PHILOSOPHY 1111
INTRODUCTION TO ETHICS
Video Checkout Course (Summer Semester 2005)

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Course Description:

This course is designed to assist you in developing your analytical skills and using them in addressing various ethical dilemmas. Being a video course means that you miss the opportunity for face-to-face contact with the instructor and getting oral reinforcement for the important points. Please read this syllabus carefully, so as not to miss some requirement or insight that could be very helpful; it should contain all the information that you need to complete the course satisfactorily.

Course Objectives:

1. To provide an introduction to the field of ethics and invite students to understand something of the role of ethics in decision-making which has consequences for people, including oneself.
2. To provide an introduction to the major systems of moral philosophy so that the essential focus and main advocates of each system are understood.
3. To provide opportunity for moral thought and enhancing analytical skills.
4. To provide opportunity for making concrete application of these moral perspectives to everyday relationships and real-life situations.
5. To provide opportunity to think about major ethical issues confronting contemporary society.

Textbook: *Everyday Morality: An Introduction to Applied Ethics*
Mike W. Martin (3rd edition; Wadsworth, 2001)

Video Series: Ethics in America

1. “Do Unto Others”
2. “To Defend a Killer”
3. “Public Trust, Private Interest”
4. “Does Doctor Know Best?”
5. “Anatomy of a Corporate Takeover”
6. “Under Orders, Under Fire” (1)
7. “Under Orders, Under Fire” (2)
8. “Truth on Trial”
9. “The Human Experiment”
10. “Politics, Privacy, and the Press”

The tapes and the readings provide the content of the course. Viewing the videotapes is an essential part of the course content, but mainly the taped discussions are intended to give you clear examples of how to analyze, explain, and defend a moral viewpoint. The text was selected to make the course as practical and interesting as possible.

NATURE OF THE COURSE:

Your final grade will be based on your scores on four objective examinations that you will take and the writing of one essay for this video course. The essay should be submitted after the reading, the viewing, and the taking of the exams. Each one of these units of work, the four exams and the one essay, will constitute the five grades for the class and each is worth an even 20%. Thus you really cannot pass this class without reading the text or viewing the video programs. (See note at end about review sheets.)

Note: You may take these exams earlier than the due date. Make certain that the number of the exam (such as exam #1, exam #2, etc.) is written on your scan sheet as you take the exam. Since the last exam and the essay are due around the same time at the end of the semester, carefully budget your time, perhaps by taking that fourth exam a few days earlier so as to allot more time to the essay.

THE FOUR MAJOR SUBJECT AREAS IN MORAL PHILOSOPHY (ETHICS) AND THE VIDEO PROGRAM ASSIGNMENTS AND SCHEDULE:

1. THE MAJOR ETHICAL SYSTEMS. (Text, chapters 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5).

Your purpose in this reading is to understand the basic concept or approach to ethics as advocated in the major systems: Greek virtue ethics; Rights ethics; Duty ethics; and Religious ethics (primarily Judeo-Christian or Biblical ethics). The names you are asked to learn about in this section of readings are Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Aquinas, Kant, Locke, Jefferson, Bentham, and Mill, and to especially give attention to their insights or contributions. Exam one will cover this material and will also cover video programs one and two. The date for this exam to be completed: June 22nd, 2005.

Helpful note (hopefully): this exam will have 50 objective questions, most of which will be multiple choice. There are a lot of names and concepts in these early chapters. I realize that what I think is important may not be viewed as important to you and vice versa. The exam is to measure if you have done the reading and viewing. I do NOT plan to ask questions about the following philosophers: Richard Brandt, A. J. Melden, David Ross, John Rawls, David Hume, Alasdair MacIntyre, Edmund Pincoffs, and Ruth Benedict. I hope this is helpful to you in knowing where to place your focus.
2. PERSONAL MORALITY ISSUES. (Text, chapters 18, 19, 20, 22, 23).

We have moral duties toward ourselves—thus, how do we take care of ourselves morally? Consider those concerns that relate to yourself, such as your personal integrity, your courage, etc. Exam two will cover this material as well video programs 3, 4, and 5. The date for this exam to be completed: July 6th, 2005.

3. RELATIONSHIP ISSUES. (Text, chapters 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17).

We all live in community with other people in our lives; sometimes we have moral commitments to some of these people. How do we relate to our closest family members and friends in a moral way? Read about these topics and focus on key concepts. Exam three will cover this material as well as video programs 6 and 7. The date for this exam to be completed: July 20th, 2005.

4. MAJOR SOCIAL AND PUBLIC POLICY ISSUES (Text, chapters 7, 8, 9, 10, 24, 25, 26).

There are moral dimensions to big issues on which most of us already hold opinions. Read about these issues from a moral perspective and note the diversity of ways that moral views are held by different philosophers and writers. Exam four will cover this material as well as video programs 8, 9, and 10. The date for this exam to be completed: August 3rd, 2005.

WATCHING THE VIDEO

One of the weaknesses of this course is that the video programs do not necessarily coincide with the readings in the text. There will be between five and ten questions on each exam from the video programs, so watch them according to the schedule. Do not worry that the book topics and video topics do not necessarily match.

THE ESSAY ASSIGNMENT:

After you have completed the reading and the viewing, write a personal essay that shares and explains your personal moral philosophy. Make certain that the essay answers the following questions:

a. What moral system or moral philosopher do you feel you relate to best and why?
b. What are your personal moral values?
c. What are some moral values, if any, that you feel you would not compromise no matter what the situation?
d. What has been the source of your moral values (e.g.s., parental influence, peer influence, influence of teaching in a church or school, personal study, etc.)?
e. What do you think is the biggest moral issue facing our society today and what do you feel should be done about it?
f. How do you go about resolving moral dilemmas?
Your essay should be submitted to the Testing Center on the Nashville State main campus (in the library) no later than August 8, 2005, though you may certainly submit it earlier. It is highly recommended that you keep a copy of your essay for your own files; the essay can be returned if you enclose or attach a suitable, self-addressed envelope with adequate postage.

This is a reflective essay as much as it is academic. You are certainly free to include any other writing on moral philosophy. Incorporate applications, illustrations, and lines of analysis based on your readings and the viewing of videos and also from two additional sources: (a) your personal life experiences, moral dilemmas, etc., and (b) moral issues in the current affairs and news stories. Feel free to state your moral convictions on any of these.

1. This essay must be typewritten with lining of the text double-spaced. Your name, PHI 1111 (the course number), and P. Cotham (instructor) should appear in the upper left corner of the first page of each essay. Font should be a standard 12-point size with reasonable margin space. While the content of your essay is far more important than its length, the requested length of the essays is five to seven pages.

2. You may use additional sources for the essay, though it may certainly not be necessary. If you use, and certainly if you quote, an additional source besides the text, please cite these sources (at least at the end of the essay).

3. Turn in your essay at the Testing Center located just inside the library. Make sure all your papers are stapled together or placed in a secure envelope. Use the clock stamp to stamp your papers. This will indicate the date and time you submitted your essay and provides evidence that it has been completed on time. Make certain that Nashville State Technical Community College has your current address. (For locations away from Nashville: courier service is often used to get test sheets to the main campus and sometimes they arrive two or three days after the test is due to be taken. In the case of the final essay, however, you as student are responsible for making certain that your essay gets to the Nashville site and Testing Center by August 8th.

SUGGESTIONS IN WRITING YOUR PAPERS:

The following are some suggestions that I gave to video students when they were writing several essays for this course. They may be helpful to you in writing your one essay:

Since you are not in a classroom situation, there is a big disadvantage of not being able to ask the instructor questions. I will attempt within reason to answer questions by phone, but I will also understand your disadvantage.

My main concern is for your learning the moral systems, theories, and moral options for everyday morality. Then I want to see how you are able to think critically and
make application to your personal life and in your understanding of current affairs and current issues. So, the more you can tie all of this together in your essay, the more I can be impressed. I realize, too, that you can only incorporate what you have learned from the videos at the pace that you are seeing them and that will take the entire term.

The essays are not intended to be exercises in writing style and grammar, although the more grammatically correct and the less misspelled words that appear will serve you well. Poor grammar and misspellings will be marked as I read them but, unless excessive, cannot be any major factor in your grade.

State your convictions in these essays. Attempt to be an objective observer of what you read and hear. It is not important whether I agree or disagree with your moral viewpoint—what is important is how much substance is in your argument and how clearly you state your viewpoint and argument.

PERSONAL NOTE

The video class does not meet in a classroom at any time. However, in order to help students prepare for the exams, I prepare a review sheet which covers the material in the text. For students who visit the Nashville campus, copies of the review are placed in the plastic box on my office door in the library building. For students living away from Nashville, I will attach a copy of the review sheet in reply to a request that you make to me via e-mail.

The best way to communicate with me is through e-mail messaging. You do not need to check in with me on some regular basis. If you call me and leave a message asking me to return the call, I will not be able to return a call to students living outside the Nashville calling area—that’s why e-mail is the best way to present a message or ask a question. Also, as you write, I’d be glad to hear anything personal from you about your life, your education, goals, or whatever you might want to share.

For students taking the video course in the upcoming semester: this syllabus will not be updated until the beginning of the new semester. That is the same time that students in classroom courses will receive their syllabuses.