

Course Outline Introduction to Ethics

Course Description:

In this course, students will learn about a few of the core issues of ethics. Ethics is an area of philosophy which addresses questions such as “How should I live?” and “What is right and wrong?”. The first section of this course will familiarize students with philosophical methodology to better address these and related questions. This section will include learning about reading and writing philosophy, constructing and evaluating arguments, and properly utilizing thought experiments. The second section of this course addresses key issues in ethical theory, such as the nature of morality, the nature of right and wrong, and the limits of morality. The final section of this course will examine selected issues in applied ethics.

Course Texts:

I am aware of the financial impediments posed by acquiring materials for class. To remove this potential barrier to your academic success, all readings are free-to-use and made available electronically.

Course Reading Schedule:

Day 1: Introduction

Day 2: Reading and Writing Philosophy; University Resources

Reading: 1,000 Word Philosophy, “How to Read Philosophy”

Reading: Harvard Writing Center, “A Brief Guide to Writing the Philosophy Paper”

Day 3: Logic, Arguments, and Philosophical Methodology

Reading: Tom Regan, “Introduction to Moral Reasoning”

Day 4: Moral Relativism

Reading: James Rachels, “The Challenges of Cultural Relativism”

Day 5: Moral Realism

Reading: David Enoch, “Why I am an Objectivist About Ethics (And Why You Are, Too)”

Day 6: Divine Command Theory

Reading: Plato, “Euthyphro”

Day 7: Egoism

Reading: James Rachels, “Ethical Egoism”

Day 8: Classical Utilitarianism

Reading: John Stuart Mill, “Utilitarianism”

Day 9: Rule and Act Utilitarianism

Reading: J.J.C. Smart, “Act-Utilitarianism and Rule-Utilitarianism”

Day 10: Utilitarianism and Obligations to Others

Reading: Peter Singer, “Famine, Affluence, and Morality”

Day 11: Critique of Utilitarianism

Reading: Bernard Williams, “Integrity”

Day 12: The Trolley Problem

Reading: Judith Jarvis Thomson, “Killing, Letting Die, and the Trolley Problem”

Day 13: Deontology

Reading: Immanuel Kant, “The Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals”

Day 14: Deontology and Obligations to Others

Reading: Onora O’Neill, “Kantian Approaches to Some Famine Problems”

Day 15: The Limits of Impartial Morality

Reading: Bernard Williams, “Persons, Character, and Morality”

Day 16: The Limits of Impartial Morality

Reading: Susan Wolf, “Moral Saints”

Day 17: Virtue Ethics

Reading: Aristotle, “Nicomachean Ethics”

Day 18: Virtue Ethics

Reading: Rosalind Hursthouse, “Normative Virtue Ethics”

Day 19: Feminist Ethics

Reading: Cheshire Calhoun, “Justice, Care, and Gender Bias”

Day 20: Free Will and Moral Responsibility

Reading: Galen Strawson, “The Impossibility of Moral Responsibility”

Day 21: Luck and Moral Responsibility

Reading: Thomas Nagel, “Moral Luck”

Day 22: Abortion and Rights

Reading: Judith Jarvis Thomson, “A Defense of Abortion”

Day 23: Abortion and the Ethics of Killing

Reading: Don Marquis, “Why Abortion is Immoral”

Day 24: Abortion and Virtue Ethics

Reading: Rosalind Hursthouse, “Virtue Theory and Abortion”

Day 25: Animals and Utilitarianism

Reading: Peter Singer, “All Animals Are Equal”

Day 26: Animals and Rights

Reading: Tom Regan, “The Case for Animal Rights”

Day 27: Animals and Virtue Ethics

Reading: Rosalind Hursthouse, “Applying Virtue Ethics to Our Treatment of Other Animals”

Day 28: Environmental Ethics and Anthropocentrism

Reading: William Baxter, “People or Penguins”

Day 29: Environmental Ethics and Biocentrism

Reading: Paul Taylor, “The Ethics of Respect for Nature”

Day 30: Environmental Ethics and Virtue Ethics

Reading: Thomas Hill, “Ideals of Human Excellence and Preserving Natural Environments”