

**College of San Mateo**  
**Official Course Outline**

1. **COURSE ID:** PHIL 244    **TITLE:** Introduction to Ethics: Contemporary Social and Moral Issues  
**C-ID:** PHIL 120

**Units:** 3.0 units    **Hours/Semester:** 48.0-54.0 Lecture hours; and 96.0-108.0 Homework hours

**Method of Grading:** Grade Option (Letter Grade or Pass/No Pass)

**Recommended Preparation:**

Eligibility for ENGL 100 or ENGL 105.

2. **COURSE DESIGNATION:**

**Degree Credit**

**Transfer credit:** CSU; UC

**AA/AS Degree Requirements:**

CSM - GENERAL EDUCATION REQUIREMENTS: E5c. Humanities

**CSU GE:**

CSU GE Area C: ARTS AND HUMANITIES: C2 - Humanities (Literature, Philosophy, Languages Other than English)

**IGETC:**

IGETC Area 3: ARTS AND HUMANITIES: B: Humanities

3. **COURSE DESCRIPTIONS:**

**Catalog Description:**

This course examines the concept of morality and values, representative ethical theories and includes their applications to contemporary social and moral issues.

4. **STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOME(S) (SLO'S):**

Upon successful completion of this course, a student will meet the following outcomes:

1. Demonstrate knowledge of major ethical theories, including Kantianism and Utilitarianism.
2. Apply knowledge of major ethical theories to contemporary social and moral issues.
3. Compare and contrast competing ethical theories and subject them to critical analysis.

5. **SPECIFIC INSTRUCTIONAL OBJECTIVES:**

Upon successful completion of this course, a student will be able to:

1. Demonstrate knowledge of major ethical theories, including Kantianism and Utilitarianism.
2. Apply knowledge of major ethical theories to contemporary social and moral issues.
3. Compare and contrast competing ethical theories and subject them to critical analysis.

6. **COURSE CONTENT:**

**Lecture Content:**

I. Introduction to Ethical Theory

(Instructors may include different combinations of the following.)

A. Terminology: What is Ethics? What is Morality?

B. Virtue-Based Ethics

1. Plato's philosophy
2. Aristotle's philosophy
  - a. Function of man/human nature
  - b. How virtue is acquired
3. Role of tradition & exemplars

C. Deontology

1. Duty and Rationality
2. Kant's Ethical Philosophy

D. Consequentialism

1. Utilitarianism
2. J.S. Mill's version of utilitarianism

- 3. Objections to Utilitarianism
- 4. Consequentialism & Deontology contrasted
- E. Rights-based Ethics & Theories of Justice
  - 1. Universal Human Rights (can include issues of moral isolationism)
  - 2. Human Rights, Civil Rights, Legal Rights contrasted
  - 3. Natural Rights & Natural Law: Social Contract Theory
  - 4. Rawls' Contractarian Theory: Justice as Fairness
- F. Anthropological Views of Human Ethics
  - 1. Chimpanzee Social Justice
  - 2. Universal Incest Avoidance
  - 3. Reciprocal Altruism & evolution
- G. Criticisms of Western Ethical Theory
  - 1. Hume's Is/Ought Dichotomy; the problem of Relativism
  - 2. Feminist Ethics; critique of impersonal rational moral agency
  - 3. Existence of Evil, Matters of Faith

## II. Applied Ethics: Contemporary Issues

(Instructors may include different combinations of the following.)

- A. Economic Justice
  - 1. Welfare and entitlement
  - 2. Affirmative action
  - 3. Global poverty/starvation, the obligation to assist, overpopulation
- B. Rights and Liberties
  - 1. Paternalism and censorship (can include questions of pornography)
  - 2. Religious freedom and freedom of education
  - 3. Freedoms of speech and press  
(can include questions of racist speech, neo-Nazi marches, flag burning)
  - 4. Civil disobedience
  - 5. Privacy
  - 6. Abortion
  - 7. Gay Rights, Sexism, & other issues of discrimination
- C. Business Ethics
  - 1. AIDS, drug, genetic testing
  - 2. Whistleblowing
  - 3. Environmental responsibility vs. corporate profit
  - 4. Sexism, racism, discrimination & the glass ceiling
  - 5. WTO, GATT, and problems with free trade
- D. Medical Ethics
  - 1. Euthanasia
  - 2. Genetic Technology; Ethical implications of Human Genome Project
  - 3. Abortion revisited: medical perspectives
  - 4. Surrogate Motherhood
  - 5. Animal Experimentation
- E. Capital punishment
  - 1. Arguments of deterrence
  - 2. Arguments of justice
  - 3. Theoretical v. Practical Arguments
- F. Animal rights
  - 1. Animals as food
  - 2. Animals for sport and entertainment.
  - 3. Animals as human companions
- G. Environmental Ethics
  - 1. Gaia theory
  - 2. Anthropocentric perspective
  - 3. Eco-Feminism
  - 4. Deep Ecology

## 7. REPRESENTATIVE METHODS OF INSTRUCTION:

Typical methods of instruction may include:

- A. Lecture
- B. Discussion
- C. Guest Speakers
- D. Observation and Demonstration
- E. Other (Specify):
  1. Lecture to present a) principles of major ethical theories (can include historical/political context in which the theories developed) b) comparisons between major ethical theories c) objections to major ethical theories d) organization of ethical theories into a cohesive framework e.) fallacies of reasoning
  2. Teacher modeling to demonstrate the a) analysis of ethical reasoning on both sides of a contemporary moral controversy b) generation of arguments supporting a position on a contemporary controversy c) examination of weaknesses or assumptions underlying a given ethical position d) question-answer format to be used in debates of contemporary moral issues.
  3. Small group discussion of assigned readings, lecture material, and teacher-generated questions to have students a) distinguish the essential characteristics of ethical theory, and to compare ethical theories b) apply ethical theory to contemporary moral issues to establish implications for conduct c) analyze contemporary moral arguments to unveil theoretical principles, weaknesses of reason, hidden assumptions, and resulting problems d) organize theoretical ethical principles in the development of a unified theory e) take a personal stand on contemporary social and moral issues and present a reasoned argument in support of that position.
  4. Full class discussion to serve as follow-up to small group discussions or as brainstorming sessions in which students contribute to analysis of moral concepts or principles, synthesis of principles into a unified framework, analysis of moral arguments, comparison of ethical positions.
  5. Full class debate/question-answer sessions on contemporary moral controversies; student contribution can be mandatory unlike open discussion where participation can be voluntary; students generate both questions and answers and direct both to each other as well as to teacher.
  6. Video and audio taped presentations to offer examples of diverse viewpoints surrounding contemporary social and moral issues.
  7. Student-led discussion groups based on assigned readings to have students consider the topics before class and come to class prepared to defend their interpretations.
  8. Individual student presentations of additional material not assigned to the whole class.
  9. Out of class exams or term papers designed to have students research and create complex arguments incorporating course material.

## 8. REPRESENTATIVE ASSIGNMENTS

Representative assignments in this course may include, but are not limited to the following:

### **Writing Assignments:**

**Exams:** Study questions for all three exams will be given to you prior to the exam. The exam will be taken from these questions. Responses to each study question are intended to be between 2-3 pages in a Blue Book. Students are encouraged to work together in studying for the exams. The final will be comprehensive.

**Class Participation:** You are expected to participate in the classroom discussions. You are strongly encouraged to share your perspective with the rest of the class and to be respectful of other's points of view. Like all your classes, you may miss no more than two classes.

**In-Class assignments and Reading Quizzes:** To motivate you to do your reading on time, I will from time to time give a reading quiz. Quizzes will cover the previous nights assigned reading and will be very straight forward plot summary sorts of questions. If you did the reading, you should be fine. There are no make-ups but everyone starts out with one reading quiz credit.

**Papers:** You will be asked to write a paper explaining your position on an ethical issue. To write this paper you will need to meet with your professor to get approval for each of the following steps 1) Identify the issue you are interested in exploring 2) Build a bibliography of relevant and contemporary research on this issue. 3) Develop your own position on this issue based on an ethical theory you learned in class 4) Turn in a paper (and/or do a presentation) do demonstrate what you learned

### **Reading Assignments:**

Students will read assigned chapters from the text and articles/books as assigned.

## 9. REPRESENTATIVE METHODS OF EVALUATION

Representative methods of evaluation may include:

- A. 1. Post-lecture question-answer sessions evaluated for student comprehension of material presented. 2. Student responses, participation, and contribution in small group and full class discussion and full class debate evaluated for comprehension of theoretical material, application of theory to moral decision-making and conduct, and development of moral reasoning in evaluation of moral controversies. 3. Evaluation of in-class writing assignments for comprehension of material, application of theory to the content of the assigned questions, development of moral reasoning in defense of positions taken, and breadth of

examination of contemporary moral issues. 4. Assessment of student-led discussions evaluated for breadth and relevance of prepared discussion questions. 5. Individual student presentations evaluated for completeness of summary and analysis of the reading and depth of evaluation of the reading. 6. Evaluation of major essays evaluated for ... (see Method of Evaluation #4 above). 7. Evaluation of short response essays or journal entries for determination of the seriousness and depth of consideration of the chosen writing topic. 8. Short-answer and essay examinations to evaluate (see Method of Evaluation #4 above).

**10. REPRESENTATIVE TEXT(S):**

Possible textbooks include:

- A. John Arthur. *Morality and Moral Controversies*, 9th ed. Prentice Hall , 2013
- B. Daniel Bonevac. *Today's Moral Issues*, 5th ed. McGraw Hill , 2006
- C. Francis J. Beckwith. *Do the Right Thing*, ed. Jones and Bartlett, 1996
- D. Lawrence M. Hinman. *Contemporary Moral Issues: Diversity and Consensus*, 4th ed. Prentice Hall, 2012
- E. Liszka . *Moral Competence: An Integrated Approach to the Study of Ethics*, ed. I Prentice Hall, 2002
- F. Thiroux & Krasemann . *Ethics: Theory and Practice*, 11th ed. I Prentice Hall, 2011
- G. Thiroux. *Ethics: Theory and Practice*, 8th ed. I Prentice Hall, 2004
- H. James White. *Contemporary Moral Problems*, 10th ed. West Publishing, 2011
- I. Christina Sommers /Fred Sommers. *Vice and Virtue in Everyday Life*, ed. Harcourt Brace, 1997
- J. James Rachels, Stuart Rachels . *The Elements of Moral Philosophy*, 7th ed. McGraw Hill , 2012

**Origination Date:** August 2017

**Curriculum Committee Approval Date:** September 2017

**Effective Term:** Fall 2018

**Course Originator:** Jeremy Ball