Course Description

This is a writing-intensive, online philosophy course that utilizes zombie movies and TV programs as thought experiments, to explore themes and ideas in ethics. Why zombie ethics? Zombies represent an interesting case of creatures that are like humans in some ways, but very much unlike them in other ways (or are they?). Zombies and the zombie apocalypse provide creative ways to think about some of the important questions in ethics, including what it means to be a person, what humans are naturally like, why we should be good, and when killing is justified. The theme for each week will be illustrated in the video assignment and discussed in the reading assignments for that week.

Course Learning Objectives

- Students will be able to identify and describe major ethical theories and principles, and apply them to specific moral problems.
- Students will be able to write an analytical paper that addresses an ethical question. They will consult and utilize the relevant literature, and demonstrate their ability to apply reasoning to the question and its resolution.
- Students will be able to discuss their perspectives in online class discussion and demonstrate appropriate respect for other students including those whose values and perspectives differ from their own.

Course Resources

Course website on Canvas: https://mtu.instructure.com/courses/824560

Required Course Texts & Media:

- Ethics, ed. by Peter Singer
- The Zombie Autopsies: Secret Notebooks from the Apocalypse, by SC Schlozman
- The Walking Dead, Season 1 (TV series) [Streaming on Netflix, iTunes, Amazon Instant Video; DVD]
- Shaun of the Dead (Movie) [On cable TV; Streaming on hulu, Amazon; DVD on Netflix]
Grading

Grading is based on points. Your final grade will be determined by the following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Points</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Weekly papers (6x7pts)</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Paper</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussion participation (7x4pts)</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Points</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
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</tbody>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Letter Grade</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Grade points/credit</th>
<th>Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>93% - 100%</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>Excellent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AB</td>
<td>88% – 92%</td>
<td>3.50</td>
<td>Very good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>82% – 86%</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>Good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BC</td>
<td>76% – 81%</td>
<td>2.50</td>
<td>Above average</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>70% – 75%</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>Average</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CD</td>
<td>65% – 69%</td>
<td>1.50</td>
<td>Below average</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>60% - 64%</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>Inferior</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>59% and below</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>Failure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>Incomplete; given only when a student is unable to complete a segment of the course because of circumstances beyond the student's control. A grade of incomplete may be given only when approved in writing by the department chair or school dean.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>X</td>
<td>Conditional, with no grade points per credit; given only when the student is at fault in failing to complete a minor segment of a course, but in the judgment of the instructor does not need to repeat the course. It must be made up within the next semester in residence or the grade becomes a failure (F). A (X) grade is computed into the grade point average as a (F) grade.</td>
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Course Policies

Late assignments will be penalized by one full letter grade (A to B, B to C, etc) for every day they are late. This includes weekends and partial days. So, if your paper is due on Monday, and you turn it in on Tuesday, you will be penalized one full letter grade. If you turn your paper in on Wednesday morning, you will be penalized two full letter grades. In exceptional circumstances, extensions may be granted if requested. All requests must be made in advance of the due date via email.

Cheating and Plagiarism

Students are expected to maintain the highest standards of honesty in their college work. Cheating and plagiarism are serious offenses, and subject to disciplinary action. A failing grade in this course is the minimum penalty you can expect for academic dishonesty. Students are advised that the professor is on the Academic Integrity Committee and takes plagiarism and cheating seriously.

University Policies

Student work products (exams, essays, projects, etc.) may be used for purposes of university, program, or course assessment. All work used for assessment purposes will not include any individual student identification.

Michigan Tech has standard policies on academic misconduct and complies with all federal and state laws and regulations regarding discrimination, including the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. For more information about reasonable accommodation for
or equal access to education or services at Michigan Tech, please call the Dean of Students Office, at (906) 487-2212 or go to: http://www.mtu.edu/provost/faculty-resources/syllabus-policies/

Required coursework

☑ Video & Reading Assignments

The video should ideally be watched at the beginning of the week. In an ideal world, you would also finish the assigned readings before you watch the video, so they can be bubbling in the back of your mind as you watch. Taking notes is recommended, paying special attention to interesting moral issues or questions that come up. You’ll need these notes for your weekly paper and weekly discussion.

☐ Lectures

Each week, a short video lecture and a newsletter will be posted to Canvas, no later than Tuesday.

☑ Weekly Paper (1 page); DUE WEDNESDAY by 10PM*

The topic/question for the Weekly Paper will be posted to Canvas.

Students will be expected to draw on the reading & assignments for the week in writing their papers. Critical thinking is expected.

* No Weekly Paper due the final week of class.

☑ Weekly discussion; CLOSES FRIDAY at 11:59PM**

All students are encouraged and expected to participate fully in online discussions, and to bring their personal insights to the discourse. Lively, civil conversation and debate have a long and colorful history in philosophy, and plays a crucial role in the development and refinement of philosophical thinking.

At least one discussion topic will be posted by Monday of each week. During the week, I may post additional discussion topics. You’ll have until Sunday to respond and discuss. You are encouraged to spend some time reading other student’s comments, and making frequent comments yourself. This is a graded assignment, for which drawing on the video and reading is important.

Students may suggest questions for discussion by emailing me with the question, along with an explanation of why you think it is important. If I use your question, you’ll get 1 point of extra credit.

** During the last week of class, discussion will be stopped on Thursday, the final day of the session.

☑ Final Paper (5-6 pages); DUE JUNE 27 by 11:59 PM

Paper topics will be posted to Canvas during Week 5. Additional details about the paper assignment will be available then.
Schedule of Topics and Assignments

All readings from *Ethics*, except as noted.
(C) indicates reading material available on Canvas, located in Files. nb: *The Zombie Autopsies* is not on the schedule until Week 6, but you are free to read it any time before then.

**Week 1 May 12-16**
Themes: Why be good?
**Walking Dead ep 1: Days Gone By**
Reading:
3-13 Introduction
21-26 Plato
43-48 Darwin
155-158 Nagel
63-66 Barash
Plato: The Ring of Gyges (C)

*May 21 is the last day to drop course with refund*

**Week 2 May 19-23**
Theme: The Social Contract: What do we owe to our fellow humans, and why?
**Walking Dead ep 2: Guts**
Reading:
Hobbes (C)
Locke (C)
367-373 Gauthier

*May 30 is last day to drop without a grade*

**Week 3 May 27-30**
Themes: Moral duties
**Walking Dead ep 3: Tell it to the frogs**
Reading:
Mill (C)
Kant I (C)
332 Dostoevsky

**Week 4 June 2-6**
Themes: Altruism & Reciprocity
**Walking Dead ep 4: Vatos**
Reading:
35-36 Rousseau
69-72 Ashworth
67-69 DeWaal
76 Confucius
78-88 Trivers
88-92 Axelrod

**Week 5 June 9-13**
Theme: Death & Humanity
**Walking Dead ep 5: Wildfire**
Reading:
294-305 Bennett
339-346 Williams
Feinberg (C)
Kagan (C)

*June 13 is last day to drop with W*

**Week 6 June 16-20**
Theme: Killing
**Walking Dead ep 6: TS-19**
Reading:
The *Zombie Autopsies*
Nagel (C)
Brandt (C)

**Week 7 June 23-26**
Theme: Are zombies people? Personhood, speciesism, moral status
**Movie: Shaun of the Dead**
Reading:
Singer (C)
Kant II (C)
Warren excerpt (C)

*Final papers due June 27*