

Las Positas College  
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**Course Outline for PHIL 2H**  
**HONORS PHILOSOPHY 2: ETHICS**  
**Effective: Fall 2014**

**I. CATALOG DESCRIPTION:**

PHIL 2H — HONORS PHILOSOPHY 2: ETHICS — 3.00 units

This is an honors course for Philosophy 2. This course covers the concepts of morality, values and influential ethical theories. Students taking this course will be required to use philosophical methods to evaluate these theories for themselves and show how these theories can apply to everyday ethical questions. Students in Honors Philosophy 2 course will have assignments in reading, writing, discussion, analysis, and oral presentation at a level of rigor higher than those in Philosophy 2 and consistent with honors program expectations. A student who has successfully completed PHIL 2 cannot enroll in PHIL 2.

3.00 Units Lecture

**Strongly Recommended**

- Eligibility for ENG 1A -

**Grading Methods:**

Letter Grade

**Discipline:**

	<b>MIN</b>
<b>Lecture Hours:</b>	54.00
<b>Total Hours:</b>	54.00

**II. NUMBER OF TIMES COURSE MAY BE TAKEN FOR CREDIT: 1**

**III. PREREQUISITE AND/OR ADVISORY SKILLS:**

**Before entering this course, it is strongly recommended that the student should be able to:**

A. -Eligibility for ENG 1A

**IV. MEASURABLE OBJECTIVES:**

**Upon completion of this course, the student should be able to:**

1. discuss and explain the central theories of ethical philosophy, including Kantianism, Utilitarianism, and Virtue Ethics;
2. evaluate and critique competing ethical theories covered in the course using comparison and contrast as well as skills of philosophical analysis;
3. apply theories discussed in class to moral problems and questions facing humans in modern times;
4. synthesize personal experience, individual research, and course information into a cogent and defensible ethical theory;
5. explain personal ethical positions to others in both written and spoken form;
6. work with others in a group to problem-solve ethical dilemmas.
7. compose philosophical essays on ethical questions using rigorous argumentative technique and incorporating responses to ideas found in contemporary philosophical writings
8. Prepare and lead organized discussion groups on ethical topics
9. Read complex philosophical literature on ethics, and develop a response to that literature using a combination of self-direction and close interaction with the instructor
10. Present original ethical arguments both orally and in writing

**V. CONTENT:**

- A. Definitions and methodology
  1. Definitions of "ethics" and "morality"
  2. Contrasting intrinsic good and instrumental goods
  3. Methods of argument formation and analysis
  4. Normative vs. non-normative discourse
  5. Ground rules for fair and respectful ethical discussion
- B. Advanced methods of ethical analysis for honors students
  1. Reading and comprehending complex ethical arguments
  2. Preparing notes and discussion points on ethics readings
  3. Leading discussion groups
  4. Presenting and reconstructing arguments
  5. Developing targeted responses to specific philosophical arguments

6. Collaborative and self directed development of ethical theory
7. Composing philosophical essays and presentations in ethics
- C. Classical ethical theory
  1. Aristotle and virtue ethics
  2. Classical origins of Western theory
  3. Ethical traditions in world philosophy
- D. Kantian Ethics
  1. The categorical imperative
  2. Ends and means
  3. The primacy of intentions
- E. Consequentialism
  1. Defining Consequentialism
  2. Bentham, Mill and contemporary utilitarianism
  3. Act and Rule-Utilitarianism
- F. Other issues in ethical theory
  1. Ethics and religion: intercultural perspectives in religious ethics
  2. Egoism and altruism: psychological and ethical theories
  3. Determinism and free will: metaphysical, psychological, and religious theories
- G. Applying ethical theory to contemporary ethical questions.
  1. Avoiding fallacious reasoning
  2. Being fair minded
  3. Making logical and rational arguments
  4. Developing an extended argument and responding to objections
- H. At least one topic from the ethical dilemmas of life and death below
  1. Abortion
  2. Suicide
  3. Euthanasia
  4. The death penalty
  5. War
- I. At least one topic from the ethical dilemmas in social organization below
  1. Patriarchy
  2. Racism
  3. Business ethics
  4. Governmental authority
  5. Incarceration
- J. At least one topic from the ethical dilemmas beyond human relations below
  1. Environmental ethics
  2. Animal rights
  3. Self actualization

#### VI. METHODS OF INSTRUCTION:

- A. Advanced student-led research, discussion and analysis projects
- B. Individual interaction between instructor and students on philosophical projects
- C. **Lecture** -
- D. **Discussion** -
- E. Final research and analysis project
- F. Multi-media presentations & analysis
- G. Course text readings
- H. Brief written assignments
- I. **Student Presentations** -

#### VII. TYPICAL ASSIGNMENTS:

##### A. Group discussion

1. Read the first section of Kant's *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals* and diagram the arguments you find there. Come to class prepared to present and discuss the arguments you diagrammed.
2. Review the notes from Bentham's *Principles of Morals and Legislation*. Formulate class discussion questions with the other honors students in this class, and come to class next time prepared to lead the class in a discussion of the central ideas of the text.

##### B. Student presentations

1. The importance of person relativity as a challenge to Bentham's view
2. Why Kant had so much trouble showing that animal cruelty is wrong

##### C. Multi-media presentations & analysis

1. View excerpts from David Sutherland's documentary *Country Boys*, followed by an in-class discussion of the relevance of rural poverty to Bentham's utilitarian theory.
2. Watch excerpts from Steven Spielberg's *Schindler's List*, and use these scenes as the basis for a discussion on Kant's categorical imperative and its implications for truth telling.

##### E. Course text readings

1. Read selected excerpts from Bentham's *Principles of Morals and Legislation*, and be prepared to discuss his method for determining the best act.
2. Read selected excerpts from Kant's *Groundwork of Metaphysics of Morals*, and be prepared to discuss the difference between perfect and imperfect duties.

##### F. Written assignments

1. Evaluate Plato's arguments about religious ethics in the *Euthyphro*. Identify the argumentative structure behind three of Plato's arguments, and respond to specific parts of the argument showing why you find them to be either successful or unsuccessful.

#### G. Final research and analysis project

1. Working closely with the instructor, identify a central contemporary ethical text that offers a unique argument about one of the central questions in this class. After researching, contextualize this argument both in terms of the historical positions we have covered in this class, and in terms of at least 2 other contemporary ethical thinkers. Finally, you will need to develop a response to the philosophical issues of this contemporary thinker that goes beyond both the historical ideas and the contemporary responses offered by other philosophers. You may be in a position to offer a unique example, extension, or modification, or refutation that has not been offered before. You will work closely with the instructor as you develop each part of your essay as discussed above. Your final project will be a 12 page paper as well as an oral presentation.

#### VIII. EVALUATION:

##### A. **Methods**

###### 1. Other:

###### a. Methods

1. Both group discussions and multi-media presentation analyses include written group accounts and are evaluated according to creativity, critical insight, formation of cogent arguments, and depth of understanding.
2. Student presentations and final projects are evaluated according to the quality of research, level of understanding of the philosophical content, and the ability to apply that material to make effective arguments which synthesize abstract philosophical ideas with applied social concerns.
3. Brief written assignments are evaluated according to the extent to which they reflect an understanding of the material, an ability to apply that material effectively to personal experience, and an ability to critically evaluate one's own ideas as well as those of the philosophers we have studied.
4. Essay and short-answer tests may be used throughout the term to demonstrate knowledge of the key ideas, thinkers, and philosophical methods presented in the course.

##### B. **Frequency**

###### 1. Frequency

- a. Group discussions will occur weekly throughout the course.
- b. Student presentations will be given 1-4 times throughout the course.
- c. Multi-media presentations and analyses will occur on average 3-6 times per course.
- d. Brief written assignments will occur on average every other week.
- e. The final research and analysis project will be submitted at the end of the term.
- f. Essay and short answer tests will be given 1-3 times throughout the course.

#### IX. TYPICAL TEXTS:

1. Confucius. (2008). *Analects*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
2. Kant, Immanuel. (2003). *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
3. Mill, John Stuart (2002). *Utilitarianism* (2nd ed.). Indianapolis: Hackett.
4. Marino, Gordon (2010). *Ethics: The Essential Writings*. New York, NY: Modern Library.
5. Waller, Bruce (2012). *Consider Ethics: Theory, Readings and Contemporary Issues* (3rd ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.
6. Aristotle (2012). *Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

#### X. OTHER MATERIALS REQUIRED OF STUDENTS: