

Johnson County Community College
Philosophy 143: Ethics
Revised Course Syllabus
Fall 2011

Instructor Information

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Office Hours: MWF 11:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.
TR 11:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

Course Information

Division: Liberal Arts
Credit Hours: 3
Time: TR 8:00-9:15 & 9:30-10:45
Location: GEB 317
Prerequisites: None

Course Description

This course is an introduction to moral philosophy through some of its major issues, theories, and figures. We will address various questions regarding the nature and focus of ethics, the basis of our beliefs about morals, character development, and what makes an action right or wrong. We will critically examine historical and contemporary perspectives and their application to current issues in order to develop a deeper understanding of the current ethical situation and our responses to it.

Course Objectives

This course will familiarize students with many philosophical perspectives regarding value, character, duty and other key ethical concepts. It will enable students to interpret, evaluate, apply, formulate, and defend philosophical perspectives and arguments responding to the issues at hand. Students will develop an understanding of philosophical terminology and diverse approaches to framing ethical questions and addressing ethical predicaments. Additionally, students will consider the ways in which different theoretical approaches apply and inform responses to ethical issues that arise in contemporary society and one's own experiences.

Course Format

This course is designed to be a guided discussion of moral philosophy. While there may be a small lecture component, the instructor will help students work their way through philosophical material by introducing the basic methods of philosophy as well as asking questions and seeking answers in order to compile an interpretation and evaluation of philosophical ideas contained in the assigned readings. Students are strongly encouraged to participate by asking questions and offering their own positions on issues discussed. Various in-class activities will be scheduled to promote interaction among students and involvement in the class. Course material will follow the syllabus as closely as possible; however, the schedule that appears on page three is subject to alteration if necessary.

Texts

Most of the required reading assignments will be drawn from online resources and materials placed on ANGEL. Links to online resources can be accessed through ANGEL as well; however, there will be one book that you will need to purchase:

Keown, Damien, Buddhist Ethics: A Very Short Introduction, Oxford University Press, New York, 2005.

Course Requirements & Grades

EXAMS: There will be five exams over the course of the semester. Of the five exams, only four will count toward your semester grade. The lowest exam score will be dropped. The first four exams will be held during normal class periods. They will each be worth 100 points and will focus on material from the current unit. The first four exams will consist of 10 true/false (2 points each), 10 multiple choice (2 points each), and 4 short essay questions (15 points each). The fourth exam will be a final exam given during the final examination period. The final exam will be cumulative and will also be worth 100 points. The final exam will consist of 20 true/false (1 point each), 20 multiple choice (1 point each), and 1 long essay question (60 points). The long essay will be drawn from a list of possible essay questions that will be distributed to students ahead of time. **Makeup exams will not be offered following any of the exams.*** If you have a scheduling conflict, you may make arrangements to take the exam ahead of time provided you offer sufficient notice.

SERVICE LEARNING PROJECT: Students are required to complete a minimum of 18 hours of service at the approved service learning site of their choice. Prior to their first visit and following each visit to the site, students will reflect on their expectations & experiences in addition to addressing a series of questions from the instructor in the form of journal entries. The service learning project will culminate with a 5-7 page term paper using the students' on site experience and theoretical approaches from the course to respond to a question of ethical significance. The service learning project will be worth a total of 200 points. **Failure to submit assigned portions of the service learning project by their respective deadlines will result in a 0 for that portion of the project***

ATTENDANCE & PARTICIPATION: Attendance and participation are essential for success in the study of philosophy as discourse is an integral part of the discipline. While attendance and participation are not a formal part of the semester grade, students are expected to be in class promptly, to be prepared, alert, respectful, and engaged in class discussion and activities. In accordance with these standards, cell phone use in the classroom is strictly prohibited. Failure to meet these requirements will have significant impact on your ability to grasp material, think philosophically, and perform well on the written work for this course. Should a student's behavior interfere with the positive learning environment in our classroom, that student will be asked to leave for the remainder of the period and will be responsible for all material covered that day. Should an occasion arise in which a student is unable to attend class, it is the student's responsibility to contact the instructor in a timely fashion to inform her of the absence and get any missed assignments. Please note that per the exam policy stated above, absences on examination days will result in a zero for the exam unless prior arrangements were made to take the exam ahead of time.* Also note that failure to attend class and/or complete required coursework will **not** result in automatic withdrawal from the course. It is the student's

*Exceptions will be made only in extreme circumstances with timely notification at the discretion of the instructor.

responsibility to withdraw from the course should they choose to do so; however, students should be aware of the following statement from the counseling department, “if you are an international student, student athlete or required to maintain full time status due to a third party or insurance, withdrawing from the class can have severe negative effects and may mean you will not have enough credits to be a full-time student.”

STATEMENT ON ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT: Any and all violations of the academic dishonesty policy (plagiarism, cheating, etc.) will not be tolerated and will result in disciplinary action including the assignment of an “F” for the course and possible administrative action. If you have any questions on what constitutes academic misconduct, please feel free to consult with the JCCC homepage or with the instructor for this course.

ACCOMODATIONS: If you are a student with a disability, and if you will be requesting accommodations, it is your responsibility to contact Access Services. Access Services will recommend any appropriate accommodations to your professor and his/her Academic Director. The instructor and director will identify for you which accommodations will be arranged. JCCC provides a range of services to allow persons with disabilities to participate in educational programs and activities. If you desire support services, contact Access Services, 253 Student Center or by phone at (913)469-8500, ext. 3521 or (913)469-3885 TDD.

EMAIL & ANGEL: All JCCC students are issued a college email account that is accessed through my JCCC. This account is used by the college to communicate course, grade, financial aid, enrollment and other important college information. It is your responsibility to check your JCCC e-mail account regularly for important information. ANGEL will also be used in a supplementary capacity in this course. Students should plan to use ANGEL to access announcements, reading assignments, handouts, and grade information.

SCHEDULE

Anticipated reading assignments are found in parentheses below; however, specific readings & exact assignments will be assigned each class period to be completed prior to the next class period.

Week 1: Action-Oriented Ethics

Ethical Egoism (Plato’s Republic: The Ring of Gyges)
Service Learning Project Overview

Week 2: Ethical Relativism (Ruth Benedict’s *Anthropology & the Abnormal*)
Ethical Relativism (James Rachels’ *The Challenge of Cultural Relativism*)

Week 3: Divine Command Theory (Robert Mortimer’s *Morality is Based on God’s Commands*)
Divine Command Theory (Plato’s Euthyphro: The Euthyphro Problem)

Week 4: Exam #1
Utilitarianism (John Stuart Mill’s Utilitarianism: Chapter II)

Week 5: Utilitarianism (John Stuart Mill’s Utilitarianism: Chapter II)
Utilitarianism (Kai Nielsen’s *Against Moral Conservatism*)

- Week 6:** Kantianism (Kant's Groundwork for the Metaphysic of Morals: Duty & Imperatives)
Kantianism (Kant's Groundwork for the Metaphysic of Morals: The Moral Law)
- Week 7:** Kantianism (Kant's Groundwork for the Metaphysic of Morals: Derivation & Types of Duties)
Exam #2
- Week 8:** **Agent-Oriented Ethics**
Virtue Ethics (Aristotle's Nichomachean Ethics: Book I: The End of Human Action)
Virtue Ethics (Aristotle's Nichomachean Ethics: Book II: Virtues of Character Defined)
- Week 9:** Virtue Ethics (Aristotle's Nichomachean Ethics: Book III & IV: Virtues of Character Illustrated)
- Week 10:** Buddhist Ethics (Koller, The Life and Teachings of the Buddha)
Buddhist Ethics (Keown, Buddhist Ethics, Chapter 1)
- Week 11:** Confucianism (Confucius, The Analects, Selections from Books I, II, IV, & VI)
Confucianism (Selections from Mencius & Xunzi)
- Week 12:** **Exam #3**
Applied Ethics
Animals & the Environment (Keown, Buddhist Ethics, Ch.3)
- Week 13:** Animals & the Environment (Confucius)
Animals & the Environment (Peter Singer, Utilitarianism & Vegetarianism)
- Week 14:** Suicide & Euthanasia (Keown, Buddhist Ethics, Ch. 7)
****No classes Thursday – Thanksgiving Break****
- Week 15:** Suicide & Euthanasia (James Rachels, Active and Passive Euthanasia)
Suicide & Euthanasia (Peter Singer, Voluntary Active Euthanasia)
- Week 16:** Suicide & Euthanasia (Kantian Approaches)
Exam #4

Final Examinations: 12/10-12/16