“Ethics and Public Values” is concerned with the two principal subjects of moral (or normative) discourse on government: ethics and responsibility. In this course we shall consider some of the major classical and contemporary contributions to the literature on these subjects in order to discern their relevance to the conduct of public servants generally, but more especially to your own conduct and personal struggles to act ethically and responsibly. This course does not presume to offer a single moral truth or preferred point of view about what constitutes ethical and responsible conduct. Indeed, ethics and responsibility, while they are related ideas, are by no means synonymous and may often conflict with one another. Conflict and disagreement are central characteristics of both of these subjects, both as they bear on one another as well as within the discourse on each subject. One reason for this is that ethics and responsibility may each be considered in terms of their individual and their collective (or shared) aspects, as well as in terms of their organizational (managerial) as opposed to their public policy implications.

One of the hallmarks of this course is its emphasis on conflict and disagreement; thus, students will be expected to consider these thoughtfully and (I hope) undogmatically. Class members will also be asked to take this course personally, rather than simply as an intellectual exercise. Specifically, you will be afforded the opportunity to reflect, both individually and with one another, on personal and professional dilemmas that involve questions of ethics and responsibility.

Course Objectives:

1. To create a setting in which students may reflect upon their own ethical and moral beliefs, and critically analyze them in light of the literature and class discussions.

2. To become conversant with the chief literature and debates about ethics and responsibility, and to consider their relevance to both individual and collective action.
3. To illuminate the ethical and responsibility dimensions of public administration and policy that lie beneath the surface of everyday discourse about them.

4. To sharpen an understanding of the relation between the subjects of ethics and responsibility.

**Expectations, Assignments, and Grading:**

Class participation, as indicated above, is uncommonly important in a course such as this. In order to participate in a thoughtful manner, however, conscientiously keeping up with the reading assignments for each session is a must. “Participation,” in other words, is not simply a matter of voicing pre-formed opinions on the subjects discussed in class, but of reflecting thoughtfully and critically about the relation between the points of view expressed in the course literature and the values, biases, and world view with which you began the course.

The first (ungraded) assignment, due at the third class meeting on July 16, is a one-page (or so) essay stating what you wish both to get from and give to the class. Make this essay as personal as possible, although some comment on your professional or career aspirations is certainly appropriate as well.

For the second assignment, you are asked to analyze a situation in which you were personally involved (as the decision-maker or as a participant in the decision process) that forced you to confront a choice between two seemingly “right” alternatives. You should clearly define the situation and the seemingly “right” alternatives. You should also describe how the situation was resolved (if, indeed, it was resolved), and critique the decision(s) leading up to that resolution from the standpoint of Badaracco’s discussion, in his book *Defining Moments*, of right-vs.-right choices. This paper, approximately 7 pages long, is due on July 30.

In groups of three or four students, you will be asked to prepare a presentation, and facilitate a class discussion (lasting about one hour and fifteen minutes on August 11 and 13), about a topic that highlights important issues about ethics, responsibility, and public values. The presentation should attempt to integrate aspects of the course literature in a thoughtful way. Among the possible formats for the presentation might be the analysis of a particular policy issue or organizational problem, the analysis and discussion of a play (which the rest of the class might read before your session), or a film (that the class might view beforehand). Try to think of other possible formats as well. No paper or other written product is required for this assignment, although brief handouts to the rest of the class might be helpful. Also feel free to assign responsibilities to the rest of the class that you think might facilitate their effective participation in your project. This assignment will not be graded as such, although your part in it may affect your “class participation” grade.

Finally, you will be asked to prepare, instead of the usual research paper, a more personal “synthesis paper” (of about 10 pages) on ethical and responsible conduct. The precise content of
this assignment will be discussed in more detail during the second meeting of the semester. The paper is due on Friday, August 15.

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<th>Course Grade:</th>
<th>Expectations Essay</th>
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|                     | Class Participation| 30%
|                     | Defining Moment paper | 30%
|                     | Group Presentation  | 0%
|                     | Synthesis paper     | 40% |

**Readings:**

Joseph Badaracco, *Defining Moments: When Managers Must Choose between Right and Right*

Michael Harmon & O. C. McSwite, *Whenever Two or More Are Gathered: Relationship as the Heart of Ethical Discourse*

Markate Daly (ed.), *Communitarianism: A New Public Ethics* (selected chapters)

Christina Hoff Sommers (ed.), *Right and Wrong: Basic Readings in Ethics* (selected chapters)

Sissela Bok, “Never to Lie,” “Weighing the Consequences,” “Lies for the Public Good,” from *Lying*

Carol Gilligan, “Remapping the Moral Domain”

Stanley Fish, "Plagiarism is Not a Big Moral Deal"

Stanley Fish, “The Trouble with Principle” (“Taking Sides”)

Stanley Fish, “Reverse Racism, or How the Pot Got to Call the Kettle Black” and “You Can Only Fight Discrimination with Discrimination”

Shelby Steele, “I’m Black, You’re White, Who’s Innocent?”

Stephen Carter, “The Insufficiency of Honesty”

Michael Harmon, “Paradox and Personal Responsibility”

Walter Truett Anderson, selections from *The Truth about the Truth*

Michael Specter, “The Dangerous Philosopher”

Michael Harmon, "Truth, *Telling* the Truth, and *Being* Truthful: Affect, Nonverbal Communication, and the Constitution of Ethical Relationship"
Orion White, "The Girl Who Changed into a Dog"

Cases:
- “To Torture or Not to Torture”
- “Heinz”
- “A Matter of Principle”
- “Space Case”
- “A True Tragedy”
- “Norway Names”
- “The Case of the Goose and the Gander”
- “Three Consultants”
- “Abortion and Community”
- “Two Students Who Cheated”

Films:
- “The Lives of Others”
- “Pleasantville”
- “Dead Man Walking”

Course Schedule

July 7 (Monday) Introduction to the course; Key terms and concepts in ethical discourse; Ethics vs. responsibility
Readings: Fish, "Plagiarism is Not a Big Moral Deal" (access on-line)

Question for next session: Under what circumstances is it ethical to lie?

July 9 (Wednesday) Ethics as cognitive and moral development; Lying (“Expectations Essay” due)

Readings: Gilligan, “Remapping the Moral Domain”
Harmon, “The Trouble with Truth…” (WTMG: 11)
McSwite, "The Ethics of Lying, Cheating, and Stealing" (WTMG: 2)
Bok, Ch. 3, “Never to Lie?” & Ch. 12, “Lies for the Public Good”
Carter, “The Insufficiency of Honesty”
“Heinz” (case)
“Lying in the Public Interest” (case)


July 16 (Wednesday) Kantian and utilitarian ethics; Ethical relativism (“Expectations Essay” due)

Readings: Sommers, Ch. 1 selections: Kant, Strang, Taylor; Ch. 2 & 3 selections: Bentham, Smart, Williams, Herodotus, Benedict, Stace, Williams
Bok, Ch. 4, “Weighing the Consequences”
Specter, “The Dangerous Philosopher”
Harmon, "Five Good Reasons…” (WTMG: 8)
“A Matter of Principle” (case)
“To Torture or Not to Torture” (case)
“A Space Case” (case)
"Norway Names” (case)
“A True Tragedy” (case)

Questions for next session: Is there a common ground on the abortion issue? In "Pleasantville," why did people change from black-and-white to color?

July 23 (Wednesday) The liberal/communitarian debate; Feminism and communitarianism

Readings: Daly, “Introduction,” Chs. 2, 3 & 7 selections: Taylor,
July 30 (Wednesday)  Pragmatism; Choosing between right and right (“Defining Moment” paper due)

*Readings:*  Badaracco, *Defining Moments*
Harmon & McSwite, "Introduction" to *Whenever Two or More are Gathered*
Harmon, “In Praise of Harry Bosch…” (WTMG: 5)
McSwite, "Moralism as Threat..." (WTMG: 6)
McSwite, "The Problem of Evil" (WTMG: 7)

*Film:*  “The Lives of Others” (view before class meeting)

Question for next session: Can you be both ethical and responsible at the same time?

Aug. 4 (Monday)  Personal responsibility and the rationalist conception of responsibility; The affirmative action debate

*Readings:*  Harmon, "Paradox and Personality Responsibility"
Steele, “I’m Black, You’re White, Who’s Innocent?”
Fish, “Reverse Racism” and “You Can Only Fight Discrimination with Discrimination”
Harmon, “Why Principles Can’t Justify” (WTMG: 9)
“Two Students Who Cheated” (case)

*Films:*  “Dead Man Walking” (view before class meeting)
“On Values” (to be viewed in class)

Question for next session: In what sense is Threefo and Kevin's relationship an ethical one?

Aug. 6 (Wednesday)  Psychoanalysis, language, and the ethics of relationship; Postmodern ethics
Readings:

McSwite, "Human Relationship: The Heart of Ethical Discourse" (WTMG: 1)
McSwite and Harmon, "The Brave New World of Relationship" (WTMG: 12)
Harmon, "Truth, Telling the Truth, and Being Truthful"
White, "The Girl Who Changed into a Dog"
Anderson, *The Truth about the Truth*

Question for next session: What is your opinion about the following aphorism: “To understand completely is to forgive completely.”

Aug. 11 (Monday) Group Presentations

Aug. 13 (Wednesday) Group Presentations

Aug. 15 (Friday) “Synthesis Paper” due (no class meeting)