

RE
338/0 Religion, Philosophy, and Social Ethics

WE I '01
Pms

Winter Interim ~ 12/00- 1/01 Chaminade University
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Course Description

The ways that we treat one another, the kinds of decisions we make, how we allocate scarce resources, the manner in which we try to resolve conflicts, how we conduct ourselves in various situations - all of these have something to do with what we believe. Beliefs can be usefully understood from the perspectives of religion and philosophy, both of which will be employed in this course to explore contemporary ethical issues. To aid in this task, we will discuss concepts and theories used to guide individual and social conduct, such as virtue, ethics, morality, integrity, freedom, justice, happiness, and self-knowledge. These will be applied to important ethical and moral problems that are dealt with by us and our society, including specieism, sexism, racism, and issues concerned with medicine, wealth and poverty, and warfare.

Goals

1. To become critically aware of one's "assumptive world" and the ethics and morality that compose it.
2. To gain familiarity with the religious and philosophical approach to social ethics, including basic concepts and vocabulary, literature and resources.
3. To better understand the relationship between ethical decision making, and the social contexts in which these occur.
4. To assess arguments and positions presented in texts, articulate these in the classroom, and identify them in life situations.
5. To offer the opportunity and the skills needed to work out one's own positions and arguments about the issues we cover.

Format

The first three meetings will construct the background and set the tone for the course. These will consist largely of lectures by the instructor. The following seven meetings will be devoted to discussion of the main topics. These "topic days" will be led by students who have chosen to present the readings for that day.

Each student will be responsible for:

1. Two articles in the readings to summarize and present to the class. This presentation should contain a summary of main points, and include questions for discussion.
2. A research report on any topic relevant to this course. The purpose of the project is for students to creatively exchange knowledge between the classroom and real life experience. This will be given as a 10-15 minute (depending on class size) presentation to the class. You need to turn in a one page summary.
3. The completion of a final exam.

Grading

The following evaluation criteria is suggested: final examination (30%), research report (20%), chapter or article summaries (30%), class attendance and participation (20%).

90-100 @ A; 80-90 @ B; 70-79 @ C; 60-69 @ D; 59-0 @ F

The following requirements will be considered in the grading:

- come to class on time and stay for the whole period.
- be courteous and professional in class discussions; i.e. take turns in speaking, allowing others to express their ideas without interruption, communicate with positive, constructive verbal and nonverbal language.
- show respect and an open mind to different ideas and opinions of class members.
- complete assignments on time.

Learning Outcome Assessment

All the student's work will be evaluated for:

- knowledge of the reading material, class lectures, discussion, videos, and resources from research.
- ability to provide relevant examples to support viewpoints.
- ability to apply the knowledge to understand current issues in society.
- clarity and logical presentation.
- demonstration of having an understanding of the subject matter objectively and from opposing viewpoints.
- demonstration of achieving the objectives of this class.
- ability to analyze, critically review, and compare the issues cross-culturally.

Reading

Bowie, G.Lee, Kathleen Higgins, and Meredith Michaels

1992 *Thirteen Questions in Ethics and Social Philosophy*. 2nd ed. New York, NY: Harcourt & Brace.

Schedule

Monday, Dec. 18

Introduction: Definitions and Models

Tuesday, Dec. 19

Philosophical Theories in Ethics

Wednesday, Dec. 20

Religious Ethics and Worldviews

- Homework: Reading (see Dec. 22)

Friday, Dec. 22

Specieism and the Environment

- Reading: Chapter 11

Saturday, Dec. 23

Gender and Sexism

- Reading: Chapter 9

Wednesday, Dec. 27

Race, Racism, and Ethnicity

- Reading: Chapter 8

Thursday, Dec. 28

Poverty and Affluence

- Readings: Chapter 12

Friday, Dec. 29

Ethics of Life and Death (Medical)

- Reading: Chapter 13

Tuesday, Jan. 2

Military Ethics

- Reading: Chapter 10; see the film "Saving Private Ryan"

Thursday, Jan. 4

- Final exam