ETHICS & THE PUBLIC INTEREST:

PPG2011H

Time: Wednesdays 1:00 – 3:00

Instructor: Andrew Stark
e-mail: stark@rotman.utoronto.ca

*Ethics and The Public Interest* provides a range of frameworks, drawn from a variety of cultural perspectives, for analyzing and managing the complex ethical dilemmas that public officials confront. It is a course in politically-informed moral reasoning.

“Politically-informed” means that this is not a course in pure moral theory. The political realities that policy-makers face, the constraints imposed by interests, resources and power, and the possibilities afforded by coalitions, compromise and bargaining, will be very much a part of the discussion.

But ultimately democratic public officials have to analyze, argue for, and justify their positions in moral language. Participants in democratic debates never say “We support policy X because it’s in our interest” – at least not if they hope to persuade others and command their respect. Instead, whether their motivations are self-interested or altruistic, officials and citizens have to show that their preferred X advances some plausible conception of the broader public interest. And that requires that they be able to reason morally, and to explore the moral strengths and weaknesses of various alternatives before them. The analytical and case material we will discuss is meant to enable the formulation of well-reasoned, theoretically and empirically-based viewpoints on difficult and controversial public-policy and public management issues.

The course will focus on what for the vast majority of people would be genuine moral dilemmas: issues about which most of us will be internally conflicted, where each of the competing sides asserts well-founded ethical claims. But more than this, the course has a global component. Not only will many of the topics pose dilemmas for any one ethical system, they will also pose different kinds of dilemmas for different ethical systems, which will view them through diverse moral lenses, weighing the costs and benefits in culturally distinctive ways. Because many of the most compelling issues that public officials face transcend borders and cultures, the course will develop an understanding of differing moral systems and the ability to navigate between them.

The course is divided into two parts. The first seven classes deal with moral challenges of public management that crop up across policy domains. The final six classes look more closely at ethical issues that arise in specific topical policy areas.
Grading

Final exam: 35%
Mid-term exam: 30%
Short Paper: 20%
Class Participation: 15%

Sept 12: Introduction: Ethics, Politics and Globalization

Sept. 19: Lying, Deception, Privacy and Transparency

Dennis Thompson, “Democratic Secrecy,” Political Science Quarterly (Summer 1999), 181-193


Sissela Bok, Lying: Moral Choice in Public and Private Life (Vintage, 199), 165-180


Sept. 26: Compromise and Disagreement

Amy Gutmann and Dennis F. Thompson, “The Persistence of Moral Disagreement,” Ch. 1 of Democracy and Disagreement (Harvard University Press, 1998), 11-51

Amy Gutmann and Dennis Thompson, “The Mindsets of Political Compromise,” Perspectives on Politics 8 (2010), 1125-1143


Case: Simon Cabuela May, “Principled Compromise and the Abortion Controversy” Philosophy and Public Affairs 33 (Fall, 2005), 317-348

Oct 3: Means and Ends (The Problem of Dirty Hands)


Cases: The Terror Bomber; The Torturer (handout)

Oct. 10: Responsibility and Accountability (The Problem of Many Hands)

Christian List and Philip Pettit, Group Agency (Oxford University Press, 2005), 153-169


Case: The Space Shuttle Challenger, in Amy Gutmann and Dennis F. Thompson, eds., Ethics and Politics: Cases and Comments (Wadsworth, 2005), 236-245


Oct. 17: Conflict of Interest


Lawrence Rosen, “Understanding Corruption,” American Interest (Spring 2010), 78-82

Case: Jaime Cárdenas, “Parliamentary Incompatibilities and Conflicts of Interest in Mexico,” in Irma E. Sandoval, ed., Contemporary Debates on
Corruption and Transparency (Institute for Social Research, National Autonomous University of Mexico; World Bank, 2011, approx. 27pp.)

Oct. 24: IN-CLASS MID-TERM

Oct. 31: Historical Injustice and Global Justice

Jeremy Waldron, “Superseding Historic Justice,” Ethics (October 1992), 4-28


Case: Mathias Risse, “Do We Owe the Poor Assistance or Rectification?” Ethics and International Affairs (2005) 9-18

Nov. 7: Religion in the Public Sphere

Amy Gutmann, “Is Religious Identity Special?”, Ch. 4 of Identity in Democracy (Princeton University Press, 2003), 151-191


Nov. 14: Intellectual Property


**Nov. 21: Biotechnology and Health Care**

Ezekiel J. Emanuel, “Justice and Managed Care: Four Principles for the Just Allocation of Health Care Resources,” *Hastings Center Report* 30 (May/June 2000), 8-16


Allen Buchanan, “Privatization and Just Health Care,” *Bioethics* 9 (July 1995), 220-239


**Nov. 28: Markets and Regulation**


K. Aramesh, “Iran’s Experience with Surrogate Motherhood: An Islamic View and Ethical Concerns,” *Journal of Medical Ethics* 35 (May, 2009), 320-322