

The Public Ethics of Philanthropy

T407020

❧ SYLLABUS ❧



Fall Semester 2024

Mondays 14:00-16:00 – Uni Mail M5189

Complément d'études: Mondays 08:00-10:00 – Uni Mail M5220



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This course is taught in English.

The final exam can be written in French or in English.



COURSE OVERVIEW

This course aims to offer the conceptual and normative tools to explore the justification of philanthropy from the perspective of public ethics in political theory. The lectures examine the role of philanthropy in shaping public policies and addressing social issues across a variety of instances (for example, philanthropy and democracy; philanthropy and the media; cross-border philanthropy; fiscal incentives for philanthropy). By the end of the course, the students will have developed a theoretical toolkit to apply to the analysis and assessment of the various ways in which philanthropy may benefit the public, as well as the ethical challenges that resorting to philanthropy may pose in a polity.

The course is divided into two parts with two general objectives. In the first part, we will examine the concept of philanthropy against other forms of institutional action. We will also analyze various forms of philanthropy, including charitable giving, social entrepreneurship, impact investing, and corporate social responsibility. The objective is to conceptualize the various dimensions of philanthropy and the ethical challenges they may raise—for example, the accountability of nonprofit organizations, and responsibility for effective donations. By the end of this part, students will be able to analyze case studies of philanthropic initiatives from a public ethics perspective. In the second part, we will discuss the justification of philanthropy in view of its potential to address policy issues and enhance or undermine public institutional action. We will discuss the contributions of philanthropy in various public domains, including the social provision of public goods, the reduction of inequality, and the promotion of democratic participation. The objective is to assess normatively how philanthropy should be organized and regulated in view of its public significance—for example concerning the support of political candidates, and the contribution to public media communication. By the end of this part, students will be able to assess case studies of

philanthropic initiatives through the lenses of such normative ideals as transparency, accountability, justice, and legitimacy.

NOTE TO THE COURSE

The course employs a dynamic combination of in-depth lectures and interactive seminars, thoughtfully designed to equip students with the essential methodological toolkit needed to engage with and analyze the forefront of contemporary debates on philanthropy.

To best engage with the materials presented, students are expected to read the required texts, with the option to read the recommended readings for an enhanced understanding. Students are invited to formulate a question for each class to foster active participation in the class discussions. The discussion during the lectures will be facilitated by the instructors. All readings (both required and suggested) are listed in the course syllabus and are accessible through the University's network. They are also available on the course page on the Moodle platform.

The *complément d'études* will serve as a platform for students to collaborate and engage in meaningful dialogue. These sessions may involve students working in groups or pairs.

FINAL ASSESSMENT

Students are required to **write a final essay**, on a topic of their choice subject to the instructors' approval. The final essay should engage with a question or issue related to the realm of philanthropy, demonstrating a mastery of the concepts acquired throughout the course. More information about the final essay and writing guidelines will be given to students during the course.

The **final paper is compulsory** to pass the exam, and it will bear for **60% on the final evaluation** of the course. The final paper should be 2.000 words (maximum) in length (including footnotes, excluding references). The final paper should be submitted electronically, in a .pdf format, to michele.bocchiola@unige.ch. The **deadline for submitting the final essay is 11:59 PM on January 12** (August 17 for the makeup session), 2025.

COMPLÉMENTS D'ÉTUDES (CdÉ)

CdÉ are an integral part of the course and will be conducted alongside the last four classes, as specified in the schedule. The purpose of the CdÉ is to develop skills in managing the drafting of a call for philanthropic actions and to prepare applications for funding philanthropic projects based on a call for tender. The focus of these exercises will be on the ethical principles informing philanthropy.

During the first CdÉ, students will be invited to briefly present the work they have prepared individually. Students are tasked with the preparation of a "call for tender" (2 pages maximum) tailored to philanthropic initiatives. To prepare the call for tender, students will imagine themselves as officeholders of a public institution that has allocated 10 million CHF for a philanthropic endeavor. **The work for the first CdÉ is compulsory and will bear for 40% on the final evaluation of the course** and should be submitted electronically, in a .pdf format, to michele.bocchiola@unige.ch. **The deadline for submitting the work for this CdÉ is 7:59 AM on November 25, 2024.**

During the second and third CdÉ, the focus will shift towards preparing project applications in response to the calls for tender formulated in the previous sessions. To facilitate effective learning and engagement, students will be divided into groups. Each group will be assigned the task of

crafting an application that responds to some of calls for tender devised by students in the first CdÉ.

In the last CdÉ, each group will present their call for tender, showcasing their ability to develop and articulate a compelling proposal.

❧ SCHEDULE ❧

Week 1 (16/09/2024): Introduction

- Course description and practicalities
- Definitions of philanthropy
- The public ethics perspective

In this introductory class, we examine the foundations of philanthropy, exploring its definition and highlighting its importance in society. We examine the ethical dimensions inherent in philanthropic endeavors, highlighting the normative considerations that guide and shape acts of philanthropic giving and receiving. By understanding the underlying principles and its potential impact, students will gain a broad perspective on the public ethics of philanthropy.

▪ Suggested Readings:

- P. Singer, “Famine, Affluence, and Morality,” *Philosophy & Public Affairs* 1, no. 3 (1972): 229–43.
 - Link: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2265052>.
- L. Murphy, “Responsibility in Nonideal Theory,” in *Moral Demands in Nonideal Theory* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 74-101.

Week 2 (23/09/2024): The Historical and Institutional Context of Philanthropy

- The development of philanthropy in different societies and cultures
- The role of public institutions in shaping philanthropy

This class embarks on a journey through time and space, tracing the development of philanthropy across diverse societies and cultures. Exploring how philanthropy has evolved in response to historical, social, and cultural factors, we shall uncover its connections with public institutions. By comprehending the historical and institutional context, students will gain important insights into the forces that have shaped and continue to shape philanthropy.

▪ *Required Reading:

- H. Cunningham, “The Multi-Layered History of Western Philanthropy,” in S. Phillips et al. (eds.) *The Routledge Companion to Philanthropy* (London: Routledge, 2015), pp. 62–75.
 - Link: <https://www.routledgehandbooks.com/doi/10.4324/9781315740324.ch2>

Week 3 (30/11/2024): The Justification for Philanthropy

- The moral and political arguments for philanthropy
- The relationship between philanthropy and justice

In this class, we examine the moral and political arguments that underpin philanthropy. We explore the ethical justifications for giving, examining how acts of philanthropy can be seen as instruments of moral virtue and social progress. We also analyze the relationship between philanthropy and justice, investigating the ways in which acts of giving can contribute to and address social inequalities.

- Suggested Readings:
 - Deontological Perspective: T. Hill, “Duties and Choices in Philanthropic Giving: Kantian Perspectives,” in P. Woodruff (ed.), *The Ethics of Giving* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), pp. 13-39.
 - Link: <https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780190648879.003.0002>.
 - Virtue Ethics Perspective: C. Swanton, “Virtue Ethics, Thick Concepts, and Paradoxes of Beneficence,” in P. Woodruff (ed.), *The Ethics of Giving* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), pp. 40-77.
 - Link: <https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780190648879.003.0003>.
 - Moderate Consequentialist Perspective: W. MacAskill et al., “Giving Isn’t Demanding,” in P. Woodruff (ed.), *The Ethics of Giving* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), pp. 178- 203.
 - Link: <https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780190648879.003.0007>.

Week 4 (07/10/2024): The Public Ethics of Giving

- The moral obligations of philanthropists
- The role of individual choice in charitable giving

This class explores the ethical dimensions of giving from the perspective of philanthropists. We discuss the moral obligations that accompany the act of philanthropy, examining the responsibilities and expectations placed upon those who possess the means to contribute. Furthermore, we assess the role of individual choice in charitable giving, considering how different values may influence the allocation of philanthropic resources.

- *Required Reading:
 - C. Cordelli, “Reparative Justice and the Moral Limits of Discretionary Philanthropy,” in: R. Reich et al. (eds.), *Philanthropy in Democratic Societies: History, Institutions, Values* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016), pp. 244–66.
 - Link: <https://doi.org/10.7208/9780226335780-012>.

Week 5 (14/10/2024): The Public Ethics of Receiving

- The moral obligations of recipients of philanthropic donations
- The impact of philanthropy on the relationship between giver and receiver

In this class, we focus on the ethical responsibilities of those who receive philanthropic donations. We explore the moral considerations and dilemmas faced by recipients, analyzing the impact of philanthropy on the relationship between givers and receivers. By examining the dynamics at play, participants gain a deeper understanding of the ethical dimensions involved in being on the receiving end of philanthropy.

Week 6 (21/10/2024): Philanthropy and the State

- The relationship between philanthropy and the state, including taxation and regulation
- The justification of philanthropy's impact on public policy and political decision-making

This class examines the complex relationship between philanthropy and the state. We explore the interplay between taxation, regulation, and the state's role in shaping and overseeing philanthropic activities. We analyze the relation between philanthropy, public policy and political decision-making, exploring the potential benefits and challenges that arise from this interaction.

- *Required Readings:

- E. Ceva, "Institutional short-circuits: When should philanthropy be incentivized?," H. Peter, G. Lideikyte Huber (eds.), *The Routledge Handbook of Taxation and Philanthropy*, Routledge, 2021
 - Link: <https://www.taylorfrancis.com/chapters/oa-edit/10.4324/9781003139201-5/institutional-shortcircuits-emanuela-ceva?context=ubx&refId=2e534f2b-86b6-4063-81c7-54b6cedb6392>
- R. Reich, "What Are Foundations for?" *Boston Review* 38, March–April 2013
 - Link: <https://www.bostonreview.net/forum/foundations-philanthropy-democracy/>

Week 7 (28/10/2024): The Role of Philanthropy in Democratic Societies

- The importance of philanthropy in democracy
- The potential risks and challenges of philanthropy in a democratic context

In this class, we explore the role of philanthropy in democratic societies. We examine how philanthropy supports and nurtures civil society, and how it contributes to the practice of democracy. We then discuss the potential risks and challenges associated with philanthropy in democratic contexts, fostering a critical understanding of the complexities inherent in the intersection of philanthropy and democratic ideals.

- *Required Reading:

- E. Beerbohm, "The Free-Provider Problem: Private Provision of Public Responsibilities," in: R. Reich et al. (eds.), *Philanthropy in Democratic Societies: History, Institutions, Values* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016), pp. 226-243.
 - Link: <https://doi.org/10.7208/chicago/9780226335780.003.0009>.

Week 8 (11/11/2024): Philanthropy and Social Justice

- The impact of philanthropy on social justice and inequality
- The ethical and political challenges of addressing systemic social problems through philanthropy

This class takes on the relationship between philanthropy and social justice. We examine how philanthropic efforts can impact and address social inequalities, shedding light on both the positive contributions and potential pitfalls. We explore the ethical and political challenges involved in attempting to tackle systemic social problems through philanthropy.

- *Required Reading:
 - E. Ashford, "Obligations Of Justice and Beneficence to Aid the Severely Poor," In P. Illingworth et al. (eds.), *Giving Well* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), pp. 26-45.
 - Link: <https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199739073.003.0003>
- Suggested Readings:
 - A. Buchanan, "Justice and Charity," *Ethics* 97(3), (1987), pp. 558-575.
 - Link: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2381179>.

Week 9 (18/11/2024): Philanthropy and Global Justice

- The challenges and ethical considerations of philanthropy in a global context
- The potential for philanthropy to address global social problems

In this class, we discuss the ethical considerations that arise in the realm of global philanthropy. We explore the challenges inherent in conducting philanthropic activities on a global scale, taking into account cultural, political, and economic factors. In addition, we examine the potential of philanthropy to address pressing global social problems, fostering a nuanced understanding of its impact and limitations.

- *Required Reading:
 - R. Riddell, "Aiding the World's Poor: New Challenges for Donor States," in P. Illingworth et al. (eds.), *Giving Well* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), pp. 84-103.
 - Link: <https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199739073.003.0006>.

➤ COMPLÉMENTS D'ÉTUDES 1 (25/11/2024)

Students' presentation of a call for tenders for philanthropic initiatives

Week 10 (25/11/2024): Corporate Philanthropy

- The role of corporations in charitable giving
- The ethical considerations of corporate social responsibility

In this class, we explore the realm of corporate philanthropy and the ethical considerations it entails, but looking into the role of corporations in engaging in charitable giving. We also look

at the ethical dimensions of corporate social responsibility, exploring how businesses can align their philanthropic endeavors with philanthropic objectives.

- *Required Reading:
 - T.W. Dunfee, “The Unfulfilled Promise of Corporate Philanthropy,” in P. Illingworth et al. (eds.), *Giving Well: The Ethics of Philanthropy* (Oxford: Oxford Academic, 2011), pp. 243-263.
 - Link: <https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199739073.003.0013>

➤ **COMPLÉMENTS D'ÉTUDES 2 (02/12/2024)**

Group work on the calls for tender

Week 11 (02/12/2024): Fundraising

- The ethical considerations of fundraising, including donor intent and donor fatigue
- The role of professional ethics in fundraising

This class focuses on the ethical considerations surrounding fundraising practices. We explore the role of professional ethics in fundraising, highlighting the importance of ethical conduct and the establishment of trust between fundraisers and donors.

- *Required Reading
 - J. Shulman, “The Funder as Founder: Ethical Considerations of the Philanthropic Creation of Nonprofit Organizations”, in P. Illingworth et al. (eds.), *Giving Well: The Ethics of Philanthropy* (Oxford: Oxford Academic, 2011), pp. 220-242.
 - Link: <https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199739073.003.0012>

➤ **COMPLÉMENTS D'ÉTUDES 3 (09/12/2024)**

Group work on the calls for tenders

Week 12 (09/12/2024): Philanthropy and Tax Incentives

- The question of publicly incentivizing philanthropy
- The ethical considerations about tax incentives

This class explores the question of whether states should promote philanthropy, specifically examining one of the most prevalent incentivization mechanisms today: tax incentives. We will explore whether these incentives potentially redirect public spending in a problematic manner, amplifying the power and status of wealthier donors.

- *Required Reading
 - R. Pevnick, “Democratizing the Nonprofit Sector,” *Journal of Political Philosophy* 21(3), 2013: pp. 260-282.
 - Link: <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9760.2011.00414.x>
- Suggested Reading

- A. Lambelet, P. Balsiger, R. Camac, and C. Honegger, “Tax Incentives in Favour of Public Utility in Switzerland: an Incomplete Debate?” *L’Année PhiLanthropic - The PhiLanthropic Year* 1(3), 2019, pp. 31-45.
 - Link: <https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=&ved=2ahUKEwjNsoTb89yCAxWf0gIHHWNUA1IQFnoECAsQAQ&url=https%3A%2F%2Farodes.hes-so.ch%2Frecord%2F3909%2Ffiles%2FOnline%2520version.pdf&usq=A0vVaw0eh2DQj357WABLpnFz9AC1&opi=89978449>

➤ **COMPLÉMENTS D’ÉTUDES 4 (16/12/2024)**

Group presentations of the calls for tenders

Week 13 (16/12/2024): The Limits of Philanthropy

- The ethical boundaries and constraints in philanthropic endeavors
- The implications of unrestricted philanthropy on societal structures

In this class, we explore the ethical considerations and potential consequences of unrestricted philanthropic actions, analyzing their impact on societal structures and power dynamics. In this way, we can gain a deeper understanding of the ethical dimensions involved in the practice, encouraging thoughtful reflection on the potential limitations and implications of philanthropic initiatives.

- *Required Readings:
 - L. Wenar, “Poverty Is No Pond: Challenges for the Affluent,” in P. Illingworth et al. (eds.), *Giving Well* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), pp. 104-132.
 - Link: <https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199739073.003.0007>.
 - P. Woodruff, “Afterword: Justice and Charitable Giving,” in P. Woodruff (ed.), *The Ethics of Giving: Philosophers’ Perspectives on Philanthropy* (New York, 2018), pp. 204-220.
 - Link: <https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780190648879.003.0008>.