

Philosophy 002 – Introduction to Ethics

Fall 2013

M/W/F 9:00 AM – 9:50 AM

Room: Amador Hall Room # 152

Satisfies General Education Area C3 (see learning objectives and evaluations below)

“Educating the mind without educating the heart is no education at all.”

- Aristotle

“There are two types of people in this world, good and bad. The good sleep better, but the bad seem to enjoy the waking hours much more.”

- Woody Allen

Instructor Information

Instructor: **J. Carboni**

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Mendocino Hall, Room 3000

Office Hours: Monday and Wednesday 10:00 AM
- 11:00 AM – Mendocino Hall, Room #
3032

Course Description

Course Catalogue: This course is designed around the “Examination of the concepts of morality, obligation, human rights and the good life. Competing theories about the foundations of morality will be investigated.”

Ethics is the study of right and wrong. However, it is more than what this overly simplistic definition implies. Ethics, and the study of ethics, concerns looking at how we act, why we act the way we do and how we justify the way we act. In this course we will discuss various traditional/historical ethical theories that have had an impact on the way in which we answer the questions above. However, while traditionally the philosopher has been stereotyped as being the “arm chair quarterback” or “backseat driver” of the moral realm, usually alongside a large wing-backed armchair and a pipe of some type, ethics is about doing. Thus, in addition to the above discussions/lectures, we will be engaging in ethical analysis of contemporary issues like abortion, war and terrorism, human rights, animal rights, environmentalism, etc. We will also read and discuss theories of the self, freedom, the role of religion, etc. and review how our understanding of these issues impacts our moral lives.

Required Textbooks

Exploring Ethics, 2nd Edition. (2010). Ed. Steven M. Cahn. Oxford University Press: NYC. ISBN 9780199757510

Learning Objectives

- Students will develop competence in philosophical and ethical language and literature, especially of ethical theories and modes of practice

- Students will develop written and oral communication skills, especially those associated with argumentative writing and public speaking
- Students will develop an appreciation of the diversity of the human condition, as this is reflected in ethical theories, formulated at different epochs, in diverse historical and social contexts and by a diversity of individuals
- Student Learning Objectives for Area C3 courses can be viewed at: <http://www.csus.edu/acaf/Portfolios/GE/geareaC3.stm>

Each of these learning objectives will be met through a variety of course assignments including readings, examination, quizzes, essays, group work and class lectures/discussions (each of these is discussed further below).

Student Standards of Conduct

- Plagiarism and/or cheating will not be tolerated in this class. All those who engage in these activities will receive a zero on the associated assignment. In addition, all incidents of cheating and/or plagiarism will be reported to the department chair and to the Judicial Officer in the Office of Student Affairs. It is your responsibility to both know and adhere to Sac State's Academic Honesty Policy. This policy can be found at the following address: <http://www.csus.edu/umannual/student/UMAO0150.htm>
- Purposely "obstructing" the viewpoint of another student in the classroom during classroom discussions is prohibited. This class will involve many discussions concerning the material assigned for homework and the material presented during the classroom lectures. This being a philosophy course, many of these discussions *may* challenge certain beliefs that you hold. Open dialog and proper methods of argumentation are not only expected but required for this class.
- Attendance/Participation: Students are expected to attend each class session. This class will involve many in-class discussions and in-class group work. Students are expected to have completed the readings and participate in all in-class discussions.
- Cell Phones and Computers: Please set your phone to vibrate before class! Cell phones are not to be used in class. If you must take a call (which I discourage unless an emergency) please step outside before you answer. No texting or Internet use will be allowed in class (unless directed by me). This is especially true during exams. Students may use computers in class but will be required to sit in the front row to ensure academic honesty.
- If you have a disability and require accommodations, you will need to provide disability documentation to SSWD, Lassen Hall 1008, (916) 278- 6955. Please discuss your accommodation needs with me after class or during my office hours early in the semester.

Evaluation

Group Work: This class will involve a significant amount of group work and assessment. Each student will be assigned to a group at the beginning of the semester and will remain with that group throughout the course. Every Friday there will be one group quiz based on the reading assignments/classroom discussions for that week. Each of these quizzes will be worth a total of 10 possible points. The lowest score received during the term will be dropped. In addition, each Friday students will be expected to complete in-class group work based on the material discussed/assigned that week. Each group assignment will be worth a total of 15 possible points.

At the conclusion of the semester, there will be 225 possible points for in-group work and 140 possible group-quiz points.

I understand that most people do not enjoy working in a group environment. However, being able to work in groups is essential, for you will not be able to avoid working with others no matter how hard you try. A group or a team is defined in terms of a shared goal. As such, each of us, in some way, is already a member of a group. This includes our families, friends, sports teams, jobs, etc. It is important to understand that the majority of the time we will not be able to choose the groups that we are in. Being able to function well within a group setting will not only help us understand how to work with others who are often different from us (an important skill in its own right) but the positive impact that such work will have on our daily lives. In addition, in terms of our academic lives, various studies have shown that academic group work dramatically increases student performance and learning.¹ All this means that group work is important and beneficial to you as a person and as a student. In order to ensure academic integrity, as the semester draws to a close, each student will be asked to evaluate the other members of his or her group.

Examinations: There will be two in-class examinations in this class (a midterm and a final exam – 100 possible pts each). The dates of these examinations will be as follows:

Midterm Exam: Wednesday, October 30th, 2013 (Review will be held on Monday, October 28th, 2013)

Final Examination: TBA (Week of December 16th – December 20th - Review will be held on Friday, December 13th)

Essays: This class will involve three essay assignments. Each essay will be worth 100 possible points. You will be provided with a detailed essay assignment sheet including a grading rubric two weeks prior to the assignment due date.

Essay # 1 Due Date: October 11th, 2013 – Assignment details provided Sept. 27th

Essay # 2 Due Date: November 8th, 2013 – Assignment details provided Oct. 25th

Essay # 3 Due Date: December 13th, 2013 - Assignment details provided Nov. 29th

Grading Scale

All essays/exams will be graded based upon a 100 pt scale where 1 pt = 1%. Below is the grade breakdown for all examinations and essays:

A Outstanding (96 – 100 pts)
B+ Above Satisfactory (86 – 89 pts)
B- Below Satisfactory (80 – 82 pts)
C Average (73 – 75 pts)
D Poor (60 – 69 pts)

A- Very Good (90 – 95 pts)
B Satisfactory (83 - 85 pts)
C+ Above Average (76-79 pts)
C- Below Average (70 – 72 pts)
F Unacceptable (59 and lower pts)

Overall Point Breakdown:

Quizzes – 140 pts possible

Group work – 225 pts possible

¹ Bucher, Richard and Patricia L. Bucher. (2009) *Diversity Consciousness: Opening Our Minds to People, Cultures, and Opportunities*, 3rd Edition. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall.

Examinations – 200 pts possible
Essays – 300 pts possible

Total Possible Points: 860 pts

Final Grade Breakdown: A 860 – 820 pts; A- 819 – 770 pts; B+ 769 – 736 pts; B 735 – 710 pts; B- 709 – 684 pts; C+ 683 – 650 pts; C 649 – 624 pts; C- 623 – 598 pts; D 597 – 512 pts; F 511 pts and Below

Reading/Assignment Schedule

Below is the reading schedule for the course. All readings, unless indicated, will be from the required text for the course. All additional materials will be provided to you in-class. Unless otherwise indicated, Fridays are scheduled for quizzes, reviews, group-work and to catch up on material that was not completed on Monday/Wednesday.

Week 1: Course introduction & what is philosophy and who cares about ethics?

Readings – For Wednesday: Morality and Moral Philosophy, *William K. Frankena*
For Friday: How Not to Answer Moral Questions, *Tom Regan*

Week 2: What is morality? How do we know what's right? & Are we 'entitled' to our opinions?

Readings – For Monday: *Crito*, Plato
For Friday: The Nature of Ethical Disagreement, *Charles L. Stevenson*

Week 3: What role does God play in all this?

Readings - For Monday: God and Morality, *Steven M. Cahn*
For Wednesday: Euthyphro Problem (*Provided in class*)

Week 4: Sophistic Relativism (Cultural and Ethical) – What is Relativism, Where did it originate, and why is it such a headache for moral philosophers?

Reading – The Challenge of Cultural Relativism, *James Rachels*
Essay Number 1 Review

Week 5: Psychological and Ethical Egoism

Readings – For Monday: Reading on Ayn Rand (*Provided in class on 9/20*)
For Wednesday: The Social Contract, *Thomas Hobbes*

Week 6: Utilitarianism

Readings – For Monday: Reading on Jeremy Bentham (*Provided in class on 9/27*)
For Wednesday: Utilitarianism, *John Stuart Mill*; Strengths and Weaknesses of Utilitarianism, *Louis P. Pojman*
Due Friday: Essay Number One

Week 7: Deontic Ethics

Readings – For Monday: The Categorical Imperative, *Immanuel Kant*
For Wednesday: *Kant Cont. & A Simplified Account of Kant's Ethics*, *Onora O'Neill*

Week 8: Virtue Ethics

Readings - For Monday: The Nature of Virtue, *Aristotle*
For Wednesday: Aristotle Cont. & Virtue Ethics, *Bernard Mayo*
Essay Number 2 Review

Week 9: Midterm Exam Review and Midterm Exam (Friday, November 1st)

Week 10: What is a person & the Nature of Animal Rights

Readings – For Monday: The Case for Animal Rights, *Tom Regan*
For Wednesday: The Case for the Use of Animals in Biomedical Research,
Carl Cohen

Due Friday: Essay Number Two

Week 11: Personhood and abortion

Readings – For Monday: On the Moral and Legal Status of Abortion, *Mary Anne Warren*
For Wednesday: Why Abortion Is Immoral, *Don Marquis*

Week 12: Human Rights

Readings – For Wednesday: Famine, Affluence, and Morality, *Peter Singer*
For Friday: World Hunger and Moral Obligation: The Case Against Singer,
John Arthur
Holiday: Monday, November 11th

Week 13: Environmental Ethics – Should we care about our planet?

Reading - For Monday/Wednesday: Philosophical Problems for Environmentalism,
Elliott Sober – *Group Quiz on Wednesday*
Essay Number 2 Review
Holiday: Thursday & Friday, November 28th and 29th

Week 14: Should we care about what we eat?

Reading – For Monday: We Are What We Eat, *Tom Regan*
Film – For Wednesday/Friday: *Forks Over Knives* (To be followed by a class discussion)

Week 15: Just war theory and the ethics of torture & What Does All This Even Mean?

Reading – For Monday: *The Moral Equivalent of War*, William James (Provided in class Friday, December 6th)
For Wednesday: Torture, *Henry Shue*
For Friday: *Phaedo*, Plato
Friday: Final Examination Review
Due Friday: Essay Number three

Week 16: Final Examination

Finally, welcome to philosophy 002.