

Las Positas College
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Course Outline for PHIL 2

ETHICS

Effective: Fall 2013

I. CATALOG DESCRIPTION:

PHIL 2 — ETHICS — 3.00 units

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.

3.00 Units Lecture

Strongly Recommended

- Eligibility for ENG 1A -

Grading Methods:

Letter Grade

Discipline:

	MIN
Lecture Hours:	54.00
Total Hours:	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 ethical theories covered in the course using skills of philosophical analysis;
3. apply theories discussed in class to 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.

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. Classical ethical theory
 1. Aristotle and virtue ethics
 2. Classical origins of Western theory
 3. Ethical traditions in world philosophy
- C. Kantian Ethics
 1. The categorical imperative
 2. Ends and means
 3. The primacy of intentions
- D. Consequentialism
 1. Defining Consequentialism
 2. Bentham, Mill and contemporary utilitarianism
 3. Act and Rule-Utilitarianism
- E. 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

- F. 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
- G. 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
- H. At least one topic from the ethical dilemmas in social organization below
 - 1. Patriarchy
 - 2. Racism
 - 3. Business ethics
 - 4. Governmental authority
 - 5. Incarceration
- I. 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. **Student Presentations** -
- B. Multi-media presentations & analysis
- C. Course text readings
- D. Brief written assignments
- E. Final research and analysis project
- F. **Lecture** -
- G. **Discussion** -

VII. TYPICAL ASSIGNMENTS:

A. Lecture

- 1. "Jeremy Bentham's utilitarian calculus as developed in his Principles of Morals and Legislation"
- 2. "Kant's theory of the categorical imperative as found in his Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals"

B. Group discussion

- 1. If Americans distributed their resources according to Bentham's calculus, what would our country look like? Does this potential result of applying his theory support or count against his the theories validity?
- 2. Take a moral dilemma about which Americans struggle, and show how someone might answer that dilemma using Kant's categorical imperative.

C. 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

D. 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. Brief written assignments

- 1. Consider an ethical dilemma in your own life, and discuss how Bentham would have solved that dilemma. Using your example as a starting point, evaluate the philosophical validity of Bentham's theory.
- 2. Discuss an instance where you or another have been treated in Kant's language, "merely as a means and not also as an ends." Use this experience as a starting point for evaluating Kant's view on means, ends, and the categorical imperative.

G. Final research and analysis project

- 1. Choose an ethical dilemma that is of special interest to you personally. Show how three of the ethical theories discussed in class would attempt to solve that moral dilemma. Abstract from the specific case that you have discussed and give general reasons for accepting or rejecting each of these ethical views.

VIII. EVALUATION:

- A. **Methods**
- 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: