

Introduction to Ethics (PH 105-60)

WE 02

Chaminade University of Honolulu
Winter Evening Semester,
Instructor: Robert Buss (phone: 528-4067, home)

Jan. 7 to March 20, 2002.
Fridays, 4:45 to 8:55 p.m.
Pearl Harbor, Bldg 679, second floor

"Introduction to Ethics" -- An examination of ethical values in general and the forums in which such discourse finds critical expression. The course will introduce students to the language of moral concepts and their relation to forms of social life and human conduct. It will also examine ethics in the history of ideas, particularly the Western philosophical tradition. What are the intellectual origins of looking at a particular ethical dilemma or problem? How do the conditions of the modern, urban, technological world affect how we consider ethical issues? How do classical philosophical, religious and cultural values affect our ethical judgments? The two most difficult tasks of this class will be to clarify our own thinking about moral issues and to demonstrate an ability to see alternative ways of considering such issues.

Course Objectives -- Upon successful completion of this course, the student will be able to:

1. Gain an overview of moral philosophy or philosophical thinking about morality, moral problems and moral judgments.
2. Distinguish between using reason to lay out ethical arguments and using such non-philosophical methods as opinion, faith, authority and technological solutions.
3. Demonstrate an ability to provide a balanced review of alternative positions on ethical "hard cases."
4. Express through discussion and writing an understanding of contemporary moral dilemmas and issues.
5. Improve his or her own philosophical thinking skills.

Text: -- *Vice and Virtue in Everyday Life: Introductory Readings in Ethics*,
by Christina Sommers & Fred Sommers (Fifth Edition, 2001).
-- There will also be occasional handouts and study aids.

Organization of Course and Basis for Grading

- Each student must complete a research paper on a topic approved by the instructor. These papers will include the following basic parts: an introductory section that includes a discussion of the origins of the problem and key philosophical/ethical issues it raises, at least two sections on opposing positions on the problem (you may find more than two, but try to distinguish two key alternative positions), and a conclusion that summarizes the difficulties in resolving the problem or possible solutions. The final few class periods will include time for brief (5-10 minute) presentations of these reports. This project will count 30% of your final grade. The essay/paper should be at least six pages in length.

Student projects should be on a social issue that has inherent moral or ethical implications. Following are some sample topics: Do we have a moral obligation to help the poor? Do citizens of the so-called "first world" have a moral obligation to help those in the so-called "third world?" Is there such a thing as an "ethic of nature" (environmental ethics)? Do animals have rights? To what extent can society legitimately protect its members from obscenity or pornography (can censorship be justified)? Have we as a society been unfair to women? What is the nature of racial unfairness in America? Is it ethical to conduct research on human cloning? Choose a topic that is broad enough to have several issues and approaches for you to consider and evaluate. You may wish to consider topics suggested by the readings at the end of chapter ten of the text (*Morality and Social Policy*).

- There will be an in-class mid term exam, which will count 30% of your grade.
- There will be five writing assignments, taken from the text and indicated in the following outline of topics and reading assignments. These should be handed in at the following class period from which they are assigned and will count, cumulatively, 30% of your grade. Note: Use the questions following the essay as a guide to your short essay, about 2-3 pages each.
- The final 10% of your grade will come from special assignments and in-class projects. It also includes attendance and active participation in class discussions.

GENERAL OUTLINE OF TOPICS (With Reading Assignments)

<i>Date</i>	<i>Topic</i>	<i>Reading Assignments</i>
Jan. 11	What is a philosophical question or problem? Philosophical investigation and argument A Case Study in Medical Ethics	In class presentation only.
Jan. 18	Good and Evil. Essay: Respond to questions at end of the short story "Billy Budd" (page 55)	Readings from Chapter one.
Jan. 25	Moral Doctrines and Moral Theories. Essay: Respond to questions at end of the short story "Why Not Murder?" (page 143) from the novel <i>Crime and Punishment</i> .	Readings from Chapter two.
Feb. 1	Is It All Relative. Essay: Respond to questions at end of either the "I Have a Dream" speech by Martin Luther King, Jr. (page 263) or <i>The U.N Charter: Universal Declaration of Human Rights</i> (page 268)	Readings from Chapter three.
Feb. 8	Virtue. Essay: Respond to questions at end of the essay "The Origin of the Moral Sense" by Charles Darwin (page 364)	Readings from Chapter four.
Feb. 15	Vice. Review for midterm exam.	Readings from Chapter five.
Feb. 22	Mid-term Examination.	
March 1	Morality and Self-Interest. Essay: Respond to questions at end of the "The Ring of Gyges" by Plato (page 436)	Readings from Chapter six.
March 8	Character, Dignity and Self-Respect.	Readings from Chapter seven.
March 15	Moral Education.	Readings from Chapter eight.

PHILOSOPHY 105: ETHICS
Spring 2002

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COURSE DESCRIPTION/OBJECTIVES:

I have designed this course to be an introduction to some of the major writers and philosophical perspectives in the history of ethics and to explore some of the seminal issues and controversies in the area of applied ethics.

Throughout the semester, students will:

- * be introduced to the seminal philosophers and their teachings in the history of ethics
- * struggle with and evaluate different philosophical perspectives and arguments on a series of ethical issues
- * be engaged in the essential philosophical activities of critical thinking and discussion

REQUIRED TEXTS:

- James Sterba's *Morality in Practice* (6th ed.)
- several articles will be placed on library reserve.
- (at least four bluebooks)

STRUCTURE OF COURSE:

Approximately half of the course will consist of lectures by the instructor; half of our classes will provide opportunities for students to participate in group discussion and respond to class materials.

Since dialogue and discourse are essential in the philosophical process, they will constitute an essential part of our philosophical experience together **in an atmosphere of mutual respect.**

COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND GRADES:

It is expected that students be present on the days that exams are administered and that all assignments be submitted on the dates due. Students are not automatically entitled to make up exams or to other forms of extensions. It is always up to the discretion of the instructor to determine if and when and how makeups or extensions are given and with what grade penalties. **Your grade will be determined as follows:**

- four--five exams (essay format; bluebooks) each of equal weight

Attendance will be taken on a regular basis throughout the semester. Students who accumulate more than three (unexcused) absences will have their course grade lowered significantly (to an extent which is completely up to the discretion of the instructor).

I encourage students to make an appointment to see me during the semester; I do not enjoy teaching a classroom of strangers.