

Las Positas College  
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## Course Outline for PHIL 2

### INTRO TO PHILOSOPHY: ETHICS

Effective: Fall 2008

#### I. CATALOG DESCRIPTION:

PHIL 2 — INTRO TO PHILOSOPHY: ETHICS — 3.00 units

Theory of good and evil, right and wrong, individual and social action, and living the good life. An overview of ethical theory with emphasis placed on using theory to analyze contemporary moral issues.

3.00 Units Lecture

#### **Strongly Recommended**

ENG 105 - Reading, Reasoning and Writing  
with a minimum grade of C  
or

ENG 104 - Integrated Reading and Writing II  
with a minimum grade of C  
or

ESL 25 - Advanced Reading and Composition II  
with a minimum grade of C  
or

#### **Grading Methods:**

Letter Grade

#### **Discipline:**

	<b>MIN</b>
<b>Lecture Hours:</b>	54.00
<b>No Unit Value Lab</b>	18.00
<b>Total Hours:</b>	72.00

#### 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. ENG105

1. use strategies to assess a text's difficulty, purpose, and main idea prior to the act of reading
2. employ strategies that enable a critical evaluation of a text
3. respond critically to a text through class discussions and writing
4. use concepts of paragraph and essay structure and development to analyze his/her own and others' essays
5. write effective summaries of texts that avoid wording and sentence structure of the original
6. respond to texts drawing on personal experience and other texts
7. organize coherent essays around a central idea or a position
8. apply structural elements in writing that are appropriate to the audience and purpose
9. provide appropriate and accurate evidence to support positions and conclusions
10. demonstrate academic integrity and responsibility, particularly when integrating the exact language and ideas of an outside text into one's own writing
11. utilize effective grammar recall to check sentences for correct grammar and mechanics
12. proofread his/her own and others' prose

##### B. ENG104

##### C. ESL25

#### IV. MEASURABLE OBJECTIVES:

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

1. discuss the central theories of ethical philosophy, including Kantianism, Utilitarianism, and Virtue Ethics;
2. evaluate and critique ethical theories covered in the course using cogent 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. actively 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. Ground rules for fair and respectful ethical discussion
- B. Classical ethical theory
  1. Classical origins of Western theory
  2. Ethical traditions in world philosophy
- C. Ethics and religion
  1. Intercultural perspectives in religious ethics
  2. Western monotheism and ethical foundations
  3. Non-theistic ethical theory
- D. Ethics of self-interest
  1. Psychological egoism
  2. Ethical egoism
  3. Psychological altruism
  4. Ethical altruism
- E. Determinism
  1. The concept of freedom
  2. Religious arguments for determinism
  3. Psychological arguments for determinism
  4. Scientific arguments for determinism
- F. Kantian Deontological Ethics
  1. The categorical imperative
  2. Ends and means
  3. The primacy of intentions
- G. Consequentialism
  1. Defining Consequentialism
  2. Act-utilitarianism
  3. Rule-utilitarianism
- H. Ethics and political theory
  1. Classical political philosophy
  2. Ethics and rights
  3. Theories of justice
- I. Ethical dilemmas of life and death
  1. Abortion
  2. Suicide
  3. Euthanasia
  4. The death penalty
  5. War
- J. Ethical dilemmas in social organization
  1. Patriarchy
  2. Racism
  3. Business ethics
  4. Governmental authority
  5. Incarceration
- K. Ethical dilemmas beyond human relations
  1. Environmental ethics
  2. Animal rights
  3. Self actualization

## VI. METHODS OF INSTRUCTION:

- A. **Lecture** -
- B. **Discussion** -
- C. **Student Presentations** -
- D. Final research and analysis project
- E. Course text readings
- F. Brief written assignments
- G. Multi-media presentations & analysis

## 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 *Analects.*, Oxford University Press, 2008.
- 2. Gensler, Harry *Ethics: Contemporary Readings.* ., Routledge, 2004.
- 3. Kant, Immanuel. *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals.* ., Oxford University Press., 2012.
- 4. Mill, John Stuart *Utilitarianism.* 2nd ed., Hackett, 2002.
- 5. Solomon, Robert C., *Consider Ethics: Theory, Readings, and Contemporary Issues.* . 2nd ed., Pearson Longman, 2007.

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