

Syllabus for Intro to Ethics, Spring 2008

PHL 210: Intro to Ethics

Contemporary Ethics

Professor: Dr. Heather Salazar

Class: Sec 1: TR 1-2:15pm, QH 129; Sec 2: TR 2:30-3:45pm, QH 129; Sec 3 (or LL 51): M 6-9pm, QH 327

Office: Academic Building 306, (251) 380-4183

Office Hours: MW 1:20-2:20, M 5-6pm, W 4-6pm, R 10-12 and by appointment

Email: hsalazar@shc.edu

Class Website: <http://faculty.shc.edu/hsalazar>

Class Description:

In this class, we will seek answers to questions about morality, endeavoring to understand and analyze different theories and perspectives in ethics in order to more fully appreciate the ethical dimension of our own lives and that of others and to govern ourselves wisely and ethically. In so doing, we will survey the contemporary ethical territory by examining issues in applied ethics and theoretical ethics. The class will be conducted primarily through guided discussion, enabling everyone to achieve a greater understanding of others and of the theories, as well as providing a way for each person to seek personalized answers to his or her questions. (Note: there is a prerequisite for this class of having completed PHL 101: Logic.)

The class will take place in four stages. The beginning of the class will be concerned with specific 'applied' issues in ethics and the normative theories in ethics that help us to decide what to do in different cases. We will then examine issues in meta-ethics, concerning what ethics is, whether objective or subjective, where it comes from and how it applies to us. In the third part of the course, we will examine the challenges of environmentalism, feminism and multiculturalism to traditional ethical theories. Finally, (provided we have time to do so) we will examine a piece of literature for ethical themes, questioning, understanding and developing a practice of insight into our daily lives.

Objectives

The goals of this class are to provide the material and methods to understand and engage with the ethical territory within the three major areas of ethics: meta-ethics, normative ethics, and applied ethics; to show how and in what ways these three are related; to examine the views in ethics from various perspectives; to practice the philosophical method of extracting, analyzing, evaluating, and revising arguments and views with an eye towards charitable interpretation; to use all available sources of knowledge, including rationality, experience, and intuition, to bear on one's ethical search in a balanced way; to promote philosophical discussion among students and between the students and the professor in a respectful exploration of the issues involved; and to provide a foundation for each individual's lifelong search for what is good and right.

Books:

Mortal Questions, by Thomas Nagel

Morality, by Bernard Williams

Three Challenges to Ethics, by James P. Sterba

Literature TBA

Schedule (Subject to Change):

Week 1 (1/10):	Nagel: Death	
Week 2 (1/15, 1/17):	Nagel: Death, Moral Luck	
Week 3 (1/22, 1/24):	Nagel: War and Massacre	INE, RL
Week 4 (1/29, 1/31):	Nagel: Equality	
Week 5 (2/5, 2/7):	Mardi Gras Break: No classes on MTW; Class on R	
Week 6 (2/12, 2/14):	Willaims: The Amoralist	INE
Week 7 (2/19, 2/21):	No class on T or R; Movie on Monday	* <i>Gandhi</i> M 2/18, 6-9:30pm
Week 8 (2/26, 2/28):	Williams: The Amoralist; Subjectivism	Essay #1 due Tuesday 2/26, INE
Week 9 (3/4, 3/6):	Williams: Relativism; Subjectivism: Further; Goodness	by R: choose 2 essays, INE
Week 10 (3/11, 3/13):	Williams: Moral Standards and the Mark of Man	INE
Week 11 (3/18, 3/20):	Williams: God, Morality and Prudence	INE, RL
Week 12 (3/25, 3/27):	Spring Break: No classes this week	
Week 13 (4/1, 4/3):	Sterba: Environmentalism	INE
Week 14 (4/8, 4/10):	No class during the day; lecture at night	*Dr. Petrie on the Superfund M 4/7, 6-9pm
Week 15 (4/15, 4/17):	Sterba: Environmentalism, Feminism	INE, RL
Week 16 (4/22, 4/24):	Sterba: Feminism, Literature: TBA	
Week 17 (4/29):	Last Day	by Tue: Choose 2 essays
Week 17, 18 (5/2-5/7) (Finals Week)		Essay # 2 due via email

* all special events will take place in Bio 108 unless otherwise stated.

INE = In-Class Essay, RL = Reading Logs due

Coursework

The reading log (20%), graded in-class exercises (20%), meditations and in-class participation (10% together) will comprise 50% of your grade. The essays will comprise 25% each. (Your reading log and exercises will be reviewed periodically. Although they need not be perfect, they must exemplify thoughtfulness and an attempt at understanding the readings and the key issues in order to receive full credit.)

Reading Log: You will be required to keep a reading log. For every excerpt that you read, please write the title, author, main thesis or theses, and a short explanation of the main argument(s). (You will be provided with a list of theses for each reading.) Then write one or two discussion questions for class for each reading. Please type these and place them in a paper folder clearly marked with your name. Bring them to class daily as they will be essential for your use in the class.

Meditations: Most classes include brief meditations upon which you will be asked to think and then write briefly. You may write a word or sentence of impact to you, a poem, or a paragraph. The choice is yours since this is for your reflection and benefit. Some meditations may be assigned to be completed out of class, as well. Please write your meditations in a small journal that is reserved for this purpose.

Exercises: There will be short weekly in-class writing exercises that will ask you to explore and analyze a specific topic that was highlighted in the readings for that week. (You will be able to use your notes and books for these.) You will be asked to choose four of your best to be graded, two for mid-semester and two for the end of the semester. The others will count towards your participation in class.

Essays: You will write two essays of three pages each. You will be given a week to write each and they will be due before the end the middle of the semester and at the end of the semester. Essays must be submitted via hard-copy and email attachment in MS Word unless otherwise stated.

Grades

The college describes grade designations in the Bulletin. Briefly, an A constitutes “excellent...truly outstanding scholarship and an unusual degree of intellectual initiative”; a B “truly superior or well above average attainment”; a C “average or satisfactory work as is done by a majority of students”; and a D “deficient, but passed.”

Academic Integrity

Academic honesty is expected in this class, as in all other classes, and the penalties for transgressing will be severe and may include failing the class and being reported to the Provost. This means that you must write your own papers; merely summarizing someone else’s views in your papers is unacceptable. Your papers do not require outside research and most, if not all, of each paper should be your own ideas together with the ideas presented in lecture and in the class readings. All references in your papers to another person’s views must be cited sufficiently. Always err on the side of being too careful in citations rather than being careless and ask me if you are in doubt about whether something is permitted.

Other Policies:

Attendance and Participation: This class relies very heavily on attendance and participation. Missing more than three classes, per college policy, may result in dismissal from class. Note: students will not be dropped from the class by the professor; students must withdraw themselves by the drop deadline (Jan 15, 2008) to avoid receiving a WP or WF in the class. All special events outside of the class time that the class is required to attend may be made-up, but regular classes may not.

Late and Missing Assignments: In-class exercises may not be made up, but missing one will not impact your grade as long as there are four over the semester that are graded (two for the mid-semester and two for the end of the semester). If you miss a meditation, please make sure that you consult a classmate and make it up. Late reading logs will count for half of their original credit. Late papers will be considered under exceptional circumstances but may be marked down one third of a letter grade for each day that they are late. Contact the professor asap (preferably at least 24 hours in advance of the due date) if you think you may need a paper extension with the request and reason for the request. Documentation and college approval may be necessary in certain cases. Completion of both essays and at least four in-class essays are required for passing the class. Essays that are not submitted via hard-copy and email by the due date will be considered late unless otherwise stated or other arrangements are made with the professor.

Special Accommodations: Students who want to receive disabilities accommodations should contact Mrs. Dunklin, Coordinator for Student Support Services at 380-3470 as soon as possible so that warranted accommodations can be arranged. Her office is located in Student Academic Services, 1st floor, Administration Building.