PHIL 196P: PROFESSIONAL AND PUBLIC SERVICE ETHICS

SUMMER 2010 (CCE, 8-WEEK ON-LINE)

Class Meetings: On-line in SacCT, June 18-August 12, 2010.
Instructor: Dr. Christina Bellon, Philosophy
Office Hours: via SacCT Chat on Tuesdays 9:00am-11:00am.
Contact: via SacCT email.
Availability: Other than during scheduled office hours, communication will be answered within two working days. If you attempt to reach me after 5pm M-F or on the weekend, do not expect a response until the next business day.

CATALOGUE COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course prepares students planning careers in public service to identify, understand, and resolve ethical problems. Includes examinations of (i) ethical theory, including rights and duties, virtue ethics, utilitarian ethics, social contract theory, and role morality; (ii) the philosophical underpinnings of professional codes of conduct, regulations, and norms of various public service practices; (iii) moral reasoning and argumentation; (iv) the relation between ethical judgment and action; (v) the relation between public service and democratic principles.

COURSE CONTENT

This course is intended as an introduction to philosophical ethics for those whose educational interests are motivated by current or future careers in the professions in both the private and public sectors. While the focus of the course is on ethics comprehension and competence for professionals and future public service employees, it does not focus on any one specific profession or area of public service. The starting point for the course is the assumption that all professionals, as professionals engaged in particular practices in public and private sector employment, have similar ethical needs. This assumption is reaffirmed in the near universal requirement that professional training, regardless of the field or discipline, include some ethics training. This course contributes to that training.

A/ Professional and Public Service Practices

Drawing on the norms of existing professions in both the private and public sectors, and drawing on theoretical considerations offered by Role Morality, this section will engage student to identify the norms and standards of good practice implicit in them, as well as examine the motivations for entering professional or public service. Students will explore some of the major regulatory systems applicable to the various recognized professions and to various public service agencies and functions. Students will also examine, discuss and analyze selected
professional ethics codes for their role as statements of a profession’s values, goals, and ideals, as well as for their role in professional self-regulation.

B/ The Moral Community
Public Service employment is directly connected to the community, in a way not typical of other professions and vocations. Nonetheless, all self-regulating professions, whether in the private or public sector, have a trust with the community to exercise their privileged positions responsibly. As such, it is imperative for public service employees and professionals to understand their responsibility to the broader community served. Central to this responsibility are the values of trust and integrity. This section of the course takes as a starting point Social Contract Theory to highlight the way in which society is a voluntary arrangement for individual and mutual benefit. This section of the course will examine the

- ethical bases of community trust and professional integrity
- proper uses of public authority
- role of professional organizations in the broader public community
- role of democratic political processes in shaping the community
- responsibilities to the community of public service and professional employees.

C/ The Philosophical Roots of Professional Ethics
In this component of the course, students examine the basic ethical theories with a focus on those features of the theories most pertinent to practical ethics. Theoretical approaches to ethics will include consideration of:

- Character and Virtue
- Rights and Duties
- Utility and Greatest Good
- Role Morality
- Social Contract Theory

D/ Moral Reasoning and Ethical Judgement
In this component of the course, students will learn what counts as moral reasons for or against some action or policy, how to distinguish moral reasons from other kinds of reasons, and how to assess moral arguments. Students will develop skills in moral reasoning, including:

- identification of common fallacies
- formulating and analyzing moral arguments
- the role of facts and values in reasoning about ethics
- assessing moral opinions
- justification of moral judgments
- role of emotion and reason in forming and assessing moral judgements
- impediments to moral reasoning (psychological and social barriers)

Students will practice their ability to construct and evaluate each others’ arguments regarding different matters of public interest and policy.

E/ Applications
Throughout the course (weekly), students will be challenged with practical exercises which raise ethical problems as they arise in the workplace, with clients, within agencies, and between professions and the community. Throughout the course, students will apply their moral reasoning skills and understanding of the ethical theories to resolving dilemmas and conflicts in
a selection of cases taken from life situations. Cases will be relevant to the various public service professions.

**LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ASPIRATION/OBJECTIVE</th>
<th>PRACTICAL GOALS</th>
<th>ASSESSMENT TOOLS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Develop understanding of and competence applying ethical theories and modes of practice.</td>
<td>1. Accurately describe and distinguish between a variety of ethical concepts, theories, positions; 2. Formulate and express own ethical judgment; 3. Engage in cogent and respectful discussion of difficult and controversial ethical issues; 4. Analyze ethical arguments for consistency and credibility.</td>
<td>1. Pre and post course open-ended question/assessment. 2. Content in each of: a. essays, exams, weekly quizzes b. in-class practical exercises c. on-line discussion d. in class discussion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1. Writing competently in concise, precise and logical style; 2. Expression of a point of view through the formulation of a coherent and consistent argument in response to a practical ethical problem or case; 3. Presentation of an ethical argument in a coherent manner to an audience of peers.</td>
<td>1. Quality of the form (essay structure, logic) and mechanics (syntax, grammar) of each of each in-class assignment. 2. Substance, structure, and delivery of in-class and on-line discussions 3. Presentation of an argument in defense of an ethical position in class. 4. Preparation of case analysis.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop written and oral communication skills, especially as those are associated with argumentative writing and public speaking, and to develop skills in moral reasoning, argumentation, and evaluation of ethical judgments.</td>
<td>1. Accurately describe and distinguish the central elements of each ethical tradition, against its historical and cultural context. 2. Accurately account for the diversity of plausible positions in ethical problems, dilemmas and cases, while arguing in defence of one’s own considered position.</td>
<td>Evaluation of discussions of similarities and divergences between points of view expressed in different theories and moral judgments, in student a. essays, exams b. on-line discussion c. in-class practical exercises d. class participation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apply these ethical concepts and theories to problems in professional and public service contexts, familiarize students with public service and professional codes, apply ethical theories and concepts toward better professional practice.</td>
<td>1. Develop practical skills to assess relevance of ethical concepts and theories to situations encountered in public service and in professions, especially interactions with clients &amp; community, regulatory &amp; governance structures, and determining private and public resource allocations; 2. Apply concepts and theories to critically assess professional codes and regulations; 3. Develop skills to resolve conflicts that arise in the community.</td>
<td>Evaluation of these practical skills through: a. Case study analysis b. Problem based learning exercises</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
TEXT

2. Selected articles and supplemental material, PDFs in SacCT.

ASSIGNMENTS AND REQUIREMENTS

Evaluation of your progress toward the satisfaction of the course learning objectives, will be conducted by several means. The following assignments comprise the whole of the requirements for this course. This course is based on a total of 100 available points. Each assignment must be completed and submitted for grading. Failure to do so indicates a failure to complete the course and will result in a course grade of F.

Grading Scale

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>Outstanding (96pts and above)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>Very Good (90-95pts)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>Range Satisfactory (75-89pts)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>Range Minimally Satisfactory (60-74pts)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>Range Poor (50-59pts)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>Unacceptable (below 50pts)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This is based upon a 100 pt scale with 1pt = 1%

Technology Component

Please note this course is offered entirely on-line administered through SacCT. Instructor availability will be limited to on-line office hours. See office hours for opportunities to chat with the instructor. Technical problems must be addressed to the SacLink Help Line @ 916-278-7337. **ALL lectures, office hours and assignments are administered within SacCT. All assignments must be completed in the appropriate assignment or assessment area in SacCT.**

Weekly Quizzes (30pts)

Each week, for each set of the assigned readings, you will have a multiple choice quiz. At least seven quizzes will be issued, the best six are counted for grades. Each quiz will consist of 5-10 questions. You will have 20 minutes to complete each quiz, you may take each only once, no make-ups are permitted. The quizzes will be available on-line and you will have a range of at least three days during the week in which you can take each quiz.

Weekly Virtual Discussion (30pts)

Each Week students will contribute to an on-line discussion of designated ethical problems. These ethical problems will present a scenario to which students must respond, taking into account the course material thus far. Prompts will be issued by the instructor, students will have 7 days to respond to the prompt and follow up on their own and others’ contributions.

Initial direct reflection on the prompts will be graded (seven opportunities, best six will be counted for grades). These reflections must be at least 50 words long (approximately one paragraph). Students are expected to read and respond to the reflections of their class-mates. On-line reflections and ensuing discussion must be conducted in the effort to better understand the course material and its practical application and to further our appreciation of the
material’s strengths and weaknesses. Polemics, ideological shortcuts, and other rather thoughtless and unscholarly contributions will not satisfy this requirement and should be resisted. Proper on-line etiquette is expected; violations will not be tolerated. Each student must have read at least ¾ of the available contributions from their fellows on each prompt to qualify for a satisfactory grade of C- or better (regardless of the quality of their own response).

Short Essay (20pts)
To afford students the opportunity to examine the course material in an extended fashion, students are required to write one substantial essay on an individually chosen topic, but which must engage the theoretical and ethical components of the course. Topic proposals will be due at least three weeks prior to the essay due date, as indicted in SacCT. You are encouraged to begin thinking about this essay early on. Essay length is 1200-1500 words and should be based on the textual material, lecture notes, and supplemental material.

Final Exam (20pts)
This course will have a final cumulative exam. This exam is comprised of a sequence of multiple choice and short answer questions. You will take this final exam on-line during the exam period (8th week) with a three day period over which to take it. Once you begin, you will have two hours to complete it.

Bonus Points (up to 4pts)
Bonus points can be earned by listening to the series of “visiting speakers” and writing a two page reflection on the interview. Up to 4 bonus points may be earned. All bonus reports are due by the last day of classes as indicated in SacCT.

LATE ASSIGNMENTS
All assignments are due at the date and time specified in the assignment. Late assignments will be penalized at a rate of 10% per calendar day (not merely class period) 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. When submitting any assignment in SacCT, ALWAYS check its status to ensure it was submitted. Do not merely hit “submit” and leave. It is your responsibility to ensure your assignment was submitted accurately and timely. Do not wait for the instructor to ask you about it or for a “0” to appear in your grade column! 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/CHEATING
Plagiarism and cheating are serious academic offenses which will not be tolerated in this class. Assignments in which plagiarism or other forms of cheating are found will at the least be graded at 0 (not just an F). ALL incidents of cheating and 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. It is your responsibility to know and comply with the University’s Academic Honesty Policy http://www.csus.edu/umanual/student/UMA00150.htm.

**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 second 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.

**WEEKLY SCHEDULE (8 WEEK SCHEDULE)**

**Week 1: Introduction: Practical Ethics, Professions and Public Service**
Read: Sources of Guidance and the Basis of Ethics, Chapter 1; Seeking a Foundation for Ethics in the Professions, Chapter 2; Zimmerman, “Public Service Ethics”; Dwivedi, “Bureaucratic Morality”; Barber, “Regulation and the Professions”.

**Week 2: Role Morality and Ethics Codes**

**Week 3: Professional Values and Good Results**
Read: Values Integral to the Role of Professions, Chapter 3; Seeking the Best Results, Chapter 4.

**Week 4: Treating People Fairly**

**Week 5: Respecting Autonomy & Integrity**
Read: Respecting Autonomy, Chapter 7; Acting with Integrity, Chapter 8; Brien, “Professional Ethics and the Culture of Trust”; Flannigan, “The Fiduciary Duty.”

**Week 6: Ethical Thinking and Dilemmas**
Read: Chapter 9; Chapter 10.

**Week 7: Practical Problems: Moral Blame and Rights**
Read: A Guide to Dealing with Blame, Chapter 11; A Guide to Thinking about Rights, Chapter 12.

**Week 8: Final Exam and Essay, SacCT.**