

Applied Ethics Seminar: Ethics and Technologies of Manipulation

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[Dates and location removed]

Description and Learning Outcomes of the Seminar

People manipulate one another in all sorts of ways – they play on emotions, invent clever lies, and shape the environment to get others to do what they wish. Manipulation of the everyday sort has only fairly recently become the focus of serious philosophical investigation, even as personal data proliferates, computational power grows, and our digital and physical environments are increasingly shaped with an eye on human psychology. This course focuses on philosophically understanding manipulation, and applying this understanding to our lives in the information age.

This course addresses two philosophical questions. The *identity question* is: what is the nature of manipulation? The *ethical question* is: if it's wrong to manipulate people, why? A popular way to answer both is to say that manipulation is wrong because it undermines autonomy, and it does *that* because its nature is to interfere with our ability to think rationally about what we will do. In the first part of the course, we spell out this idea with rigor and entertain serious second thoughts. In the second part, we creatively apply the lessons learned to novel topics.

This course will require students to write several short papers spelling out the philosophical material with clarity and concision. The goal is to learn how to actively read analytical texts, which is a distinctive but widely applicable skill. Students may also write two longer papers to practice applying this skill to questions they will formulate in cooperation with me. The goal there is to develop one's own thoughts in a similarly comprehensive and critical manner.

Preparation Before Each Session

This course requires frequent writing by students, which will be held to high standards. To meet those standards, you will have to:

1. Complete each and every required reading *before* the session in which it is discussed. All readings will be made available on the course Moodle.
2. Actively participate in each and every session. *Two absences* for good reason, sent to me via email and approved in advance, will be permitted.

Assessment

[Curriculum-specific details removed] Grades in this course are determined by three components:

Active Participation

First, attendance to every meeting is expected – two absences with good reason will be permitted (sent to me by email in advance and approved). In truly exceptional cases, contact me. Second, you must actively participate in each session's discussion and activities. Active Participation will be pass/fail. **You must pass this component to earn any credit for this course.**

Short Papers ('SP's)

You will be expected to write several (between three or four) SPs in this course. Each SP will be a **single-spaced, single-page (A4, 2-cm margins)** paper responding to a particular reading from the schedule. These will be graded on the 1.0–5.0 scale. A handout with further information will be provided.

Note: there are six deadlines for SPs on the schedule. You will not need to complete them all. If you wish to do extra, I will select your best to calculate your final grade.

Note: I encourage you to submit revisions of your SPs. There is no hard limit the number of revisions you may submit, though this principle always applies: **respect your time and mine!** All revisions should be arranged with me, in advance, by email. I reserve the right to refuse on a case-by-case basis.

Long Papers ('LP's)

You will be expected to write one or two LPs in this course. Each LP will be **approximately 1,800 words**. It must engage with several of the readings from the schedule, and must substantively develop your own arguments. These will be graded on the 1.0–5.0 scale. Handouts for each long paper will be provided.

Schedule

	Topic and Required Reading	Assignment Due
07.04	Introduction	
14.04	Varieties of Manipulation Baron, "Manipulativeness"	
21.04	Ethics, First Pass: Autonomy and Liberty Hausman and Welch, "Debate: To Nudge or Not to Nudge"	Due 26.04: SP: Baron <i>or</i> H&W
28.04	Identity, First Pass: Manipulation Undermines Rationality Noggle, "Pressure, Trickery, and a Unified Account of Manipulation"	
05.05	Do Manipulators Always Threaten Rationality? Gorin I, "Do Manipulators Always Threaten Rationality?"	Due 10.05: SP: Noggle <i>or</i> Gorin I
12.05	Seduction and Manipulation Buss, "Valuing Autonomy and Respecting Persons" (excerpt) <i>Note: difficult!</i> Read it quickly once, then carefully a second time.	
19.05	Seduction and Manipulation (again) Buss, "Valuing Autonomy and Respecting Persons"	
26.05	<i>No class</i> – Ascension of Christ / Himmelfahrt	Due 30.05: SP: Buss <i>or</i> Noggle <i>or</i> Gorin
TBD – see email	Why Care About Autonomy? Millgram, "Disciplinary Specialization and Thinking for Yourself"	
09.06	<i>No class</i> – Pentecost Week / Pfingstwoche	
16.06	<i>No class</i> – Corpus Christi / Fronleichnam <i>Note:</i> the reading for next week (23.06) is long! If you can, start this week.	Due 14.06: SP: Millgram
23.06	Gamification <i>Read first:</i> Parmer, "Notes on Nguyen" <i>Read second:</i> Nguyen, "Gamification and Value Capture"	Due 28.06: LP 1
30.06	Porn Nguyen and Williams, "Moral Outrage Porn"	Due 05.07: SP: Nguyen <i>or</i> N&W
07.07	Powerpoint Tufte, "Cognitive Style of Powerpoint"	
14.07	Boilerplate Radin, <i>Boilerplate</i> (excerpts)	Due 19.07: SP: Tufte <i>or</i> Radin
		Due 26.08: LP 2