the nature of these problems, including their ethical dimensions, and getting hands-on in designing sustainable solutions to them. For example, we will consider questions such as what you *as an individual* are required to do about these problems from an ethical perspective, especially when your actions seem to make no difference, and especially when others are not doing their part to prevent things from getting out of control. For example, are you required to reduce your carbon footprint, and to avoid products that are produced in ethically objectionable ways? Do you have a duty to vote? Is free-riding always ethically objectionable? Can you be required to 'cooperate' in a situation where you know that most others will 'defect'? And from a real-world policy perspective, how can we bring about the best solutions to such collective action problems? Is the best policy response always a straightforward function of the variable features of each case? Interdisciplinary readings from authors in philosophy, politics, economics, and law such as Elinor Ostrom, Peter Singer, and Cass Sunstein. The course will include a module led by an award-winning game designer in which students will design table top games to teach the dynamics of collective action to high school students.

MATERIALS

All materials are available through the course website. No purchase necessary.

EVALUATION

Midterm exam: 20% of your grade

Final group table top game project: 15% of your grade

Interactive participation and very short quizzes: 25% of your grade

Short paper assignments (three assignments adding approximately four pages each, culminating in a final paper): 40% of your grade

VARIABLE UNITS

The final paper target length is 9 pages for 3 credits, 12 pages for 4 credits, and 15 pages for 5 units. The midterm exam will include one or two extra questions for those taking more units.

TENTATIVE SCHEDULE AND READINGS**PART ONE – COLLECTIVE ACTION, PUBLIC POLICY, GAME DESIGN***April 1 – Introduction to Collective Action Problems*

Garrett Hardin, “The Tragedy of the Commons”, *Science* (1968)

William Poundstone, “Bertrand Russell and John von Neumann’s Argument for Preventative Nuclear War”, in *Prisoner’s Dilemma*, Anchor Books (1992)

Optional: Milton Friedman, selection from “The Role of Government in a Free Society”, in *Capitalism and Freedom*, Univ. of Chicago Press (1962)

Play some games

April 3 – Ostrom’s Critique of Hardin, and Ostrom’s Framework for Sustainable Solutions

Elinor Ostrom, selections from *Governing the Commons*, Cambridge UP (1990)

Elinor Ostrom, “Revisiting the Commons: Local Lessons, Global Challenges”, *Science* (1999)

Elinor Ostrom, “A General Framework for Analyzing Sustainability of Social-Ecological Systems”, *Science* (2009)

Optional: Elizabeth Willott, “Recent Population Trends”, in Schmidtz and Willott eds. *Environmental Ethics*, Oxford UP (2012)

Play some games

April 8 – Global Public Goods: An Introduction

Scott Barrett, Introduction and Chapters 1, 2, and 3 in *Why Cooperate?* Oxford UP (2007)

Optional: Scott Barrett, Chapters 4-7 of *Why Cooperate?*

April 10 – Overfishing: More Depth

Ray and Ulrike Hilborn, pp. 1-60 & 122-130 of *Overfishing: What Everyone Needs to Know*, Oxford UP (2012)

Eric Schwaab and Jane Lubchenco, “Global Fisheries Sustainability: A Need for Concerted Actions to Meet Society’s Goals”, preface to ????

NOAA fact sheet on catch shares policy

Nicolas Guitierrez et. al. “Leadership, social capital and incentives promote successful fisheries”, *Nature* (2011)

Optional: Elliott Norse, et. al., “Sustainability of deep-sea fisheries”, *Marine Policy* (2012)

Play more games on overfishing

April 15 – Modesty, Stakeholders; Intro to Game Design

Lynn Scarlett, “Choices, Consequences, and Cooperative Conservation”, in Schmidtz and Willott eds. *Environmental Ethics*, Oxford UP (2012)

Optional: Carol Rose, “Liberty, Property, Environmentalism”, *Social Philosophy and Policy* (2009)

Chris Bennett, game designer in residence at Stanford’s Peace Innovation Lab, will visit and discuss game design, and lead the game design modules in the following sessions

First writing assignment due

April 17 – Game Design: More Depth

Using games to teach and to promote pro-social behavior

Design some games

April 22 and 24 – Game Design Lab

Visits by experts to add more depth

Design some games

April 29 – More Empirical and Strategic Considerations

Thomas Schelling, “Bargaining, Communication, and Limited War”, *Conflict Resolution* (1957)

Thomas Schelling, “Nuclear Deterrence for the Future”, *Issues in Science and Technology* (2006)

John F. Kennedy, June 10, 1963 address at American University

Optional: Reread William Poundstone, “Bertrand Russell and John von Neumann’s Argument for Preventative Nuclear War”, in *Prisoner’s Dilemma*, Anchor Books (1992)

PART TWO – COLLECTIVE ACTION & ETHICS

May 1 – An Approach to Collective Action and Individual Inefficacy: Consequentialism

Derek Parfit, “Practical Dilemmas” and “Five Mistakes in Moral Mathematics”, in *Reasons and Persons*, Oxford UP (1984)

Gerald Gaus, “Is Voting Rational?” in *On Philosophy, Politics, and Economics*, Wadsworth (2007)

Shelly Kagan, selection from “Do I Make a Difference?”, *Philosophy and Public Affairs* (2012)

*May 6 – In-Class Lab; Midterm Exam Due**May 8 – Other Approach to Ethics and Collective Action: Virtue Theory and Symbolic Value*

Thomas Hill, “Symbolic Protest and Calculated Silence”, *Philosophy and Public Affairs* (1979)

Kwame Anthony Appiah, “Racism and Moral Pollution”, *The Philosophical Forum* (1987)

Bernard Williams, selection from “A critique of utilitarianism”, in *Utilitarianism: For and Against*, Cambridge UP (1973)

Thomas Hill, short selection from “Ideals of Human Excellence and Preserving Natural Environments”, *Environmental Ethics* (1983)

Optional: Peter Singer and Jim Mason, “The Ethics of Eating Meat”, in *The Ethics of What We Eat*, Rodale (2007)

Optional: Alvin Goldman, “Why Citizens Should Vote: A Causal Responsibility Approach”, *Social Philosophy and Policy* (1999)

PART THREE – CASE STUDY: CLIMATE CHANGE ETHICS AND POLICY

Optional background reading on climate science: David Archer, *The Long Thaw: How Humans are Changing the Next 100,000 Years of Earth’s Climate*, Princeton UP (2008)

May 13 – Global Public Goods: The Hard Cases

Larry Summers, “Foreword” to Aldy and Stavins eds. *Architectures for Agreement*, Cambridge UP (2007)

Scott Barrett, “Tipping Treaties”, in *Environment and Statecraft*, Oxford UP (2006)

Optional: Reread Scott Barrett, “Global Public Goods that Depend on the Combined Efforts of All States”, Chapter 3 of *Why Cooperate?*, Oxford UP (2007)

Optional: Thomas Schelling, “An Interview With Thomas Schelling, Part Two”, *The Atlantic* (2009)

May 15 – Influential Perspectives on Climate Change Ethics and Policy

Peter Singer, “One Atmosphere”, in Gardiner et. al. eds. *Climate Ethics*, Oxford UP (2010)

Stephen Pacala and Robert Socolow, "Stabilization Wedges: Solving the Climate Problem for the Next 50 Years With Current Technologies", *Science* (2004)

Elinor Ostrom, “A Polycentric Approach to Coping with Climate Change”, World Bank (2009)

Optional: William Nordhaus, “Summary for the Concerned Citizen”, in *A Question of Balance*, Yale UP (2008)

Optional: Edella Schlager, Kirsten Engel, and Sally Rider, selections from *Navigating Climate Change Policy: The Opportunities of Federalism*, University of Arizona Press (2011)

May 20 – Playtesting; Second Paper Due

May 22 – Geoengineering: Ethics and Politics

Steven Levitt and Stephen Dubner, “Geoengineering and the Virtues of Cheap and Easy Solutions to the World’s Biggest Problems”, in *Superfreakonomics*, William Morrow (2009)

James Hansen, "The Problems with Geoengineering" in *Storms of My Grandchildren*, Bloomsbury (2009)

Scott Barrett, discussion of geoengineering in *Why Cooperate?* Oxford UP (2007)

Optional: David Keith, *A Case for Climate Engineering*, MIT Press (2013)

May 27 – Feasibility Constraints and the Perspective of Nations: Ethics and Policy

John Broome, selections from *Climate Matters: Ethics in a Warming World*, Norton (2012)

Eric Posner and Cass Sunstein, “Climate Change Justice”, *Georgetown Law Journal* (2008)

Cass Sunstein, “US Should Act Unilaterally on Climate Change”, Bloomberg (2013)

Optional: Walter Sinnott-Armstrong, “It’s Not My Fault: Global Warming and Individual Moral Obligations”, in Gardiner et. al. eds. *Climate Ethics*, Oxford UP (2010)

Optional: Ken Caldeira, “When Being Green Raises the Heat”, *New York Times* (2007)

Optional: Peter Singer, “Make meat-eaters pay: Ethicist proposes radical tax, says they're killing themselves and the planet”, *NY Daily News* (2009)

May 29 – Should We Divest from Fossil Fuels? Is it Wrong Not to Divest?

End of quarter period

Bill McKibben, “The Case for Fossil-Fuel Divestment”, *Rolling Stone* (2013)

Robert Stavins, “Divestment is No Substitute for Real Action on Climate Change”, *Yale Environment 360* (2014)

Milton Friedman, “Let the Protesters Themselves Divest”, *New York Times* (1986)

Optional: Bill McKibben, “Global Warming’s Terrifying New Math”, *Rolling Stone* (2012)

Optional: Michael Sandel, “It’s Immoral to Buy the Right to Pollute”, with replies, *New York Times* (1997)

Optional: Dan Ariely, “The Cost of Social Norms”, in *Predictably Irrational*, Harper (2010)

June 3 – Final Presentations

June 10 – Final Exam Period – 3:30-6:30pm

Final Paper is due by email by 6:30pm

PROVOST'S STATEMENT CONCERNING STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

Students who have a disability which may necessitate an academic accommodation or the use of auxiliary aids and services in a class, must initiate the request with the Disability Resource Center (DRC). The DRC will evaluate the request with required documentation, recommend appropriate accommodations, and prepare a verification letter dated in the current academic term in which the request is being made. Please contact the DRC as soon as possible; timely notice is needed to arrange for appropriate accommodations (phone 723-1066; TDD 725-1067).

THE HONOR CODE

Violating the Honor Code is a serious offense, even when the violation is unintentional. The Honor Code is available at:

<http://studentaffairs.stanford.edu/judicialaffairs/policy/honor-code>

You are responsible for understanding the University rules regarding academic integrity; you should familiarize yourself with the code if you have not already done so. In brief, conduct prohibited by the Honor Code includes all forms of academic dishonesty, among them copying another student's exam, unauthorized collaboration, and representing as one's own work the work of another. If you have any questions about these matters, please ask.