

PHIL 102: PROFESSIONAL AND PUBLIC SERVICE ETHICS

SPRING 2026

INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION AND AVAILABILITY

Class Meetings:	Asynchronous Online in Canvas
Instructor:	Dr. Christina Bellon, Philosophy
Office Hours:	MW 10:00am-11:30am, and 2:00-3:00pm in MND 3010; also via chat and messaging in Canvas, zoom sessions by appointment.
Contact:	MND 3010; Please keep communications within Canvas.
Availability:	Every effort is made to communicate with you quickly, effectively, and accurately. I take this as an important element of my responsibility to you. However, outside of office hours and on weekends, my response may be delayed.

CATALOGUE DESCRIPTION

Prepares students who are planning careers in either professional practice or 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 professional and public service practices; (iii) moral reasoning and argumentation; (iv) the relation between ethical judgment and action; (v) the relation between professional practice, public service, and democratic principles. 3u, no prerequisites.

GE AREA C2 REQUIREMENTS:

This course satisfies General Education Upper Division Requirements Area 3b (C2): Humanities, with the following course learning outcomes:

- A. Demonstrate knowledge of the conventions and methods of the study of the humanities.
- B. Investigate, describe, and analyze the roles and effects of human culture and understanding in the development of human societies.
- C. Compare and analyze various conceptions of humankind.
- D. Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the historical development of cultures and civilizations, including their animating ideas and values.

COURSE CONTENT

This course is intended as an introduction to philosophical and practical ethics for students whose educational interests are motivated by current or future careers in the professions in both the private and public sectors. 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.

During the semester, students will learn about:

- Professional and Public Service Practices – the norms and standards of good practice implicit in professional and public service practices, as well as examine the motivations for entering professional or public service.
- 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.
- The Philosophical Roots of Professional Ethics -- students examine the basic ethical theories with a focus on those features of the theories most pertinent to practical ethics.
- Moral Reasoning and Ethical Judgment – 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.
- Applications – the 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. Additionally, 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.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

GENERAL LEARNING OBJECTIVES	PRACTICAL SKILLS	ASSESSMENT
A/ Identify, distinguish, describe core ethical concepts, principles, and modes of practice as these are relevant to professional and public service practice.	1. Accurately describe and distinguish between a variety of ethical concepts and conceptions, principles, positions; 2. Formulate and express own ethical judgment regarding professional and public service practices; 3. Engage in cogent and respectful deliberation and exchange of ideas on difficult and controversial ethical issues.	1. Content in each of: a. Graded Quizzes b. Sharing Practical Knowledge reports c. Peer comments and reflection on (b) above.
B/ Develop written discursive communication skills, especially as those are associated with argumentative writing and critical	1. Writing competently in concise, precise and logical style; 2. Expression of a point of view through the formulation of a	1. Quality of the form (essay structure, logic) and mechanics (syntax, grammar) of each written assignment.

peer assessment, and to develop skills in moral reasoning, argumentation, and evaluation of ethical judgments, public policies, and professional practices.	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.	2. Presentation of reasons in support of one's position on different practices and policies, in the Sharing Practical Knowledge Report. 3. Preparation of response to others' Sharing Practical Knowledge Reports.
C/ Develop an appreciation of the diversity of the human condition, as this is reflected in public and professional practices, in diverse social and professional contexts, and by a diversity of individuals.	1. Accurately describe and distinguish the central elements of each ethical principle, against its theoretical, historical, and cultural context. 2. Accurately account for the diversity of plausible positions in ethical problems, dilemmas and cases, while arguing in defense of one's own considered position.	Evaluation applications of principles to cases and problems in professional practice and public administration, in students' <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Sharing Practical Knowledge Reports b. Peer feedback on others' Reports
D/ Apply ethical concepts and principles to problems in professional and public service contexts, familiarize students with public service and professional codes, apply ethical concepts and principles toward improved professional practice.	1. Develop practical skills to assess relevance of ethical concepts and principles to situations encountered in public service and in professions, especially interactions with clients & community, regulatory & governance structures, and determining private and public resource allocations; 2. Apply concepts and principles to critically assess professional codes and regulations which govern professions and public services; 3. Develop skills to resolve conflicts and problems that arise in the community, including those arising from demographic diversity, limited community resources, emergencies, changes in access to professional & public services.	Evaluation of these practical skills through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Graded Quizzes b. Sharing Practical Knowledge Reports c. Ethical Practice Plan

TEXT

Richard Rowson, *Working Ethics: How to Be Fair in a Culturally Complex World* (Jessica Kingsley Publishers: 2006). The book is available to read online through the library, here:

<https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/csus/detail.action?docID=290896>.

If you prefer a hard copy of the textbook you can rent or buy the book at the bookstore:

<https://www.bkstr.com/csusacramentostore/home>.

Supplemental readings are available as PDFs in Canvas.

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.

GRADING SCALE

Exceeds Expectations	Meets Expectations	Developing Understanding	Needs Improvement	Not Yet Demonstrated
A (96-100)	B+ (87-89)	C+ (77-79)	D+ (67-69)	F (<60)
A- (90-94)	B (84-86)	C (74-76)	D (64-66)	
	B- (80-83)	C- (70-73)	D- (60-63)	

ASSESSMENT PLAN

Assignment	Point Value	Weighting in Final Grade
Graded Quizzes (6 @ 10pts each)	60	40%
Sharing Practical Knowledge Reports (6 @ 10pts each)	60	40%
Ethical Practice Plan OR Final Exam	25 or 30	20%
Bonus Reports (optional, 5 x 1pt)	(5)	0% (add-on value)
Total	145 or 150	100%

TECHNOLOGY COMPONENT

Please note this course is offered entirely online administered through Canvas. It is your responsibility to ensure you have regular and reliable access to computing facilities sufficient to the needs of this course. Technical problems must be reported to me at your earliest encounter of the problem. If the problem is more complex than instructor skills allow, you must address your problem to the Information Resources and Technology service desk servicedesk@csus.edu or (916) 278-7337.

LEARNER RESPONSIBILITY SURVEY

This brief survey is an opportunity for you to assess your preparation for succeeding in this fully online course. If you cannot agree to every item on the survey, you should seriously consider taking this course at a time when you can commit to the requirements of success.

NOTE: This survey must be completed during the first two weeks of semester. Failure to complete it will prevent your ability to proceed in the course by blocking your access to subsequent assignments and quizzes.

ACADEMIC HONESTY ASSIGNMENT

This is the first assignment for the course requires you to familiarize yourself with the university's Academic Honesty Policy. This assignment has no point value. The Academic Honesty Policy can be found at <https://www.csus.edu/president/policy-library/>.

NOTE: This assignment must be completed during the first two weeks of semester. Failure to complete it will prevent your ability to proceed in the course by blocking your access to subsequent assignments and quizzes.

"GETTING TO KNOW YOU"

This is a fun assignment – you just have to tell us a bit about yourself, why you're here, what your hopes and dreams are, what you do for fun or relaxation – anything really, to give us all a sense of who you are and where you're coming from. We'll be doing some collaborative work in this course, and it will be so much more enjoyable if we knew a bit about who we are. That's also the biggest obstacle to building a sense of community in an online course – so go ahead, tell us about yourself!

QUIZ SERIES (60PTS, 6 X 10PTS EACH, WEIGHTD VALUE FOR FINAL GRADE = 40%)

You are required to complete 6 graded quizzes, one for each course module. Each learning module of the course has a set of assigned readings and lecture videos. Each learning module will assess student comprehension of the content of the readings and lecture videos through a series of quizzes, one practice quiz and one graded quiz. Quizzes are multiple choice in structure with about 20 questions per quiz. You will have 20 minutes to complete each quiz and each will be available at least three days during the week in which it has been assigned. The practice quiz will be open for the duration and will close at the same time as the graded quiz. You have unlimited attempts on the practice quiz. You may take a graded quiz only once, no make-ups are permitted.

NOTE: For access to the graded quiz, you must pass the practice quiz with at least a C- (70%).

NOTE: Quizzes are due at the date and time indicated. Make-ups will not be permitted.

SHARING PRACTICAL KNOWLEDGE REPORTS (60PTS, 6 X 10PTS EACH, WEIGHTD VALUE FOR FINAL GRADE = 40%)

You are required to complete 6 reports. For each learning module, you will be required to complete and submit a report of your knowledge base before and knowledge expansion after studying the assigned

material. These reports will be submitted to a public forum, and other members of the class will participate in sharing their reflections on your report. The purpose is at least three-fold:

- i. To provide an opportunity for you to reflect on your existing knowledge to build connections between what you already know and what you are learning in the course at each step along the way.
- ii. To provide an opportunity for each of us to learn from each other, whether we are at the same level of knowledge and experience or not, and whether we are functioning from within the same profession or discipline or not. The benefit of working with others from diverse professional, academic and cultural backgrounds is that we can learn from each other as much as we can from the course material alone.
- iii. To allow each of us the opportunity to critically assess our own and others' contributions in a way in which we can refine our ethics-related knowledge as well as our ability to communicate, deliberate publicly, and come to some general insights and conclusions together. Take this as an opportunity to practice public deliberation about complex ethical problems, and thereby to develop skills of effective critical communication.

NOTE: Late submission will not be permitted. These are due at the date and time indicated. Late or missed submissions or commentary will not be accepted for this assignment. Make-ups will not be permitted.

CUMULATIVE ASSESSMENT:

OPTION 1: ETHICAL PRACTICE PLAN (25PTS, WEIGHTED VALUE = 20%)

OPTION 2: FINAL EXAM (30PTS, WEIGHTED VALUE = 20%)

OPTION 1: ETHICAL PRACTICE PLAN

To afford you the opportunity to apply what you have been learning in this course to your current or anticipated career in public or professional service, you will prepare a plan for fostering your own ethical practice. This Ethical Practice Plan will require you to develop a plan in which you:

- i. identify a problem which arises in your profession and explain what makes it an ethical problem (by explicit reference to the course material and to the values and principles learned)
- ii. craft a strategy for addressing it consistent with the ethical requirements learned (if it involves whistleblowing, for example, include all steps taken to ensure your actions are ethical)
- iii. identify the resources (intellectual, professional, institutional, economic) needed to address the problem in this way
- iv. account for the benefit (to self, colleagues, profession, client/public) of addressing the problem in this way

NOTE: This assignment is due at the end of the semester, late submissions cannot be accommodated. Please plan accordingly.

NOTE: This assignment will be submitted via Turnitin and will be reviewed for originality and unethical AI use. Use of AI assistance for this assignment is prohibited. Evidence of AI use will result in a Student Conduct process, which will include rewriting the essay or participating in an oral assessment.

OPTION 2: FINAL EXAM

The final exam option consists of a timed text, like the graded quizzes, but encompassing the entire semester. This exam will allow you to demonstrate your knowledge of core concepts, principles, and critical judgement in practical examples and cases from the entire course material. There will be approximately 60 multi-option questions for a 60minute exam. This exam will be available for a 72hour period during the final exam week.

Note: this option is due on the date indicated, during exam week. There will be no extensions or repeats permitted. Use of AI assistance for this assignment is prohibited. Evidence of AI use will result in a Student Conduct process, which will include retaking the exam in person.

BONUS POINTS (UP TO 5PTS)

Bonus points can be earned by listening to the series of “visiting speakers” and writing a two-page reflection on the interview. Up to 5 bonus points may be earned in this way. All bonus reports are due as indicated in Canvas.

COURSE POLICIES

LATE ASSIGNMENTS

Late submissions for any assignments will not be accepted. Make-ups for quizzes will also not be accepted. 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! Please plan your semester carefully.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Plagiarism and cheating are serious academic offenses which will not be tolerated in this class. The use of Quizlet, or similar websites is strictly prohibited. Unauthorized use of AI tools is also strictly prohibited (see below). Assignments in which plagiarism or other forms of cheating are found will be graded at 0 (not just an F). Repeated or egregious (>20% of course grade value) violations of the university policy will result in an F in the course. ALL incidents of cheating and plagiarism will be reported both to the Department Chair and to the Student Conduct Office in Student Affairs for possible further administrative sanction. *It is your responsibility to know and comply with the University's Academic Honesty Policy*

ETHICAL USE OF AI

AI is everywhere and can be incredibly helpful at times. However, it can also be an easy shortcut that impeded learning. We are here to learn. In an ethics course, we apply these burgeoning skills to address how we ought to live and work together. Figuring out those “oughts” involves thinking *creatively* – we have to imagine what things would be like if they were not ideal, if the world were different, or if my life or work were different from what it is. It involves thinking *counterfactually* – I know this isn’t the case, but what if it were, what if we didn’t just do things like we always do, but tried something better? Ethics involves thinking *critically* – assessing and evaluating what we do, what resources we have, and what we would need to be and do better. It also involves examining our values and criteria – being honest about them – and reflecting on what decisions we make when we apply our ethical criteria.

Using AI to shortcut your development and refinement of these skills does you a disservice – it impedes your learning rather than supports it. For this reason, I want to be clear about my expectations for your uses of AI tools in this course:

Authorized Uses of AI	Unauthorized Uses of AI
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Grammar or spell check to then make your own corrections.• Tutoring to support your learning (be careful about what is integrated and cite your sources):<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Asking for suggestions on next steps when you get stuck or confused.○ Seeking general information on a topic to aid in your understanding of that topic.○ Seeking help with finding sources.• When specifically instructed to use AI for an assignment.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Asking an AI to answer assignment prompt.• Asking an AI to answer a quiz or exam question.• Asking AI to create a first draft of your own essay or assignment.• Copying AI generated text and passing it off as your own work, whether an essay, paragraph, sentence, or phrase. Even phrases that you borrow from others may require citation.• Asking an AI to summarize a reading.

AI EVALUATION PROCESS

For each assignment for this course, I will follow the below procedure to ensure compliance with course AI policy:

1. Review assignment for completion and quality per the assignment guide/rubric.
2. Check for originality through Turnitin.
3. Compare assignment to known samples of the student’s work.
4. Employ AI detection tools – these are constantly improving and are starting to keep pace with advances in AI.

If the results of this process indicate a student has cheated and/or used AI improperly, then a grade of zero (0) will be issued on the assignment, the student will be notified, and an academic misconduct

report will be prepared for submission. This may include retaking or re-writing the assignment in person or submitted to an in-person or zoom oral assessment of the course content.

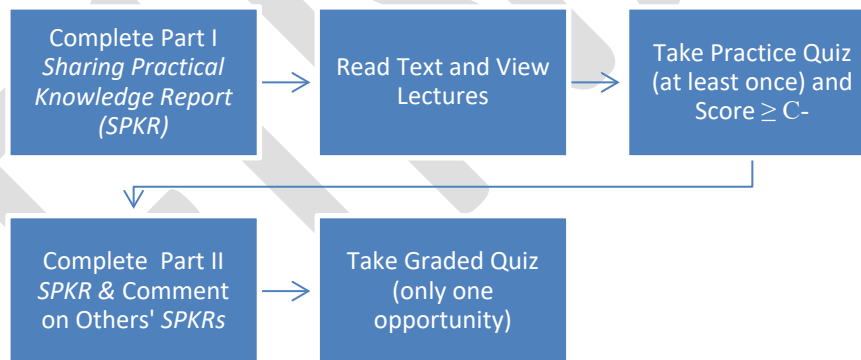
UNIVERSAL ACCESSIBILITY

Sacramento State is committed to ensuring an accessible learning environment where course or instructional content are usable by all students and faculty. If you believe that you require disability-related academic adjustments for this class (including pregnancy-related disabilities), please immediately contact Disability Access Center (DAC) to discuss eligibility. A current accommodation letter from DAC is required before any modifications, above and beyond what is otherwise available for all other students in this class will be provided. Please be advised that disability-related academic adjustments are not retroactive.

Students requiring accommodation should arrange to see me privately after class or during office hours. DAC is located on the first floor of Lassen Hall 1008. Phone is 916-278-6955 and e-mail is sswd@csus.edu. For a complete listing of services and current business hours visit the [Disability Access Center Website](#).

WEEKLY SCHEDULE (15 WEEK SEMESTER)

For each Learning Module, approximately 2-3 weeks each, you will be required to do the following assessments in this sequence:



Learning Modules can be accessed anytime during the course after they have been opened. Quizzes will be available sequentially, with the practice quiz open first, then the graded quiz, both are open until the end of the module. Similarly, postings for Sharing Practical Knowledge Reports will be sequential, with a hard cut-off due date. You cannot post earlier than the week for which it has been assigned, nor can you post late to make up missed submissions.

The following is the structure and timing of assignments for each module, every 2 weeks:

First Monday:

- a) Module opens at 12:01am, remains open.
- b) SPK submission area opens for Part 1 at 12:01am, remains open until 11:59pm on First Wednesday.

First Wednesday:

- a) SPK Part I due, submission area closes at 11:59pm.

First Thursday:

- a) Lectures and readings open at 12:01am remain open.
- b) Practice Quiz opens at 12:01am, remains open until Second Sunday at 11:59pm.
- c) SPK Part II open at 12:01am, remain open until Second Sunday at 11:59pm.

Second Monday:

- a) Graded Quiz opens at noon and is available only to those who scored at least 7/10 on the Practice Quiz; remains open until 11:59pm on Second Sunday.

Second Wednesday:

- a) Completed SPK Part II due at 11:59pm.

Second Sunday:

- a) Completed SKP Part III (commentary on peers') SPK reports are due 11:59pm.
- b) Practice and Graded Quizzes close at 11:59pm.

Please see the Canvas course calendar for due dates and availability of specific assignments.

WEEKLY SCHEDULE

DATE	MODULE & READINGS	OUTCOMES
Jan 26-Fe 8	MODULE 0: Course Orientation, Introduction & Background Review of syllabus, course policies, completion of preliminary activities and assignments, and some background on Philosophy and Ethics.	
Fe 9-22	MODULE 1: Practical Ethics, Professions and Public Service Read: Rowson, Chapter 1 and 2 Zimmerman, "Public Service Ethics" Lynch, "Secularization of Public Administration"	CLO A&B GE: C2 A&B
Fe 23-Mar 8	MODULE 2: Role Morality, Ethics Codes and the Public Trust Read: Andre, "Role Morality as a Complex Instance of Ordinary Morality" Frankel, "Professional Codes" Higgs-Kleyn, "Role of Professional Codes in Regulating Conduct" Barber, "Regulation and the Professions"	CLO D GE: C2 A&B
Mar 9-22	MODULE 3: Professional Values: Seeking the Best Results Read: Rowson, Chapter 3 and 4 Brien, "Professional Ethics and the Culture of Trust."	CLO C GE: C2 D
Mar 23-27	Spring Recess – Campus Closed, No Instruction	
Mar 30-Apr 12	MODULE 4: Professional Values: Treating People Fairly Read: Rowson, Chapter 5 and 6 Boxill, "The Morality of Preferential Hiring."	CLO A&C GE: C2 C
Mar 31	Cesar Chavez Day – Campus Closed, No Instruction	
Apr 13-26	MODULE 5: Professional Values: Respecting Autonomy & Integrity Read: Rowson, Chapter 7 and 8.	CLO A&C GE: C2 A&C
Apr 27-May 10	MODULE 6: In Practice: Ethical Thinking and Practical Problems. Read: Rowson, Chapter 9, 10, 11 and 12.	CLO C&D GE: C2 A&B
May 11-15	Review and Closing – Last opportunity for Office Hours, Bonus Opportunities.	
May 18-21	FINALS WEEK <i>Ethical Practice Plan OR Final Exam</i> <i>DUE 11:59pm on Thursday, May 20.</i> <i>No extensions, no late submissions, no make-ups.</i>	