

Syllabus

Code: PHIL 227

Title: Introduction to Ethics

Institute: Business and Social Science

Department: Philosophy

Course Description: Students will become familiar with many approaches to deciding what is “right” and “wrong” in human behavior. The course begins with a look at several ethical theories, each intended to provide a framework for moral decision-making. The second part of the course involves discussion of many controversial issues, such as the taking of human life, sexual behavior, abortion, business, medical practice, etc. (Certain sections of the course will be designated to focus on questions within one particular area, e.g., Business Ethics, Nursing Ethics, Environmental Ethics. See Master Schedule for designated topics.)

Prerequisites: READ 092, READ 095 or passing score in reading on Accuplacer Test

Corequisites:

Prerequisites or Corequisites:

Credits: 3

Lecture Hours: 3

Lab/Studio Hours:

Required Textbook/Materials:

Ethics: Theory and Contemporary Issues, Barbara MacKinnon & Andrew Fiala (Belmont, CA: Cengage/Wadsworth Publishing Company, 2001), 10th ed.

N.B. For students taking the Distance Education (online), Honors, Environmental Ethics, Health Care Ethics or Business Ethics section, see the course addenda for that section, obtainable from the Philosophy Department.

Additional Time Requirements:

For information on Brookdale’s policy on credit hour requirements and outside class student work refer to [Academic Credit Hour Policy](#).

See course/instructor sections addendum.

Course Learning Outcomes:

Upon successful completion of this course, as demonstrated through the writing of essay test questions, journals and a summary/analysis report on primary source readings, the student will be able to:

- explain the moral theories of the major moral philosophers
- critically analyze the major moral theories
- identify and evaluate several moral issues
- summarize and critically analyze opposing views on a moral issue
- develop and defend their own opinion on the problems of moral philosophy

How should people live? How should they act? This is what an ethics course is all about. These are broad questions, and not every aspect of them can be studied by ethicists. What they are chiefly concerned with is the ways in which people make decisions, why they act as they do, and what norms or guidelines ought to influence their choices. The study of ethics deals with human decision-making. To do this effectively, we cannot work in a vacuum. So we must first become aware of a variety of personal and social problems

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which call for reasoned, human decisions. Only in this context can we suggest what choices ought to be made.

During our term we will look at a number of personal and social issues and see the controversies that surround them. What is right or wrong? What is good or evil? What is acceptable or unacceptable behavior? In some cases we may each reach satisfying answers. In many cases we will simply learn to evaluate the reasons on both sides of the controversy. In all cases we will attempt to clarify our thinking and make up our own minds. In short, we are setting out to become ethicists. We've all made moral choices in the past, and to that extent we have already been ethicists in a way. However, now we are challenging ourselves to learn to make those decisions in a more logically consistent and systematic manner.

Grading Standard:

N.B. For students taking the Distance Education, Honors, Environmental Ethics, Health Care Ethics or Business Ethics section, see the course addenda for that section.

- 1) Students will take several in-class tests, the exact number and style at the discretion of the instructor.
- 2) Students will submit other assignments, e.g., discussion posts, journal entries in which they express their own opinions on selected topics covered in the course. Students should specifically comment on the readings, lectures, class discussions, and any other experience they can relate to the topic, such as movies/TV programs, other written materials, conversations, etc. The exact number, length and style will be determined by the instructor. Completion of the journals is required but grades will not be assigned.
- 3) Students must write a critical paper. The grade for this critical paper will count as equal to one test grade.

Critical Paper Assignment:

Students are required to read primary source articles on ethical issues under the direction of the instructor. A summary of each article, identification of the ethical theories implied by the author, and an evaluation of it are to be submitted to the instructor. Student should consult the instructor to learn how to obtain the articles.

The paper should be approximately 6 pages in length, typed and double-spaced (if the articles are on two different topics, the paper would be two 3 page papers). Student should use the following format:

Paragraph 1--State the title and author of the article. State the main conclusion of the author (their thesis), and indicate whether you are going to agree or disagree with the author's conclusions.

Paragraphs 2, 3, 4--Present the main arguments the author gives for his/her conclusion. Summarize/explain these reasons in your own words. Identify factual evidence and theoretical assumptions in the articles. If you support your summary with sentences from the article, you must properly introduce them (e.g., "according to Aristotle...") and set off any exact words in quotation marks.

Paragraph 5, 6--Present your evaluation/analysis of the article. State whether you agree or disagree with the author and give your supporting reasons (your thoughts on their thoughts). Did the author present good evidence? Did he/she overlook evidence that would seriously criticize their thesis? Defend your position by giving good reasons.

Paragraph 7—Present your view on the ethical issue with justifying reasons. Suggest challenges that might be offered against your position.

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The above procedure must be followed for each of the articles either separately or in a combined fashion.

The grading standard for this course will be as follows:

100% to 93% = A

92% to 90 = A-

89% to 87% = B+

86% to 83% = B

82% to 80 = B-

79% to 77% = C+

76% to 70% = C

69% to 60% = D

below 60% = F

Course Content:

N.B. For students taking the Honors, Environmental Ethics, Health Care Ethics or Business Ethics section, see the course addenda for that section.

Part One: Ethical Theory

Chapter 1: Ethics and Ethical Reasoning

1. Explain what Ethics, as a branch of philosophy, is concerned with.
2. Distinguish between normative ethics and metaethics.
3. Distinguish between a descriptive judgment and an evaluative, or normative judgment.
4. Explain how one might argue that moral judgments override other normative judgments.
5. Explain the Naturalistic Fallacy, using an example.
6. Summarize the positions of Intuitionism, Emotivism, Subjectivism and Objectivism.
7. Discuss the importance of giving reasons when making an ethical evaluation.
8. Explain how analogy is often used in ethical reasoning.
9. Explain how ethical reasoning involves both factual and conceptual issues, using an example.
10. Explain the relationship between an ethical theory and an ethical judgment, and discuss the various ways in which one can move between the two.
11. Discuss the following theoretical approaches to doing ethics: consequentialist (teleological), nonconsequentialist (deontological), naturalistic, and feminist.
12. Discuss the question of whether ethics can be taught.

Chapter 2: Religion and Global Ethics

1. Discuss the relationship between ethics and religion, including an explanation and critique of the Divine Command Theory.
2. Discuss pluralism and approaches to the problem of diversity.
3. Discuss secular ethics and global issues, including criticisms such as the paradox of toleration.

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Chapter 3: Ethical Relativism

1. Explain the difference between descriptive and normative (ethical) relativism.
2. Explain the two different forms of ethical relativism: individual ethical relativism and cultural ethical relativism.
3. State the three main reasons supporting ethical relativism and present reasons against each.
4. Discuss the relationship between relativism and tolerance.
5. Explain the positions of moral realism and moral pluralism.
6. Explain the difference between objectivism and absolutism.
7. Formulate your own opinion about the theories proposed in this chapter.

Chapter 4: Egoism, Altruism, and the Social Contract

1. Explain the position of psychological egoism. Distinguish between acting selfishly and acting in our own interest. Distinguish between always acting in one's own best interest and always being motivated by self-interest.
2. Distinguish between psychological and ethical egoism.
3. Discuss the meaning of altruism.
4. Explain the difference between individual ethical egoism and universal ethical egoism.
5. Summarize Ayn Rand's version of ethical egoism.
6. Evaluate the position that ethical egoism is not compatible with "the moral point of view."
7. Formulate your own opinion about the theories proposed in this chapter.

Chapter 5: Utilitarianism

1. Explain the basic moral principle of classical utilitarianism.
2. List Bentham's criteria for calculating the greatest amount of happiness.
3. Explain Mill's distinction between quality and quantity of pleasure.
4. Analyze Utilitarianism with regard to the Trolley Problem.
5. List and discuss the major objections to utilitarianism.
6. Explain the difference between act and rule utilitarianism.
7. Formulate your own opinion about the merits of utilitarianism.

Chapter 6: Deontological Ethics

1. Discuss what, for Kant, gives an act moral worth.
2. Distinguish between a hypothetical imperative and a categorical imperative.
3. Explain the first formulation of the categorical imperative, including the terms maxim and universal laws.
4. Explain the second formulation of the categorical imperative.
5. Explain Kant's distinction between perfect and imperfect duties.
6. Discuss the strengths of Kant's theory, and present objections that can be made against it.
7. Discuss the contemporary versions of Kantian moral philosophy as found in the theories of W.D. Ross and John Rawls.
8. Formulate your own opinion about the merits of Kantian moral theory.

Chapter 7: Natural Law and Human Rights

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1. Give a definition of natural law theory.
2. Discuss Aristotle's notion of human nature and the human good.
3. Discuss Thomas Aquinas' contribution to natural law theory.
4. Evaluate natural law theory.
5. Describe the basis of rights according to natural rights theorists.
6. Evaluate natural rights theory.
7. Formulate your own opinion on these theories.

Chapter 8: Virtue Ethics

1. Discuss Aristotle's conception of the good and how it is related to human nature.
2. Explain Aristotle's theory of virtue, including his distinction between intellectual and moral virtues, and his idea of virtue as a mean between extremes.
3. Discuss the contemporary philosopher Philippa Foot's contribution to virtue ethics.
4. Present the strengths and weaknesses of virtue ethics.
5. Formulate your own opinion on virtue ethics.

Chapter 9: Feminist Thought and the Ethics of Care

1. Summarize the findings of Carol Gilligan on male and female moral thinking.
2. Distinguish between the feminine ethical perspective and the masculine ethical perspective, and give several examples.
3. Summarize and analyze the three distinct types of explanations for a possible difference between male and female morality.
4. Evaluate the factual claim that there is a feminine and masculine moral perspective with two different, paralleling types of virtues.
5. Formulate your own opinion on feminist thought and the ethics of care.

Part Two: Ethical Issues

Chapter 10: Health Care Ethics

1. Explain the basic topics and methods for studying bioethics.
2. Discuss why "health" is a philosophically complex idea.
3. Explain how basic principles of bioethics show up in codes and institutions.
4. Apply the concepts of autonomy, beneficence, non-maleficence, and justice to particular health care issues.

Chapter 11: Abortion and Euthanasia

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Abortion:

1. Describe the biological stages of fetal development as they relate to the question of developing personhood.
2. List and describe the common abortion procedures.
3. Distinguish between the legal and moral aspects of abortion.
4. Describe the essence and importance of Roe vs. Wade.
5. Present arguments for abortion that do not depend on the fetal-personhood issue and evaluate these arguments.
6. Discuss Judith Jarvis Thomson's position on the morality of abortion.
7. Discuss in detail the two methods one might employ in arguing a fetus is a person with moral status: the method that focuses on fetal development and the method that focuses on the meaning of humanness.
8. Formulate your own opinion about the morality of abortion.

Euthanasia:

1. State the difference between whole brain death and persistent vegetative state.
2. Differentiate between active and passive euthanasia.
3. Explain physician-assisted suicide.
4. Discuss the pain medication that causes death action, and how the principle of double effect is used in its justification.
5. Explain the difference between ordinary and extraordinary measures of life support.
6. Distinguish between voluntary and nonvoluntary euthanasia.
7. Explain the six types of euthanasia.
8. Distinguish between the legal and moral issues concerning euthanasia.
9. Discuss the moral significance of voluntariness using both consequentialist and nonconsequentialist considerations.
10. Discuss the morality of active versus passive euthanasia using both consequentialist and nonconsequentialist considerations.
11. Formulate your own opinion about the morality of euthanasia.

Chapter 12: Biotechnology and Bioengineering

1. Define biotechnology and bioengineering.
2. Explain the ethical issues arising out of athletic and cognitive enhancement.
3. Explain the difference between reproductive and therapeutic cloning and identify ethical issues they raise and possible responses.
4. Define genetic engineering.
5. Discuss ethical issues involving using human beings in scientific research.
6. Discuss several ethical issues that arise with the possibility of gene therapy.
7. Present ethical issues involving genetically modified plants and animals.
8. Explain genetic screening and discuss how this raises ethical issues involving privacy and conflicts of interest.
9. Formulate your own opinion on these issues.

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Chapter 13: Equality and Discrimination

1. Define racism, prejudice, institutional racism and implicit bias.
2. Identify other forms of discrimination, including sexism.
3. State reasons why racism and sexism are wrong.
4. Summarize the principle of equality and identify challenges to it.
5. Define affirmative action and preferential treatment, identifying various types.
6. Present arguments for and against preferential treatment, using consequentialist and nonconsequentialist reasons.
7. Formulate your own opinion on the merits of affirmative action/preferential treatment.

Chapter 14: Economic Justice

1. Discuss the concept of social justice and its compatibility with liberty.
2. Summarize the differences between a process view of distributive justice and an end state view.
3. Explain and evaluate the position of radical egalitarianism.
4. Discuss the goals of equal opportunity.
5. Explain, compare and evaluate the following theories: libertarianism, capitalism, socialism, and modern liberalism and communitarianism.
6. Present the main features of John Rawls's theory of justice. Identify strengths and weaknesses.
7. Present the main features of Robert Nozick's Entitlement theory. Identify strengths and weaknesses.
8. Formulate your own opinion on economic justice.

Chapter 15: Global Justice and Globalization

1. State possible reasons for the growing gap between rich and poor nations.
2. Discuss the question of the relative importance of political and civil rights and economic development.
3. Discuss the question of whether richer nations have an obligation to help poorer nations in terms of the following principles: self-interest, justice, rights, and utilitarianism.
4. Explain what is meant by globalization and global justice.
5. Evaluate globalization.
6. Formulate your own position on these issues.

Chapter 16: Sexual Morality

1. Distinguish between conceptual and factual matters regarding sexual morality.
2. Discuss the consequentialist or utilitarian approach to sexual morality.
3. Discuss the nonconsequentialist or Kantian approach to sexual morality.
4. Summarize how naturalistic moral theories approach issues concerning sexual morality.
5. Apply the various theories to issues such as same-sex marriage and sex work.
6. Formulate your own opinion on issues concerning sexual morality.

Chapter 17: Punishment and the Death Penalty

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1. Discuss the nature of legal punishment.
2. Summarize the deterrence, retributive and restorative arguments for justifying punishment and discuss problems that exist for each approach.
3. List some problems involving the determination of responsibility as regards the retributivist view of legal punishment.
4. Present major arguments for and against the death penalty using both deterrence and retributivist considerations.
5. State some other concerns involving the morality of the death penalty.
6. Formulate your own opinion regarding the morality of the death penalty.

Chapter 18: Peace, Violence and War

1. Define violence and discuss possible causes, including the theory of realism..
2. Explain the different forms and arguments of pacifism.
3. Explain the position of realism.
4. List and explain the four basic principles of the jus ad bellum part of just war theory.
5. List and explain the proportionality and discrimination principles of the jus in bello part of just war theory.
6. Define Terrorism and discuss the question of its justification.
7. Define Weapons of Mass Destruction and discuss their impact on morality and war.
8. Explain the concept of a war crime and discuss issues raised by the idea of universal human rights.
9. Formulate your own opinion on these issues.

Chapter 19: Environmental Ethics

1. Distinguish intrinsic, instrumental and prima facie value as it concerns nature.
2. Explain the perspectives of anthropocentrism and ecocentrism regarding environmental ethics.
3. Discuss the role of cost-benefit analysis as regards environmental ethics.
4. Describe four environmental problems caused by human environmental impact.
5. Explain the ecocentric (biocentric) perspective regarding environmental ethics, including concepts such as moral patient and ecosystem.
6. Summarize the views of Aldo Leopold, Native American philosophy and romanticism regarding the environment.
7. Explain the views of the deep ecology movement and ecofeminism.
8. Define and discuss the concept of sustainable development.
9. Formulate your own opinion regarding these issues.

Chapter 20: Animal Ethics—and Beyond

1. Define cruelty in terms of sentience.
2. Discuss the bearing natural predation has on the issue of the justification of harming animals.
3. Define moral right, and state and evaluate various possible criteria one might appeal to when claiming a being has moral rights.
4. Discuss the question of whether animals have rights, including a summary of the views of Tom Regan and Peter Singer.
5. Explain what is meant by "speciesism."
6. Discuss the issue of animal interests versus human interests.
7. Explain and evaluate issues such as moral vegetarianism and animal experimentation.

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8. Present anthropocentric reasons for preserving animal and plant species.
9. Identify problems with defining a species, and evaluate the position that species have rights.
10. Formulate your own opinion on the issue of animal ethics.

Department Policies:

Department Policies are in alignment with College Policies.

College Policies:

As an academic institution, Brookdale facilitates the free exchange of ideas, upholds the virtues of civil discourse, and honors diverse perspectives informed by credible sources. Our College values all students and strives for inclusion and safety regardless of a student's disability, age, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, country of origin, immigration status, religious affiliation, political orientation, socioeconomic standing, and veteran status. For additional information, support services, and engagement opportunities, please visit www.brookdalecc.edu/support.

For information regarding:

- ◆ Brookdale's Academic Integrity Code
- ◆ Student Conduct Code
- ◆ Student Grade Appeal Process

Please refer to the [BCC STUDENT HANDBOOK AND BCC CATALOG](#).

NOTIFICATION FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES:

Brookdale Community College offers reasonable accommodations and/or services to persons with disabilities. Students with disabilities who wish to self-identify must contact the Disabilities Services Office at 732-224-2730 (voice) or 732-842-4211 (TTY) to provide appropriate documentation of the disability, and request specific accommodations or services. If a student qualifies, reasonable accommodations and/or services, which are appropriate for the college level and are recommended in the documentation, can be approved.

ADDITIONAL SUPPORT/LABS:

See the Tutoring Center for information <https://www.brookdalecc.edu/academic-tutoring/tutoring-center/>.

MENTAL HEALTH:

- Mental Health Crisis Support: From a campus phone, dial 5555 or 732-224-2329 from an external line; off-hours calls will be forwarded to BCC police (2222 from a campus phone)
- Psychological Counseling Services: 732-224-2986 (to schedule an appointment during regular hours)

The syllabus is intended to give student guidance in what may be covered during the semester and will be followed as closely as possible. However, the faculty member reserves the right to modify, supplement, and make changes as the need arises.