Course Description:
This course aims at an ethical assessment of the global human situation that is philosophically as well as empirically informed. The chief organizing concept of the course is sustainable development, with the main focus resting on the global evolution of wealth and poverty, or welfare, as affected by current economical dynamics and by climate change. What are the main factors explaining development, and what are the criteria for assessing its success? What are the implications for our individual as well as collective moral responsibilities? What policy choices are advisable as we tread forward into a somewhat precarious future? To tackle these questions, we must attain an understanding of the main controversies and arguments in ethical theory and public policy, ranging from disagreements about principle, about the proper level of enthusiasm about market-based or government-based approaches, to the nuts and bolts of policy-making in a political system such as ours. To foster the intended lively debate, we will be reading contemporary statements of clashing ethical and economic assessments of the global human situation.

Learning Goals:
The goal of this course is to equip students with knowledge and skills of both a more specific as well as a more general kind. As the more specific skill set is concerned, the goal is to provide students (1) with a keen sense of the challenges and controversies regarding the identification of the appropriate criteria of ethical assessment of the global human situation; (2) with an empirically informed understanding of our current economic and environmental situation in a number of crucial respects; (3) with an understanding of some of the challenges faced by policy-making as conducted in the real world by real actors. As the more general skill set is concerned, the goal is to help students develop some key intellectual capacities required to gain and maintain an independent and critical perspective on global matters. As one part, this capacity involves an ability to tune into some relevant current debates concerning fundamental issues as conducted at the highest level of intellectual integrity. The readings of the course are selected as examples of what the instructor considers debates at the highest level of intellectual integrity. The perusal to those texts should be seen as the very beginning, rather than the end or completion, of an ongoing process of becoming an informed citizen. As another part, the capacity to gain and maintain an independent and critical perspective involves an ability to question ones own views as well as an openness to confront and deal with opposing viewpoints, to consider them fairly and carefully, to avoid the always-alluring path towards dismissive ideology.

Required Course Preparation:
To achieve the learning goals of this course, it is essential that students come prepared to each course meeting, through the traditional assignment of texts to be read before class, requiring a substantial time commitment. Students are expected to complete the entire reading assignments for the relevant week by the class on Monday. This means students are expected to read the assigned texts between Wednesday and Sunday. Please consult closely the section on time commitment.

Texts
No books are required for this course. All texts are posted on our D2L site. Most texts are from very recent very popular books. Students are encouraged to check out the entire books if they like them. Most texts are also available as audiobooks, indicated by “@.” Please contact the instructor if you have questions.
Work Involved & Grading:

Grades are determined by the following components:

- 10 Weekly Reading Responses (4 points each, 40 points total)
- Group Project (15 points)
- Midterm (15 points)
- Final Exam (30 points)

A more detailed explanation of each component is provided below.

Points-to-grade schedule:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Points</th>
<th>Grade</th>
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<tr>
<td>93-100</td>
<td>A</td>
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<tr>
<td>90-92</td>
<td>A-</td>
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<tr>
<td>87-89</td>
<td>B+</td>
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<td>83-86</td>
<td>B</td>
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<td>80-82</td>
<td>B-</td>
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<td>77-79</td>
<td>C+</td>
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<tr>
<td>73-76</td>
<td>C</td>
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<tr>
<td>70-72</td>
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<td>67-69</td>
<td>D+</td>
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<tr>
<td>63-66</td>
<td>D</td>
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<tr>
<td>60-62</td>
<td>D-</td>
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<tr>
<td>0-59</td>
<td>F</td>
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</tbody>
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An incomplete may be given to a student who has carried a subject successfully until near the end of the semester but, because of illness or other unusual and substantiated cause beyond that student's control, has been unable to take or complete the final examination or to complete some limited amount of term work. An incomplete is not given unless the student proves to the instructor that s/he was prevented from completing course requirements for just cause as indicated above.

Weekly Reading Responses:

This class contains a substantial reading component. Accordingly, the responses to the readings constitute collectively a very substantial factor determining the grade. Students are expected to submit one response each week, at the end of each Monday class, totaling 14 responses. Among all responses, only the 10 best responses count, and consequently, the poorest three responses are dropped. Each response is supposed to answer a number of questions concerning the assigned readings for the relevant week. The questions are distributed by Thursday, and are also posted on our course webpage. Each response is supposed to be about one page, in regular font size 12, single-spaced, and must be submitted in typed and printed-out format. I must insist on the printed-out format, without exceptions, because I’d liked students to submit their responses at the end of the Monday class, as opposed to the beginning of the class, in order to enable students to consult their response during class discussion. To ensure proper procedure, any hand written comment on the responses is summarily discounted.

Each response is then graded along the following scheme: A good response receives a score of 4 points. A decent response receives a score of 3 points. An acceptable response receives a score of 2 points. A poor response still meeting the formal requirements receives a score of 1 point. The guiding criterion of assessment is whether the responses display some reasonable level of engagement with the reading, which, naturally, presupposes careful reading of the assigned material. There usually is not a single way of displaying a reasonable level of engagement, but rather several different ways. Some of the questions to be answered are quite specific, some more open-ended. All are designed with a view of enabling students to answer them adequately based solely on a careful reading of the assigned material, nothing more. With that provision, the expectation is that students receive mostly high scores on the responses.

Responses will not be accepted late, and students must submit their own response in person.

Group Project:

Each student is expected to participate in a small group project. Groups of four students will be formed randomly during our very first meeting. The group project results in a brief presentation, of about 10-15 minutes, on our Wednesday class. The presentation should function as a conversation starter, and it would be desirable to include a discussion component during the presentation. The presentation should articulate a
critical response to the reading of the week, possibly also a critical response to issues discussed during the previous meeting on Monday. I will recommend some critical material to each group, but this will only be a recommendations. Each group may make their own choices about what, if any, critical material to include in their presentation. It could also be based on a critical discussion the group conducted prior to the presentation. Presentations should be low tech, without any fancy belts and whistles. Ideally, presenters would just talk through their critical points. It is very likely that students will encounter many situations where they need to articulate their opinion of something to a group of people, and this component should be seen in this light. I strongly recommend each group to meet at least twice before the presentation. If presenters wish to talk to the instructor in person, a meeting beforehand could be gladly arranged. In short, the instructor is happy to provide whatever prior feedback students may need as long as students allow enough time in advance.

Midterm & Final Exam:
The Midterm and Final exam together count for 45 points or 45% of the grade. Regarding the overall exam-score, there are two scenarios: (1) If the final exam receives a higher grade than the midterm exam, and provided the midterm receives at least a D, the midterm exam will be dropped (counting for nothing) and the final exam will count for 45 points or 45% of the grade. (2) If the midterm exam receives a higher grade than the final exam, or if the midterm receives a grade lower than a D, the final exam will count for 30 points or 30% of the grade, and the midterm exam will count for 15 points or 15% of the grade. The midterm exam thus has a probationary character, intended to prepare students for the final exam, with the nice benefit of potentially helping but not hurting a student's overall exam-score. Students need to bring their own blue book to the exams. Students are explicitly encouraged to form study groups in preparation for the exams.

A note on the exams: A list of sample exam-questions will be distributed at least one week prior to the exams, enabling students to effectively prepare for the exam (for the final exam, the list will be distributed in the final week of classes). The actual exam will feature a number of questions selected from these sample questions. There will be no question appearing on the actual exam that was not among the sample questions. At the class immediately preceding the exam, we will reserve some time for exam-preparation, and students are encouraged to ask clarificatory questions about the distributed list of questions, though naturally should not expect “substantive” answers. Students will have a full two hours for the final exam, on 05/15. The midterm exam will be held in class on 03/15, and take one hour.

Expectations about Time Commitment:
This 3-credit course meets for 2½ hours of class time per week during the semester. As a matter of university guidelines, students are expected to put in at least 6½ hours per week (on average) studying and working on assignments to achieve the learning goals of 3-credit courses. For this course, the expected overall 6½ hours time commitment would break down as follows:

Reading: Students are expected to commit up to 4 hours each week toward reading the assigned material. The distribution of the reading assignments has been deliberatively designed so as to implement this expectation, consulting the narration time of the reading material. Students will differ in their reading pace, which is entirely all right, and there is no qualitative distinction as to which pace is better than others. The instructor would count himself towards the slower spectrum. Students are strongly advised to plan their reading time wisely, to spread it out evenly and overall several days; ideally, students would spend up to one hour reading on the days between our Wednesday and Monday meetings, on Thursday, Friday, Saturday, and Sunday. The key to success, as is so often the case, is to get started early. Students will enjoy and get out more of the readings when done leisurely and without stress.

Responses: Students should spend up to 1 hour each week on the reading response.

Other Assignments: The remaining 1½ hours each week will be dedicated on all other assignments, including preparation for the exams and the group project. As is in the nature of these assignments, the time necessary to complete them will be unequally distributed throughout the semester. In the sum total, the remaining 1 hour each week adds up to roughly 14 hours.
Attendance:
For each class missed without proper excuse, up to three points may be subtracted from the student’s overall score (one point for the first unexcused missed class, two for the second, three for the third and for each subsequent unexcused missed class). Sign-in sheets will be distributed on a regular basis, at the beginning of class.

Academic Integrity:
Cheating on exams or plagiarism are violations of the academic honor code and carry severe sanctions, including failing the course, suspension, or even dismissal from the university. For further information, including the university’s policy concerning academic misconduct, please consult: http://www4.uwm.edu/acad_aff/policy/academicmisconduct.cfm

Special Accommodations:
Any student with a documented disability needing academic adjustments or accommodations is requested to speak with me during the first two weeks of class. All discussions will remain confidential. Students with disabilities should also contact the Student Accessibility Center at 229-6287. Please consult for further information: http://www4.uwm.edu/sac/

Students are permitted to miss class and/or submit late assignments, without penalty, as a result of religious observance, as long as students inform me at least one week ahead of the relevant class or assignment. I reserve the right to request official confirmation in particular cases.

Reasonable accommodations will also be provided to students called to active military duty.

For further details about university policies, please consult: http://www4.uwm.edu/secu/SyllabusLinks.pdf

Office Hours:
My official office hours are Monday & Wednesday, 1-2 PM, in Curtin Hall, CRT, 635. Students are encouraged to drop by anytime; I’m quite often in my office. Also, students may set up individual appointments per email.

Courtesy Requests:
Cell phones should be turned off during class. Laptops may not be used during class.

Teaching Assistant:
We are happy to have Justin Mooney as a Teaching Assistant. Mr. Mooney will grade all weekly responses. The instructor will grade the exams. Mr. Mooney’s email address is: mooneyj@uwm.edu
Course Schedule:

Week 1 – Introduction & Confirmation Bias
Meetings: 01/23 Introduction, Syllabus, & a Video 01/25 Reading Response #1
Readings: Westen, “Special Interests in Mind” (from: The Political Brain)
Multi-Media: Mike Huemer on political irrationality: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4JYL5VUe5NQ&t=1s

Week 2 – Criteria of Assessment I: Consequences
Meetings: 01/30 Reading Response #2 02/01 Lecture & Discussion
MacAskill, Doing Good Better, Excerpts
Singer, “The Singer Solution to World Poverty.”

Week 3 – Criteria of Assessment II: Fairness
Meetings: 02/06 Reading Response #3 02/08 Lecture & Discussion
Readings: Waldron, “Rights.”
Rawls, from A Theory of Justice, Brief Excerpt.
Multi-Media: TBA

Week 4 – Criteria of Assessment III: Freedom
Meetings: 02/13 Reading Response #4 02/15 Group Presentation #1
Readings: Sandel, Justice, Chapter 3: “Do We Owe Ourselves? Libertarianism,”
Rothbard: For A New Liberty: “The State.”
The Playboy Interview with Ayn Rand.

Week 5 – Criteria of Assessment IV: Capabilities
Meetings: 02/20 Reading Response #5 02/22 Group Presentation #2
Readings: Nussbaum, Creating Capabilities: Chapters 1-4

Week 6 – Development: Concept and Application
Meetings: 02/27 Reading Response #6 03/01 Group Presentation #3
Multi-Media: TBA
Week 7 – Development: Global Patterns
Meetings: 03/06  Reading Response #7  03/08  Midterm Questions Distributed.
Multi-Media: TBA

Week 8 – Review
Meetings: 03/13  No Reading Response  03/15  MIDTERM
Readings: No readings.
Multi-Media: No Multi-Media

SPRING RECESS

Week 9 – Factors of Development I: Institutions
Meetings: 03/27  Reading Response #8  03/29  Group Presentation #4
Readings: Acemoglu & Robinson, Why Nations Fail, Chapter 3: “The Making of Prosperity and Poverty.” @
Fukuyama, Political Order and Political Decay: Chapters 1-3 & 5 & 14 @
Multi-Media: TBA

Week 10 – Factors of Development II: Markets
Meetings: 04/03  Reading Response #9  04/05  Lecture & Discussion
Readings: Easterly, The Tyranny of Experts: “Markets: The Association of Problem Solvers.” @
Cassidy, How Markets Fail, Introduction, Chapters 10-14. @
Akerlof & Shiller, Phishing for Phools, Excerpts @
Multi-Media: TBA

Week 11 – Factors of Development III: Governments
Meetings: 04/10  Reading Response #10  04/12  Lecture & Discussion
Readings: Hacker & Pierson, American Amnesia, Excerpts. @
Schuck: from Why Government Fails So Often, Chapters 5-7. @
Multi-Media: TBA

Week 12 – Factors of Development IV: Social Capital
Meetings: 04/17  Reading Response #11  04/19  Group Presentation #5
Readings: Putnam, Bowling Alone, Excerpts. @
Fukuyama, Trust, Excerpts.
Rothstein, “Trust and Social Capital.”
Multi-Media: TBA

Week 13 – Factors of Development V: Geography
Meetings: 04/24  Reading Response #12  04/26  Group Presentation #6
Readings: Diamond, from Guns, Germs and Steel: “Spacious Skies and Tilted Axes,” @
Sachs, Common Wealth, Excerpts. @
Acemoglu & Robinson, Why Nations Fail, Chapter 2: “Theories that don’t work.” @
Fukuyama, Political Order and Political Decay: Chapter 15. @
Sowell, Wealth, Poverty, and Politics: “Geographic Factors.” @
Multi-Media: TBA
Week 14 – **Environmental Sustainability**

Meetings: 05/01  Reading Response #13  05/03  Group Presentation #7
Readings: Broome, *Climate Matters – Ethics in a Warming World*, Chapters 2 & 3: “Science” and “Economics.” @
         Sachs, *The Age of Sustainable Development*, “Climate Change” @
Multi-Media: TBA

Week 15 – **Optimism & Farewell**

Meetings: 05/08  Reading Response #14  05/10  Farewell & Review
Readings: Sachs, *The Age of Sustainable Development*, “Sustainable Development Goals.” @
         Ridley, *The Rational Optimist*, Excerpts. @
Multi-Media: TBA

05/15  **FINAL EXAM:**
Location: Regular Classroom,
Time: 10:00 am – 12:00 noon