Courses in English
Course Description

Department	13 General and Interdisciplinary Studies
Course title	**"Making the World a Better Place" with Your Career: Why and How? (NAC)**
Course number	
Hours per week (SWS)	2
Number of ECTS credits	2
Course objective	By the end of the course, students will be able to reconstruct, compare, and critically assess central philosophical arguments concerning impartial beneficence, moral demandingness, and the ethical significance of career choice. They will learn to distinguish between normative principles, empirical assumptions, personal preferences, and emotional responses in decisions about how to do good. Students will be able to compare different causes and career strategies in terms of their ethical stakes, empirical tractability, personal fit, institutional context, and possible unintended or overlooked consequences. They will also be able to evaluate tensions between impartial moral concern, personal integrity, and flourishing. On this basis, they will develop well-reasoned judgments about how ethical reflection can inform career planning, work in non-profit and for-profit organizations, charitable giving, and broader social responsibility.
Prerequisites	None
Recommended reading	- Benjamin Todd, 80,000 Hours: How to Have a Fulfilling Career That Does Good (Penguin, 2026) - Larry Temkin, Being Good in a World of Need (Oxford University Press, 2022) - Theron Pummer, The Rules of Rescue. Cost, Distance, and Effective Altruism (Oxford University Press, 2023) Magnus Vinding, Suffering-Focused Ethics: Defense and Implications (Ratio Ethica, 2020) - Larissa MacFarquhar, Strangers Drowning (Penguin, 2015) - Liam Murphy, “The Demands of Beneficence” (Philosophy & Public Affairs, 1993) - Susan Wolf, “Moral Saints” (Journal of Philosophy, 1982) - Peter Singer, “Famine, Affluence, and Morality” (Philosophy & Public Affairs, 1972)
Teaching methods	Empirically informed philosophical lectures; conceptual analysis and reconstruction of influential arguments; close reading of selected philosophical texts and critical examination of relevant applied research; structured comparison of causes, career paths, and strategies for contributing; analysis of case studies from non-profit, for-profit, and political contexts; short individual exercises and guided discussions applying ethical frameworks to realistic career decisions.
Assessment methods	Written exam
Language of instruction	English
Name of lecturer	Prof. Dr. Adriano Mannino
Email	tbd
Link	

Hochschule München University of Applied Sciences

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Course content

You will spend roughly 80,000 hours of your life at work. Choosing how to spend this much time forces you to make big decisions. How much should these decisions be guided by ethical considerations – by the impact your career has on others, on the planet and the future, and on what you yourself become over time? And if you do want your work to matter ethically, how should you choose between the many paths available?
We will approach the ethics of career choice through four main questions. First, why try to “make the world a better place” at all, rather than looking primarily after oneself and one’s own community? Here we will examine leading arguments from the philosophical literature. The Drowning Child Argument has become most famous: If you would be obligated to ruin your expensive clothes wading into a shallow pond to save a drowning child, you are similarly obligated to donate comparable amounts to save strangers around the world – or so the argument claims. Second, how should one choose a cause and area of work? Climate change, global poverty, refugee crises, discrimination and oppression, rising inequality, animal suffering, future pandemics, warfare, and AI risks all call for contributions from people with a wide range of professional backgrounds. Should one follow one’s intuition and passion, or are there more systematic ways to decide between different causes? Third, how can one best contribute? Causes need not only people working on them, but also money, social legitimacy, and political support. If a cause is underfunded relative to the number of people willing to work on it professionally, might it make sense to pursue a financially lucrative career and donate a significant fraction of one’s income, thereby allowing organizations to create new positions? What does it mean for non-profit organizations to operate effectively? And under what conditions can for-profit organizations contribute to a better world? Fourth, all the foregoing considerations concern the world at large. But these considerations must be weighed against one’s own integrity, vocation, and flourishing. To what extent should – or shouldn't – we make sacrifices and aspire to be “moral saints” in spending the hours available to us?

Remarks