PHIL 2
INTRODUCTION TO ETHICS
Fall 2006

Class Meetings:  
Sec 02:  MWF 9-9:50am in MND 3009  
Sec 05:  TR 9-10:15am in DH 110

Instructor:   Dr. Christina Bellon, Department of Philosophy
Office Hours:  T1:30-3:30pm and W11:00-12:30; and by appointment.
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COURSE DESCRIPTION
This course allows students to develop an understanding and appreciation of ethics in a broad sense.  
This course satisfies General Education Requirements of Area C3: Introduction to the Humanities.  
3 units.

OVERVIEW
This course offers students an overview and introduction to the philosophical study of ethics.  
Several questions will form the focus for the semester's study. These include: Are values relative to  
cultures, societies or individuals, or do some transcend these differences? Are values subjective and  
emotional or are they objective and rational? What is the relation between facts and values, values  
and principles or rules, and actions? How can we live good lives and be good people?

The last question on this list presupposes answers to the preceding questions. How we answer these  
will affect our answer to the latter. In much of our thinking about ethics, we often only worry about  
this latter question without realizing that it raises deeper questions, answers to which we often  
uncritically, sometimes unknowingly, assume. The philosophical study of ethics is particularly  
interested in how these background assumptions figure into our everyday thinking about living a  
good life or being a good person. So, in this course, everyone will have an opportunity to explore  
their own assumptions (and each other's) and what these mean, where they lead, and how they affect  
our answer to the question of how to live a good life.

For the purposes of this course, I will assume we all want to live good lives and be good people – to  
do what we ought. The challenge of this course is to figure out what it is we ought to do and how it  
is we ought to do it. In this sense, we will examine ethics as a central feature of living a human life, a  
complete and satisfying life, one that reflects who we are and what we value.

This course will offer to students the tools and insights, as well as the opportunity to use these, to  
answer these questions as well as some questions of their own which may subsequently arise. Among  
these tools are a variety of theories, complete with their own terms and concepts, rankings of values,  
and list principles for right and good action. Among these, we will examine three of the major  
ethical theories: Utilitarianism (I ought to do what brings the greatest happiness), Duty Ethics (I  
ought to do my duty), and Virtue Ethics (I ought to do what makes me a good person).

Insofar as each of these theories offers us the means to answer those central questions of ethics,  
they also raise questions of their own: are my interests the only ones I should be concerned with?
How do I figure the greatest happiness? What are my duties and where do they come from? What are my rights and where do they come from? What makes a person’s character good or bad?

As this course is intended to demonstrate how thinking about ethics can be helpful for living our daily lives, much of the class discussion and student exercises will draw upon current affairs, case studies and self-reflection. Students are encouraged and expected to keep up with issues of current importance, to reflect on their own ethical behavior and values, and to bring to class examples from their lives or the affairs of their community to discuss and examine. This will be especially important during debates!

**GENERAL EDUCATION CRITERIA**

This course satisfies General Education Requirements of Area C3: Introduction to the Humanities in the following ways:

1. By (i) exposing students to a variety of ethical theories from both Western/European and Eastern/Asian traditions, and (ii) offering students an opportunity to discuss (intellectually and personally) difficult and life affecting moral issues from a philosophical perspective, this course fosters in students the development of an understanding of and an appreciation for the diversity of the human community and condition.

2. While theoretical ethics often seem removed from matters of social and economic diversity, this course will emphasize the important connection between theory and experience by reflecting on the moral lessons that can be gleaned from analyses of real legal and social policy cases. In this and other ways, this course also presents the contributions and perspectives of women, persons from various ethnic, socio-economic, and religious groups, gays and lesbians, and persons with disabilities.

**REQUIRED TEXTS**


**LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

As an introductory level, GE philosophy course, the specific learning objectives can be divided into three sets. The satisfaction and attainment of all three sets will be emphasized for all students. These are:

**Analytic Skills**

- Greater familiarity with philosophical methods and ethical arguments
- Greater familiarity with ethical theories and applications
- Ability to outline a given ethical problem and propose how it might be addressed
- Ability to form a sustained argument in response to these problems

**Communication Skills**

- Refine skills for both written and oral presentation, generally
- Enhanced proficiency at expressing one’s ideas and supporting arguments in both written and oral form
- Refine skills of listening and understanding the viewpoints, arguments of others

**Content Specific Skills**

- Demonstrate familiarity with some important contemporary ethical issues and the variations in these according to social and cultural variables
- Demonstrate use of both philosophical and empirical research related to these issues
- Competent use of ethical terms and theories
Apply ethical theories to better understand (and begin to resolve) moral problems encountered in personal, professional, and social life.

EVALUATION
Students will be evaluated by several means. These will include a series of exams, short written assignments, and presentation in a case-based debate. The course is graded on the basis of 100pts (1pt = 1%).

Participation (10pts)
This component consists of all in-class activities related to class discussion of the material, small group activities, attentive listening when others speak, and a demonstrated willingness to share attempts at understanding and assessing of the material. Attendance will be taken at the beginning of each class period. Your participation grade is based, in part, on your attendance – in the sense that if you are not present, you cannot have participated in class that day. Regular attendance is expected and encouraged. However, regular attendance is not sufficient to do well on this component of the grade. You should be active in class, contributing to your own and others’ understanding of the material. Similarly, merely being vocal, without reflection on the value of your contribution to class, will not result in any better grade than silence would. Mere regular attendance will not result in more than a grade of C- (6/10). See attendance policy for further details.

Midterm Exam (15pts)
There will be one in-class exams in total following the section addressing Moral Theories. See the Weekly Schedule for details. This exam will consist of both multiple choice type questions and written short answer questions.

Take Home Quiz on Moral Reasoning (5pts)
This requirement consists of a short take home quiz on the material covered in the section on moral reasoning. You will be asked to analyze arguments and identify fallacies. Short answer and multiple-choice.

Short Essays (20pts)
You will write a total of two short essays (1000 words/ 3 pages, double spaced normal font). These essays will be written in response to a specific question assigned at the end of the section on Values and on Meaning and Freedom. You will not be required to do any external research, but your essay response should reflect your understanding of all the relevant material. Each short essay is worth 10pts. See weekly course schedule for due dates.

Moral Problem Debates (Total 35pts)
This requirement consists of two parts: first, the debate report; second, your presentation in the debate. Each student will be a member of a debate team, which will write and present a position in response to a specific question asked about some moral problem. This report will serve as the basis for the team’s presentation in a structured in-class debate. The teams will consist of no more than four students. Teams will be assigned to respond to a question/moral problem on the basis of their choice (if not unanimous choice is had, the instructor may elect to assign teams to problems). Each team will be responsible for analyzing the assigned problem, responding to the question, preparing a debate report, and presenting their position to the class in the structured debate periods.

Debate Report (20pts)
The debate report is the complete analysis of the moral problem from that team’s perspective. It must contain the answer to the assigned question which the team proposes, and it must present the detailed argument in support of the team’s answer. The debate report must also include the team’s response to the opposing team’s position (raising and supporting an objection to their position). This will require the teams to work together. Each team will be responsible for reporting their position and argument to their opposing team. This written report will be submitted for grading at least one week prior to the scheduled debate. Each member of the team will be given a grade reflecting the quality of their individual contribution and the quality of the report as a whole. Deviation from the argument and position in the report during the presentation will not be accepted. Space will be available in WebCT’s discussion sections for teams to have a virtual meeting space where they can work together on debate reports and presentations. These will be private to the two teams working on any given case. See Debate Report Guide in WebCT for fuller details, format, and evaluation criteria.

Debate Presentation (15pts)
The debate presentation involves each team presenting the results of their analysis of the assigned moral problem. The team should use their debate report as the basis for the presentation, but they should resist the temptation to merely read it. Deviation from the argument and position in the Debate Report during the presentation will not be accepted. Each member is responsible for presentation on some aspect of the issue. Each member will be evaluated on the basis of the quality of his/her individual presentation combined with the quality of the whole presentation presented as a team effort. Team members should demonstrate familiarity with the whole issue and the entire argument. Team members should feel free to support one another in their presentations. See Debate Presentation Guide in WebCT for fuller details, format, and evaluation criteria.

Final Exam (15pts)
This course has a final exam which will test your general comprehension of the whole of the course material. This exam will be structured similarly to the midterm, consisting of multiple-choice and short answer questions. A study guide will be provided.

ATTENDANCE POLICY
The following policy applies to each student. No exceptions will be made. Be sure you have read and understand your obligations in this regard. Regular attendance is expected and encouraged from all class participants. While attendance will be taken at the beginning of each class period, these will not directly contribute to the participation grade.

Sleeping, using a cell phone, reading a newspaper, doing assignments for other classes, or otherwise engaging in disruptive or disrespectful behaviour will be met with a loss of ½pt from the participation grade. All cellular devices and iPods/music players must be turned off during class.

LATE ASSIGNMENTS POLICY
All assignments (case studies and journal entries) are due at the beginning of class on the day listed. Late assignments will be penalized at a rate of 10% per day (not merely class period) late beginning with the due date. After three late days, acceptance of the assignment is at the instructor’s discretion. If you know you will not be able to meet a due date, it is your responsibility to consult with the instructor before the assignment is due.

No extensions, no exceptions. It is your responsibility to know the due dates and to plan
accordingly. Leaving an assignment until the day or two prior is risky and makes you more vulnerable than you already are to factors and events in the universe beyond your control!

PLAGIARISM POLICY
Plagiarism is a serious academic offence and will not be tolerated in this class. Always use quotation marks and a footnote citation to indicate sentences or passages you borrow from another author. Assignments in which plagiarism is found will at the least be graded at 0 (not just an F). ALL incidents of plagiarism will be reported both to the Department Chair and to the Judicial Officer in the Office of Student Affairs for possible further administrative sanction. You are responsible for reading and understanding the details of the University's plagiarism policy.

DISABILITY ACCOMMODATION
If you have a documented disability (visible or invisible) and require accommodation or assistance with assignments, tests, attendance, note taking, etc., please see the instructor by the end of the third week of semester so that arrangements can be made. Failure to notify and consult with the instructor by this date may impede my ability to offer you the necessary accommodation and assistance in a timely fashion. Also be sure to consult with the Services to Students with Disabilities (Lassen Hall) to see what other campus services and accommodation options are available for you.