

The Purpose Project: Handout 1a

Today's Plan:

- 1- Introductions
- 2- Course Overview
 - o Ethics and Jepson
 - o Learning Objectives
 - o Course Content Review
 - o The Purpose Project
 - § Interview Sign-up
 - o The Final Exam
 - o Participation Guidelines
- 3- Syllabus Quiz
- 4- Lesson
 - Moral Objectivity!

Notecard #1

- Name
- I am most excited to learn...
- I am most nervous about...
- I still have these questions about the course..
- You should know that...

Notecard #2

- Anonymous: You should know...

Drop off these notecards as you leave class

Notecard #3: Your name and phone # if you are Ok with being contacted by text by your interviewer

1. Introductions
2. Course Overview

Ethics and the Jepson Curriculum

· As the capstone class for your Leadership Studies degree, the purpose of this class is to build on your Jepson experiences so far while also building on your knowledge of leadership and yourself. The readings will draw on the things you learned about in the gateway courses, Justice, and Theories and Models. I encourage you to draw on your internship and community-based learning experiences during class discussions. The assignments will require the skills you learned in critical thinking. So far you have learned a lot about historical examples of leadership and how leaders operate. This is your opportunity to reflect on your education as a Jepson student and consider how leadership *should* be. What do you value? Who do you want to be? **What will be the meaning of your life?**

Learning Objectives

- o Students will **discover** philosophical perspectives that change the way they think about leadership, work, politics, and the meaning of life.
- o Students will **apply** their understanding of ethics to real world problems, including problems they will face in their own persona; lives and careers.
- o Students will **create** an original philosophical essay that is the best paper they've ever written.

3. Syllabus Quiz

(Notecard #3 Distribution for Interview Project)

4. Mini Class:

Thought Experiment of the Day:

- o Wendy: I think this weekend I'll trap a cat in a basket and light it on fire.
- o Jenny: Um... that's pretty messed up, why would you do that?
- o Wendy: Just for fun. Also it's solstice so I thought this would be a good time for it. Maybe I'll trap a few cats!
- o Jenny: That is really unethical. You shouldn't torture cats just for fun.
- o Wendy: Why not? They used to do it in France before the 1800's. Look it up!
- o Jenny: Well, maybe so, but nowadays we do things differently.
- o Wendy: No, *you* do things differently. Who are you to say that you're right and I'm wrong though?

Think-Pair-Share: What are the moral considerations that weigh for/against Wendy's claim that it is permissible for her to light a cat on fire?

Shafer-Landau- Eleven Arguments Against Moral Objectivity

Ethical Objectivism/Moral Objectivity: There are some objective moral standards that apply to everyone even if people don't think those standards apply to them.

Skepticism: the view that there are no objective moral truths that apply to everyone.

Shafer-Landau's strategy: One way that Shafer-Landau refutes skepticism is by showing that many arguments in favor of skepticism appeal to reasons that implicitly commit the skeptic to the denial of her view.

- Example: The skeptic says, "Truth is subjective."
- But by saying that, she's asserting a claim that it is objectively true that "truth is subjective."

1. Objectivity requires absolutism.

2. Truth is Subjective.

3. Equal Rights Imply Equal Plausibility.

- **Equal rights** to an opinion means that it would be wrong to force someone to change his mind, even if he is mistaken. It does not mean that no one is ever mistaken!

4. Moral Objectivity is Dogmatic.

5. Moral Objectivity Supports Intolerance.

- But to say that intolerance is bad and tolerance is good is to endorse a claim about what morality objectively requires (e.g. tolerance).

6. Moral Objectivity Cannot Allow for Legitimate Cultural Variation (e.g. respect for the dead, polygamy)

7. Moral Disagreement Undermines Moral Objectivity.

- Disagreement does not undermine the fact that there is a truth about other real things (like physics or math, or God, or the truth about historical societies) so why would we think that disagreement undermines the fact that there is a truth about morality? Plus, people disagree about this claim!

8. Atheism Undermines Objectivity.

- P1: Morality cannot be objective unless God exists.
- P2: God does not exist.
- C: There is no objective morality.

9. The Absence of Categorical Reasons Undermines Morality.

- P1: If there are objective moral duties then our reasons for obeying them apply in all contexts and circumstances (they are categorical).
- P2: There are no categorical reasons.
- C: There is no objective morality.
 - Against the second premise, it seems to assume that I need to have a desire to do something or a belief that doing something is in my interest in order for me to have a reason to do it? But is this assumption legitimate? I don't have a desire that $2+2=4$ and believing it may not be in my interest, but I would still have reason to believe it. Why should action be any different?

10. Moral Motivation Undermines Moral Objectivity.

- You may reject the claim that morality needs to be motivating in order to be true.
- Even if you don't care that much about morality, it's still true that there is a right and wrong about what you should do.
- Most people happen to care about morality at least a little, and given that widespread interest, morality will usually be motivating even if it isn't necessarily motivating.

Ethical Failure: Why do people act immorally? (stay tuned for more on this)

11. Values Have No Place in a Scientific World.

But science can't tell us that 'science can tell us everything.'