

The Life You Can Save: Institutions of Altruism

Honors Section

IDH 2930

Class Periods: Tuesday | Period 4 (10:40 AM – 11:30 AM)

Class Location: LIT 119

Academic Term: Spring 2025

Instructor

Name: Joel B. Harley

E-mail: joel.harley@ufl.edu

Office Phone Number: 352-392-2692

Office Location: MALA 4105

Office Hours: by appointment

Peer Instructor

Name: Rafae Jamal

E-mail: rafaejamal@ufl.edu

Office Location: Wherever You Want It To Be

Office Hours: by appointment

Course Description

"The Life You Can Save" by Peter Singer is a fascinating deconstruction of the current status quo of global inequality. This book seeks to break down the psychological and socioeconomic barriers to charitable giving amongst developed nations. In turn, Singer makes his argument that the average middle-class person can make a tremendous tangible difference in the developing world. Students in this course will engage with the current landscape of philanthropy through the lens of their own experiences and develop a greater understanding of standards for aid and the apathy that sometimes accompanies it. Students will consider Singer's assessments (both their strengths and weaknesses) as well as a variety of perspectives from outside authors and philosophers.

The United Nations defines "extreme poverty" as "a condition characterized by severe deprivation of basic human needs, including food, safe drinking water, sanitation facilities, health, shelter, education and information. It depends not only on income but also on access to services". The problem of extreme poverty has been one that remains persistent and complex, both in its challenges as well as the solutions that have been created to address it. There is no "one-size-fits-all" resolution that could solve a problem that has remained as endemic and pervasive throughout human history as extreme poverty. Students will learn the numerous types of aid currently being administered by philanthropic organizations, as well as the nature of the groups performing the work in seeking to alleviate extreme poverty. In doing so, students will learn to what degree their own perspectives align with Singer's, as well as a variety of different philosophers.

The world community has made tremendous strides in alleviating debilitating poverty, but there are still more people living off less than \$1.90 a day globally than the entire population of North America. How did it get this way? And what can I, a regular student at the University of Florida, do about all this? This is surely above my paygrade, right? In this course, we will learn more about Singer's ethical, financial, social, and environmental justifications for encouraging the charitable transfer of monetary assistance from developed countries to people in some of the poorest developing countries.

In this regard, Singer will argue that truly nothing is too little, and even relatively modest people living in developed countries can play a role in globally benefitting disadvantaged people by raising them out of extreme poverty. Most of the concerted global efforts to eliminate poverty have been taken within our lifetimes (after the year 2000), and students will gain an understanding of the work that has been accomplished in raising living standards across the

world and the work that remains. This one-credit, discussion-based course will involve a mix of in-class activities and online reflection posts that will culminate in a final project.

Course Pre-Requisites / Co-Requisites

Prerequisite: none

Learning Objectives

At the completion of this course, you should be able to:

- Understand the common psychological barriers to donation and ways to overcome these through discussion and independent research.
- Evaluate the current landscape of wealth distribution through careful examination of the arguments of its principal beneficiaries and detractors.
- Identify and categorize ways in which global poverty can be alleviated through research of the organizations currently employing these methods.
- Design a simulated nonprofit that targets a specific, underserved community or cause to promote the alleviation of extreme forms of poverty.

Required Materials

There is one required material for this class: The book! You are welcome to have it as a paper copy or as an electronic copy. If you are utilizing an electronic copy, you may obtain the book (legally) for free at the link provided below. The details of the book are as follows:

- Title: The Life You Can Save: How To Do Your Part to End World Poverty
- Author: Peter Singer
- Publisher: Random House, 2009
- ISBN: 978-0-8129-8156-8

This book is available for free as a pdf at thelifeyoucansave.org

Course Schedule

Date	Discussion	Reading Due	Assignment Due
January 14 th	Syllabus & Introduction	N/A	N/A
January 21 st	Preface & Saving a Child	Preface & Chapter 1	Reflection 1
January 28 th	Is It Wrong Not to Help?	Chapter 2	Reflection 2
February 4 th	Common Objections to Giving	Chapter 3	Reflection 3
February 11 th	Why Don't We Give More?	Chapter 4	Reflection 4
February 18 th	Creating a Culture of Giving	Chapter 5	Reflection 5
February 25 th	How Much Does It Cost to Save Life, and How Can You Tell Which Charities Do It Best?	Chapter 6	Reflection 6
March 4 th	In-class Activity!	The Book of Life	Midterm Project
March 11 th	Improving Aid	Chapter 7	Reflection 7
March 18 th	Spring Break!	The Streets (of somewhere hopefully more exciting than here)	Have Fun!
March 25 th	Your Child and the Children of Others	Chapter 8	Reflection 8
April 1 st	Asking Too Much?	Chapter 9	Reflection 9
April 8 th	A Realistic Standard	Chapter 10	Reflection 10
April 15 th	From Contemplation to Action	What One Person Can Do & Afterword	Reflection 11
April 22 nd	Final Meeting!	N/A	N/A
April 29 th	Reading days!	-	Good luck on Finals!

Attendance and Participation Policies

Attendance/Participation:

Since this is a discussion-based course, attendance is vital to the overall functioning of the course. This class meets once a week, and in-person attendance is required. You are allowed one unexcused absence for the semester with no documentation. You are allowed as many excused absences (sickness, family emergencies, religious holidays, University Event, etc.) as you require, as these are outside of your control. As a standard operating procedure, I will request some kind of documentation for excused absences, but I understand how drastically your mileage can vary with being able to provide this.

In addition to being physically present for class, please try to be mentally present as well. This means being prepared for class (reading the assigned material, digesting it, and reflecting on it), as well as being active in class discussions with your peers. In addition to this, I hope the readings will connect with you on a level beyond baseline academics, and please do not hesitate to voice the connections you have made to other observations of civilization or your personal life. I love hearing how simple words on paper of a stranger you've never met can interact with your lived experiences somehow.

Attendance and participation are worth 40% of your total grade. There is no hard and fast rule about how points are distributed in this category. There is no set "quota" on how often you need to speak, how long you need to speak, or what words in what order you need to speak. This section is graded holistically based on how you contribute to the overall class discussion. There may be some days when you do not speak or have nothing you feel like you can add, and that is completely okay. There are days where you will feel like you have so much on your mind that you need to get out, and that is also completely okay. I generally wish to hear everyone speak at least once per class, and ideally something more than a simple "I agree." I will keep track of attendance and discussion contributions as the course progresses, and I will let you know if I would like to hear more from you before I slap some low grade on Canvas to give you a heart attack.

As a general rule, your participation will be graded considering four parameters: Engagement, Substance, Selflessness, and Clarity. Engagement can be thought of broadly as "volume". I would like to hear from you roughly every class, and this will of course vary throughout the semester. Substance refers to the depth of your comments and questions. Do your comments or questions put forward to the class indicate an understanding and engagement with the material or with your personal life? This goes back to the point of simply saying "I agree" with no elaboration or explanation regarding what it is that you agree with and why you agree with it. Selflessness refers to your overall cooperation in discussions. It is said that we have two ears and one mouth because we were meant to listen twice as much as we were meant to speak. Clearly that's nonsense, but you will often gain far more in a discussion if you allow yourself to sit with your thoughts and listen to what others have to say instead of feeling like you must get everything off your chest within the first few minutes. Clarity refers to the conciseness of your contributions and the ability of your classmates to respond to your point. If your contribution consists of 5 disparate ideas and points that the class moved on from 35 minutes ago, it becomes difficult to constructively build upon your contributions. For clarity, I have attached a rough rubric on how I will be grading participation, but don't put too much emphasis on the actual numbers:

<i>Factor and Description</i>	Disappointing	Below Average	Average	Above Average	Exceptional
Engagement- Have I heard from you on a regular basis? <i>Note:</i> I typically consider a regular basis to be 1-2 times in most (not necessarily all) classes.	50	63	75	87	100
Substance- Do your comments and questions reflect depth of thought? Are your insights original, and help to move the class forward?	50	63	75	87	100
Selflessness- Do your comments clearly build what others have said, and give others opportunity to build on what you said? Have you avoided bad habits, such as “and also” and hand trees? Do you focus on listening and giving others a chance to speak, NOT simply trying to dominate air time in the class?	50	63	75	87	100
Clarity- Can others clearly understand the points that you are making? Are you succinct and well-organized, avoiding rambling or trailing off?	50	63	75	87	100

In addition to the regular course-wide participation, there will also be a small portion of every class that is dedicated to sharing a reflection with the class (see below for more details regarding reflections). There will be 1-2 reflections shared per class period at the beginning of the class (depending on how much we have planned for the day). Every student is required to share a reflection at least once, and this will be 5% of your participation grade. This will serve as a simple icebreaker for the day’s discussion and will also allow students to voice their opinions regarding the assigned reading. Students are welcome to share reflections twice, but only after every student has shared at least once.

Another component of this section will be your engagement to help to design the overall functioning of the course. I will ask for ideas regarding the preferred method of submission for the Midterm project, potential ideas for Activity Day, or general ideas for what is going well in this class and what isn’t. My goal is to create a valuable and enjoyable course for everyone, and I can only do that if I know what everyone is thinking. There are never any right or wrong answers to this, and I’m just as open to fishing for compliments as I am with constructive criticism.

If you cannot make it to class, please let me know as soon as possible so other accommodations may be arranged. Please note that if a certain number of classes are missed due to an unexcused absence (4+), it might not be possible to get credit for this course because of University policies that are beyond my control; It’s a little odd and slightly heartless, but they argue that too much critical instruction will have been missed.

Evaluation Methods and Criteria

The following section discusses the policies for each of the graded assessments in this course. You should look here first for answers to any general, course-related inquiries.

Homework / Reflections (11 in total)

When: Assigned roughly once a week (see course schedule).

What: Questions regarding your personal thoughts on the week's assigned reading. There are no right or wrong answers, just thoughts on what you read. To what degree do you agree with what Singer has to say, and does it intersect with your own personal experiences? Some reflections may require engagement with material beyond the text itself.

Why: This ensures that you are engaging with the material in a meaningful way. This also could help in discussions if you need to quickly jog your memory about the reading or to bring up a topic of discussion that particularly resonated with you.

Grading: Each reflection is graded separately. The reflections should be between 250-500 words. You may go over 500 words, but no extra credit will be given. I do, however, read all of it with my whole heart.

Late policy: You may turn in reflections late for a 10% reduction each day.

Submission: Homework will be submitted on Canvas before class on the due date. Please ensure that your submission is readable, as I like to read all of them before class time!

Midterm Project

The Midterm Project will serve as a mid-course check-in regarding the material and serve as a reflection on some of the major themes of this course. This project will have you designing and describing a nonprofit organization that you would like to create. Who does this organization serve? Where does it secure funding from? What measures are in place to ensure that this organization can do the best it possibly can with the resources it has? More details to come as to the method of submission but think about what you want to see in an ideal nonprofit as we move through the course. There will also be a rubric made available prior to the submission time, which I will discuss in class. This assignment will represent 30% of your grade and be an opportunity for you to venture beyond Singer's ideas and explore supplemental material both for and against the ideals Singer espouses. This will (hopefully) give you an opportunity to engage with different viewpoints and explore how you might feel about those viewpoints. More details will be released as the due date approaches, and I will also ask for class input when it comes to the overall design of this assignment.

Evaluation of Grades

Assignment	Points (Each)	Total Percentage
Attendance/Participation (Graded Cumulatively)	-	40%
Midterm Project	300	30%
Homework Reflections (11 Total, lowest 1 dropped)	30	30%
Total	1000	100%

Grading Policy

Percent	Grade	Grade Points
93.3 - 100.0	A	4.00
90.0 - 93.3	A-	3.67
86.6 - 90.0	B+	3.33
83.3 - 86.6	B	3.00
80.0 - 83.3	B-	2.67

76.6 - 80.0	C+	2.33
73.3 - 76.6	C	2.00
70.0 - 73.3	C-	1.67
66.6 - 70.0	D+	1.33
63.3 - 66.6	D	1.00
60.0 - 63.3	D-	0.67
00.0 - 60.0	E	0.00

Please Note: A minimum grade of B is required to earn Academic points towards your Honors Completion Requirements. (Exception: Honors Quest I and II sections require a C). Once you have earned your final grade in this course, please upload the course information and final grade from your Unofficial Transcript into your Honors Canvas Cohort: Honors Completion module to earn Honors Completion credit.

More information on UF grading policy may be found at:

<http://gradcatalog.ufl.edu/content.php?catoid=10&navoid=2020#grades>
<https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/grades.aspx>

Course & University Policies

Modifying Syllabus

Please note that this syllabus is subject to change throughout the semester. Changes made will be as minimal as possible so as not to disrupt the progression of the course. All changes made will be announced to the class in-person and subject to discussion.

Collaboration

Healthy collaboration: To solve homework assignments, healthy discussion and collaboration amongst classmates is encouraged. Healthy collaboration includes:

- Discussing and explaining general course material
- Discussing assignments for better understanding
- Helping for general issues

If another student contributes substantially to your understanding of a problem, you should *cite* this student to let myself and the teaching assistants be aware of your similar interpretations of a problem. You will not be judged negatively for citing another student.

Cheating and plagiarism: While collaboration is encouraged, you are *expected to submit your own work*.

Submitting work completed by another student is considered plagiarism and will be dealt with according to university policy. In general, if you do not fully understand your solution, the work is not your own. Examples of plagiarism or cheating include:

- Copying (or allowing someone to copy), even partially, an assignment solution
- Submitting material taken from another source without proper a citation
- Obtaining solutions to assignments through inappropriate means

Note that I may elect to use a plagiarism detection service in this course, in which case you will be required to submit your work to such a service as part of your assignment.

Consequences: If you are suspected of dishonest academic activity, university policy to is immediately report the activity to the Student Conduct & Conflict Resolution office to have paper trails and ensure students receive fair representation. Once reported, the Student Conduct & Conflict Resolution office will review the report act on it.

Students Requiring Accommodations

Students with disabilities who experience learning barriers and would like to request academic accommodations should connect with the disability Resource Center by visiting <https://disability.ufl.edu/students/get-started/>. It is important for students to share their accommodation letter with their instructor and discuss their access needs, as early as possible in the semester.

Course Evaluation

Students are expected to provide professional and respectful feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing course evaluations online via GatorEvals. Guidance on how to give feedback in a professional and respectful manner is available at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/students/>. Students will be notified when the evaluation period opens, and can complete evaluations through the email they receive from GatorEvals, in their Canvas course menu under GatorEvals, or via <https://ufl.bluera.com/ufl/>. Summaries of course evaluation results are available to students at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/public-results/>.

In-Class Recording

Students are allowed to record video or audio of class lectures. However, the purposes for which these recordings may be used are strictly controlled. The only allowable purposes are (1) for personal educational use, (2) in connection with a complaint to the university, or (3) as evidence in, or in preparation for, a criminal or civil proceeding. All other purposes are prohibited. Specifically, students may not publish recorded lectures without the written consent of the instructor.

A “class lecture” is an educational presentation intended to inform or teach enrolled students about a particular subject, including any instructor-led discussions that form part of the presentation, and delivered by any instructor hired or appointed by the University, or by a guest instructor, as part of a University of Florida course. A class lecture does not include lab sessions, student presentations, clinical presentations such as patient history, academic exercises involving solely student participation, assessments (quizzes, tests, exams), field trips, private conversations between students in the class or between a student and the faculty or lecturer during a class session.

Publication without permission of the instructor is prohibited. To “publish” means to share, transmit, circulate, distribute, or provide access to a recording, regardless of format or medium, to another person (or persons), including but not limited to another student within the same class section. Additionally, a recording, or transcript of a recording, is considered published if it is posted on or uploaded to, in whole or in part, any media platform, including but not limited to social media, book, magazine, newspaper, leaflet, or third party note/tutoring services. A student who publishes a recording without written consent may be subject to a civil cause of action instituted by a person injured by the publication and/or discipline under UF Regulation 4.040 Student Honor Code and Student Conduct Code.

University Honesty Policy

UF students are bound by The Honor Pledge which states, “We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honor and integrity by abiding by the Honor Code. On all work submitted for credit by students at the University of Florida, the following pledge is either required or implied: “On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment.” The Honor Code (<https://sccr.dso.ufl.edu/process/student-conduct-code/>) specifies a number of behaviors that are in violation of this code and the possible sanctions. Furthermore, you are obligated to report any condition that facilitates academic misconduct to appropriate personnel. If you have any questions or concerns, please consult with the instructor or TAs in this class.

Commitment to a Safe and Inclusive Learning Environment

The Herbert Wertheim College of Engineering values broad diversity within our community and is committed to individual and group empowerment, inclusion, and the elimination of discrimination. It is expected that every person in this class will treat one another with dignity and respect regardless of gender, sexuality, disability, age, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, race, and culture.

If you feel like your performance in class is being impacted by discrimination or harassment of any kind, please contact your instructor or any of the following:

- Your academic advisor or Graduate Program Coordinator
- Jennifer Nappo, Director of Human Resources, 352-392-0904, jpennacc@ufl.edu
- Curtis Taylor, Associate Dean of Student Affairs, 352-392-2177, taylor@eng.ufl.edu
- Toshikazu Nishida, Associate Dean of Academic Affairs, 352-392-0943, nishida@eng.ufl.edu

Software Use

All faculty, staff, and students of the University are required and expected to obey the laws and legal agreements governing software use. Failure to do so can lead to monetary damages and/or criminal penalties for the individual violator. Because such violations are also against University policies and rules, disciplinary action will be taken as appropriate. We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to uphold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honesty and integrity.

Student Privacy

There are federal laws protecting your privacy with regards to grades earned in courses and on individual assignments. For more information, please see: <https://registrar.ufl.edu/ferpa.html>

Campus Resources:

Health and Wellness

U Matter, We Care:

Your well-being is important to the University of Florida. The U Matter, We Care initiative is committed to creating a culture of care on our campus by encouraging members of our community to look out for one another and to reach out for help if a member of our community is in need. If you or a friend is in distress, please contact umatter@ufl.edu so that the U Matter, We Care Team can reach out to the student in distress. A nighttime and weekend crisis counselor is available by phone at 352-392-1575. The U Matter, We Care Team can help connect students to the many other helping resources available including, but not limited to, Victim Advocates, Housing staff, and the Counseling and Wellness Center. Please remember that asking for help is a sign of strength. In case of emergency, call 9-1-1.

Counseling and Wellness Center: <https://counseling.ufl.edu>, and 392-1575; and the University Police Department: 392-1111 or 9-1-1 for emergencies.

Sexual Discrimination, Harassment, Assault, or Violence

If you or a friend has been subjected to sexual discrimination, sexual harassment, sexual assault, or violence contact the **Office of Title IX Compliance**, located at Yon Hall Room 427, 1908 Stadium Road, (352) 273-1094, title-ix@ufl.edu

Sexual Assault Recovery Services (SARS) Student Health Care Center, 392-1161.

University Police Department at 392-1111 (or 9-1-1 for emergencies), or <http://www.police.ufl.edu/>.

Academic Resources

E-learning technical support, 352-392-4357 (select option 2) or e-mail to Learning-support@ufl.edu. <https://lss.at.ufl.edu/help.shtml>.

Career Resource Center, Reitz Union, 392-1601. Career assistance and counseling; <https://career.ufl.edu>.

Library Support, <http://cms.uflib.ufl.edu/ask>. Various ways to receive assistance with respect to using the libraries or finding resources.

Teaching Center, Broward Hall, 392-2010 or 392-6420. General study skills and tutoring.
<https://teachingcenter.ufl.edu/>.

Writing Studio, 302 Tigert Hall, 846-1138. Help brainstorming, formatting, and writing papers.
<https://writing.ufl.edu/writing-studio/>.

Student Complaints Campus: <https://sccr.dso.ufl.edu/policies/student-honor-code-student-conduct-code/>;
<https://care.dso.ufl.edu>.

On-Line Students Complaints: <http://www.distance.ufl.edu/student-complaint-process>.

Honors Program, 201 Walker Hall, 352-392-1519

Quick questions for an Honors advisor? Email advisor@honors.ufl.edu

Need an Honors advising appointment? Schedule via Microsoft Bookings: <https://bit.ly/ufhonorsadvising>