This course will introduce students to issues and debates about the problem of conflicting values – “value conflict” (VC) – and delve into some major contemporary political-moral dilemmas. Isaiah Berlin observed: “The world that we encounter in ordinary experience is one in which we are faced with choices between ends equally ultimate, and claims equally absolute, the realization of some of which must inevitably involve the sacrifice of others.” Politics is rife with competing views about what we should be aiming for in common life. Some seek to maximize freedom; others demand equal justice rather than unfettered individualism. All sides consider their aims right and good. How should we think about these deep sources of division, and how can and should a polity address them? The idea of VC helps us to organize a study of these fundamental questions.

This syllabus is based upon a number of background assumptions, which I set out here to help clarify the nature of the course.

First, what do we mean by value? The definition to be used is: major conceptions about political-normative goods, goals/ends, ideals, or principles. The word “value” itself encompasses much more than politics; values include friendship, cleanliness, honesty, happiness, etc. But we will be concerned with values in VC that pertain to major political-social ideals/goals such as freedom, equality, security, racial justice, patriotism, and so forth.

Second, the problem of VC appears in the fact that major ideals about political-social life come into conflict. VC happens between two goods clashing (not good vs. bad, or good vs. evil), and it appears impossible to reconcile these fundamental values. No alternative or third principle resolves the dilemma.

Third, we must note the various levels at which conflicts may occur. An individual can hold a number of political-moral ideals, and feel ambivalent about prioritizing them; one political society is divided among groups who espouse conflicting ideals; and different polities are often viewed as standing for the achievement of different goals.

Fourth, the problem of VC does not exist simply as a dilemma of understanding or moral commitment, but as a practical dilemma about what to do in a collective world. We need to make decisions and distribute resources, but if deep disagreement exists, how can political action be directed? How are conflicts managed? Who decides? Do we “decide” at all? For example, we cannot implement to the extent desired both civil liberties and security, or cosmopolitan justice and patriotism. Do we aim to balance, prioritize, or trade-off? How to determine ends and means to ends?

These starting points serve to mark the domain of study we will be engaged in. The course begins by investigating classic texts addressing these issues at a theoretical level. Then we launch into specific substantive dilemmas about political-moral goals, the arguments made on their behalf, and what means should be used to achieve them for political society. We shall see that arguing for specific goals also implicates conceptions about who we are and what we aspire to be, that is, narratives about identity.

Learning Objectives
Students will be able to:
read, critically appraise, and feel comfortable discussing various types of texts
• differentiate between explanatory and normative/advocative conceptions and theories
• understand the perspectives of conflicting positions in core political-normative dilemmas
• use ethical (moral/normative) arguments to debate and defend positions regarding these questions in contemporary politics
• distinguish among approaches to “resolving” dilemmas of value conflict.

Course requirements
• Class presentation: 10%
  ○ Approximately ~7-10 minutes
  ○ The presentation should: (a) summarize briefly the main argument, approach or methods, and findings of your assigned article(s) or book; (b) evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the readings; and (c) identify outstanding questions on the topic for the week.
  ○ A hand-out should be provided for the class.
• Participation & weekly response papers (1-2 pp, single or double-spaced): 25%
  ○ Weekly reaction papers emailed to me by 11 am on the day of class (not necessary to submit on the day you present)
  ○ Active participation in discussion and questioning.
• Two papers:
  ○ 8-10 pg: 30% (First draft; peer review; & final draft)
    ▪ Draft due Tuesday February 28; Peer Review due Thursday, March 2; Final draft due Tuesday March 7.
  ○ ~15-20 page research paper; 35%, using at least 6-8 independent sources. Due Monday, May 8.

General Guidelines
This seminar requires intensive reading. Come to class prepared and ready to debate/question/challenge. Every student is expected to participate in discussion each class, with substantive observations, arguments and opinion. Absences are counted against your final grade. You must complete all requirements to pass the course. No computers or phones are allowed for use in the classroom. Assignments may be modified, according to instructor’s judgment. Strict adherence to the Pledge of Academic Integrity is expected.

Note: For a normal week, be prepared to devote approximately 7-8 hours of study to this course outside of the seminar meeting.

Texts
The following books are available for purchase at the GW bookstore:
Naomi Klein, This Changes Everything, 2015
Timothy Noah, The Great Divergence, 2013
Chantal Mouffe, On the Political (Thinking in Action), 2005
Max Weber, The Vocation Lectures (Hackett Classics), 2004

Most other texts will be provided through Blackboard E-reserves.

WID requirements
This course is part of the “writing in the disciplines” (WID) program. You will write 2 main papers. The first shorter paper must undergo peer-review & revision. Your draft grade will count (modestly) toward the final grade on the paper. For the final research paper, you may submit a draft to me with sufficient time to return comments.

Writing assignments are constructed to help you learn two different types of writing characteristic of political theoretical analysis: (1) The first paper will be based on textual analysis and critical reasoning through comparison of two or more writers (read in class) on a specific question (prompts provided later); (2) The research paper must demonstrate: formulation of a research question about some aspect or concrete case/problem of value conflict; use of high-quality sources to explore the question; careful analysis, consideration of alternative answers, and a convincing defense of your thesis. A grading rubric for the papers will be provided on the course website.

In addition, each meeting requires a short written response to the readings. These reaction papers are important for demonstrating your engagement with the issues and for enabling you to be comfortable with weekly writing.

Additional information

University Policy on Religious Holidays
Students should notify faculty during the first week of the semester of their intention to be absent from class on their day(s) of religious observance.

Support for Students Outside the Classroom
(1) Disability Support Services (DSS)
Any student who may need an accommodation based on the potential impact of a disability should contact the Disability Support Services office at 202-994-8250 in the Rome Hall, Suite 102, to establish eligibility and to coordinate reasonable accommodations. For additional information please refer to: gwired.gwu.edu/dss/

(2) Mental Health Services 202-994-5300
The University's Mental Health Services offers 24/7 assistance and referral to address students' personal, social, career, and study skills problems. Services for students include: crisis and emergency mental health consultations confidential assessment, counseling services (individual and small group), and referrals. counselingcenter.gwu.edu/

Academic Integrity Code
Academic dishonesty is defined as cheating of any kind, including misrepresenting one's own work, taking credit for the work of others without crediting them and without appropriate authorization, and the fabrication of information. For the remainder of the code, see: studentconduct.gwu.edu/code-academic-integrity

Part I. The problem of conflicting values

Jan. 19: Intro - Individual and community
      Antigone (441BC) and Citizenfour (film 2014)

Jan. 26: Polytheistic Pluralism: the warring gods of politics
      Weber, “Politics as a Vocation” (1919)

Feb. 2: Liberal Pluralism
      Berlin, Isaiah, “Two Concepts of Liberty” and
“Introduction” to *Four Essays on Liberty*, (1958) pp. xlviii-lxiii both on E-reserves

**Feb. 9: Reasoning about values**

1. Utilitarianism: Jeremy Bentham, “An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation” (1789/1823), Ch. I, Ch. IV.

**Part II. In the American tradition**

**Feb. 16: Libertarian Freedom**


**Feb. 23: Equality**


**March 2: Equality**


**March 9: Racial justice & color-blind individualism**

http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2014/06/the-case-for-reparations/361631/

http://www.hoover.org/research/case-against-reparations-slavery

**Spring break**

**Part III. On the global stage**

**March 23:** Environmentalism & Prosperity


**March 30:** Are human rights a universal or western value?


TBD

**April 6:** Immigration & community

Michael Walzer, “The Distribution of Membership” (1981)

http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=00346705%28198721%2949%3A2%3C251%3AACTCF%3E2.0.CO%3B2-I

April 13:  Patriotic Nationalism & Cosmopolitanism
All on E-reserves

Part IV. Overcoming conflict?

April 20:  Achieving agreement
John Rawls, *Political Liberalism* (1993) Lecture I (pp. 3-46) and Lecture IV (pp. 133-172)
(Jeremy Waldron, *Law and Disagreement*, Introduction, pp. 1-17)

April 27:  Accepting conflict