

## **COURSE OUTLINE** **Ethics**

**Course Description:** PL 291. Ethics. 3 hours credit. This course will enable the student to appraise ethical concepts and arguments contained in the commentaries or selections from the works of various historical and contemporary writers or in the televised, interactive dialogues of contemporary societal leaders which form the basis of the telecourse. The student will learn how to apply ethical principles to contemporary personal and world issues and to synthesize those ethical concepts and arguments into a coherent set of principles that can guide personal conduct and thought. This course will enable the student to present his/her ethical views in discussion and/or written documents.

**Course Relevance:** Ethics is that branch of philosophy that is concerned with the nature of the Right and the Good for human beings. Courses in ethics help students to develop critical habits of thinking and skill in understanding complex moral issues. "Ethics" provides students with the opportunity to explore, analyze and critique a broad range of ethical perspectives, enhancing their skills both in the areas of critical thinking and in the area of written communication. "Ethics" provides students with the foundations for intellectual maturity and lifelong critical inquiry into contemporary personal and world ethical issues.

### **Required Materials:**

PL 291

Textbook: Luper, S. & Brown C., (eds.) (1999). The Moral Life (2<sup>nd</sup> Ed.). Fort Worth, TX: Harcourt Brace College Publishers.

PL 291 Telecourse

Telecourse materials: Textbook: Newton, L.H. (2004). Ethics in America: Source Reader (2<sup>nd</sup> Ed.). Old Tappan, NJ: Prentice Hall.

A telecourse study guide—Newton, L. H. (2004). Ethics in America (2<sup>nd</sup> Ed.). Old Tappan, NJ: Prentice Hall.

Tape Series: Ethics in America, Lessons 1—10, and three 1-hour audio tapes.

### **Learning Outcomes:**

The intention is for the student to be able to:

1. Appraise the ethical concepts and arguments contained in the commentaries or selections from the works of various historical and contemporary ethical writers or in the dialogues of contemporary societal leaders
2. Apply ethical principles to contemporary personal and world problems

3. Synthesize those concepts and arguments into a coherent set of principles that can guide personal conduct and thought
4. Present his/her own views on the ethical issues in discussion and/or written documents in a clear and precise manner

**Primary Learning PACT Skills that will be DEVELOPED and/or documented in this course:**

Through the student involvement in this course, he/she will develop his/her ability in the following primary PACT skill areas:

1. Critical Thinking
  - Through the production of a research paper later in the semester, students will address an ethical issue presented in the course. They will present the views of two ethical writers and analyze those views, comparing and contrasting them with each other. Students will then apply the ethical principles of each to their own position on the issue.
2. Historical Interpretation
  - Through the analysis of the views of the two ethical writers, students will place the issues within their historical context—their time and place of origin—and track the evolution of those ideas through the present and their possible consequences for the future.
3. Writing
  - Through a variety of types of written work, students will practice their writing skills, including their use of standard English wording and phrasing and their knowledge of standard English spelling and punctuation and grammar.
4. Computer/Internet Use
  - Through the production of a research paper that requires that the text document be word processed and that students make use of the internet to find information useful to their purposes, students will use computers to do research on their topic, to create a complete document, to make revisions in the document until it is in its final form and to produce a hard copy of the document to be turned in to the instructor.

Secondary skills (developed but not documented):

Self-Concept (Participation in activities which promote and stimulate personal growth and development)

Teamwork (Willingness to actively and productively participate)

Valuing Diversity (Recognition of the diversity of perspectives; recognition of the similarities and differences between the self and others; perception of value added through the experience)

Ethical Conduct (academic honesty and respect for others' rights)

**Major Summative Assessment Task:**

These learning outcomes and the primary Learning PACT skills will be demonstrated by:

1. Preparation of a four to six page essay on the following topic: “Examine the arguments and positions of two ethical writers whom you have studied this semester on an ethical topic from the text or, for the telecourse students, an ethical topic from the telecourse video tapes. Present, analyze and critically appraise the two views, and then discuss your position on the issue supported by valid argument.”

**SCORING RUBRICS FOR THE PHILOSOPHY DEPARTMENT  
ASSESSMENT OF THE MAJOR SUMMATIVE ASSESSMENT TASK:**

THE SCORING KEY: (The same key is applicable to all the ACT skills)

- 6 = Exceptional achievement evident; mature, unusually superior mastery for college sophomore level work
- 5 = Outstanding achievement evident; superior mastery for college sophomore level work
- 4 = Very strong achievement evident; more than adequate competence for college sophomore level work
- 3 = Moderate achievement evident; adequate competence for college sophomore level work
- 2 = Minimal achievement evident; less than adequate for college sophomore level work
- 1 = No achievement evident; utterly not adequate for college sophomore level work

**The “A” Skills  
Analytical Thinking**

**CRITICAL THINKING**

<b>The student’s work evidences:</b>	<b>Score:</b>
1. an accurate identification of the topic to be analyzed	6 5 4 3 2 1 _____
2. consideration of pertinent information before decision-making	6 5 4 3 2 1 _____

- |  |             |       |
|--|-------------|-------|
| 3. use of an analytical process ( “analytical process” refers to such approaches as comparison/contrast; classification; cause and effect, etc.) | 6 5 4 3 2 1 | _____ |
| 4. drawing of logical conclusions  | 6 5 4 3 2 1 | _____ |
| 5. supporting of conclusions with evidence and reason  | 6 5 4 3 2 1 | _____ |
| 6. application of previously learned principles/concepts to current topic  | 6 5 4 3 2 1 | _____ |
| 7. insight into the topic  | 6 5 4 3 2 1 | _____ |

**The “A” Skills  
Analytical Thinking**

**HISTORICAL INTERPRETATION**

- |  |             |               |
|--|-------------|---------------|
| <b>The student’s work evidences:</b>   |             | <b>Score:</b> |
| 1. awareness of the historical distinction of the phenomenon                     | 6 5 4 3 2 1 | _____         |
| 2. identification of the interrelationship of major components of the phenomenon | 6 5 4 3 2 1 | _____         |
| 3. identification of concepts evident in the phenomenon                          | 6 5 4 3 2 1 | _____         |
| 4. application of those concepts to present and/or future phenomenon             | 6 5 4 3 2 1 | _____         |

**The “C” Skills  
Communication Skills**

**WRITING**

- |   |             |               |
|---|-------------|---------------|
| <b>The student’s work evidences:</b>                      |             | <b>Score:</b> |
| 1. knowledge of standard English wording and phrasing     | 6 5 4 3 2 1 | _____         |
| 2. knowledge of standard English spelling and punctuation | 6 5 4 3 2 1 | _____         |

3. knowledge of standard English grammar	6 5 4 3 2 1	_____
4. use of topical, chronological and/or spatial organizational strategies	6 5 4 3 2 1	_____
5. effective fulfillment of a specific purpose or purposes	6 5 4 3 2 1	_____
6. effective addressing of a specific audience	6 5 4 3 2 1	_____

**The “T” Skills  
Technology Skills**

**COMPUTER LITERACY**

<b>The student’s work evidences:</b>		<b>Score:</b>
1. the creation of a complete document using an appropriate program	6 5 4 3 2 1	_____
2. the saving of the document with appropriate identification	6 5 4 3 2 1	_____
3. the creation of a final modified document	6 5 4 3 2 1	_____
4. the production of a hard copy of the document	6 5 4 3 2 1	_____

**The “T” Skills  
Technology Skills**

**INTERNET USE**

<b>The student’s work evidences:</b>		<b>Score:</b>
1. knowledge of internet terminology	6 5 4 3 2 1	_____
2. use of current and reliable sources of information	6 5 4 3 2 1	_____
3. use of a directory search engine and/or a keyword search engine and the use of source(s) derived from a web search engine and/or an online database	6 5 4 3 2 1	_____

**Course Content:**

- I. Themes—Key recurring concepts that run throughout this course:
  - A. The Right and the Good
  - B. Teleological and Deontological Theories of Ethics
  - C. Consequentialist and Nonconsequentialist Theories of Ethics
  
- II. Issues—Key issues that will be addressed in this course: areas of conflict that must be understood in order to achieve the intended outcome:

## PL 291

- A. Abortion
- B. Capital Punishment
- C. Human Values
- D. Illicit Drug Use
- E. Sexual Morality
- F. Suicide

## PL 291 Telecourse

- A. Duties in Community
- B. Loyalty
- C. Personal Autonomy
- D. Privacy and Confidentiality
- E. Retributive and Distributive Justice
- F. Truth-telling

- III. Concepts—Key concepts that must be understood to address the issues:

- A. Aristotelianism
- B. Utilitarianism
- C. Kantianism

- IV. Skills—Actions that are essential to achieve the course outcomes:

- A. Comprehend the ethical concepts, principles and theories of the ethical writers studied in this course
- B. Apply these ethical principles to a contemporary ethical issue
- C. Critically appraise the above with sound reasoning to support the student's views
- D. Provide evidence of the ability to perform the above skills in a research paper that is clearly and precisely written

**Learning Units:**

## PL 291

- I. Introduction: Ethics as a Division of Philosophy
  - A. Define the term "ethics"
  - B. Present, define and explain the terms and concepts of sound ethical reasoning

- II. Recurring Concepts
  - A. Define: The Right and the Good
  - B. Define and Identify: Teleological and Deontological Theories of Ethics
  - C. Define and Identify: Consequentialist and Nonconsequentialist Theories
- III. Key Concepts: Aristotelianism, Utilitarianism and Kantianism
  - A. Explain, critique and apply key concepts of Aristotelian ethical theory to the following ethical issues
  - B. Explain, critique and apply key concepts of Utilitarian ethical theory to the following ethical issues
  - C. Explain, critique and apply key concepts of Kantian ethical theory to the following ethical issues
- IV. Abortion
  - A. Identify and summarize perspectives on the moral status of abortion which claim that abortion is morally right and permissible
  - B. Identify and summarize perspectives on the moral status of abortion which claim that abortion is never morally right and never permissible
- V. Capital Punishment
  - A. Identify and summarize perspectives on the moral permissibility of capital punishment
  - B. Identify and summarize perspectives on the moral impermissibility of capital punishment
- VI. Human Values
  - A. Identify objectivist perspectives concerning the source of human values
  - B. Identify subjectivist perspectives concerning the source of human values
- VII. Illicit Drug Use
  - A. Summarize perspectives on the moral permissibility of illicit drug use
  - B. Summarize perspectives on the moral impermissibility of illicit drug use
- VIII. Sexual Morality
  - A. Identify and explain perspectives on the moral permissibility of sex outside the context of legal marriage
  - B. Identify and explain perspectives on the moral impermissibility of sex outside the context of legal marriage
- IX. Suicide
  - A. Identify and explain perspectives on the moral status of suicide which claim that suicide can be morally right and permissible
  - B. Identify and explain perspectives on the moral status of suicide which claim that suicide is always wrong and morally impermissible

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- II. Recurring Concepts
  - A. Define: The Right and the Good
  - B. Define and Identify: Teleological and Deontological Theories of Ethics
  - C. Define and Identify: Consequentialist and Nonconsequentialist Theories of Ethics
  
- III. Key Concepts: Aristotelianism, Utilitarianism and Kantianism
  - A. Explain, critique and apply key concepts of Aristotelian ethical theory to the following ethical issues
  - B. Explain, critique and apply key concepts of Utilitarian ethical theory to the following ethical issues
  - C. Explain, critique and apply key concepts of Kantian ethical theory to the following ethical issues
  
- IV. Duties in Community
  - A. Define the concept of community
  - B. Identify and discuss perspectives which define the ideal community from the viewpoint of individual goals and egocentric individualism
  - C. Present and discuss perspectives which define the ideal community in terms of concern for others and altruistic generosity
  - D. Identify ways in which these two perspectives may or may not coexist
  
- V. Loyalty
  - A. Present and explain the concept of loyalty from the perspective of the military establishment
  - B. Discuss the military establishment’s concept of loyalty from the point of view of an individual whose duty it is to obey all orders issued by command personnel
  - C. Identify possible conflicts which could arise for the individual in obeying and carrying out military orders
  
- VI. Personal Autonomy
  - A. Define the concept of autonomy
  - B. Analyze and appraise perspectives on the issue of autonomy that emphasize the value of personal autonomy and self-determination
  - C. Analyze and appraise perspectives which emphasize the interests of society in protecting its members and limiting autonomy

## VII. Privacy and Confidentiality

- A. Discuss perspectives which defend the fundamental American freedoms of privacy and confidentiality
- B. Discuss the perspective of those who state that society has an overriding interest in limiting the right to privacy and confidentiality

## VIII. Retributive and Distributive Justice

- A. Define and discuss the concept of retributive justice and the role of retribution within society
- B. Define and discuss the concept of distributive justice in regard to the distribution of goods and services

## IX. Truth-telling

- A. Identify and discuss traditions which claim that truth is a universal value
- B. Identify and discuss perspectives which claim that there are circumstances in which the concealment of truth is the appropriate response

### **Learning Activities:**

Independent and collaborative learning activities will be assigned within and outside the college classroom to assist students in achieving the intended learning outcomes. Learning activities will be geared toward practices that would be useful not only in the comprehension and critical analysis of assigned class readings but also in the analysis of other types of written communications. The learning activities will also emphasize the importance of good writing skills which is a benefit to students both inside the classroom and outside the college classroom in a variety of situations. Examples of activities which contribute to the learning process include: instructor lectures, class discussions, panel discussions, audio-visual aids, films followed by group discussion, guest speakers, daily exercises, reading assignments, handouts, study guides, field trips and individual conferences with the instructor. These methods and other methods deemed suitable may be used individually or in combination by all instructors.

Telecourse instruction is based on the use of video tapes, a textbook and a study guide and may include other avenues to student learning as deemed suitable by the instructor.

### **Grade Determination:**

The student will be graded on the satisfactory completion of learning activities (including the required assessment task as stated earlier in this document). Grade determinants may include the following: Daily work; tests, both essay and objective (including quizzes, chapter or unit tests and comprehensive examinations); writing assignments (both inside and outside of class); research papers; student projects; student presentations; attendance; class participation and other methods of evaluation employed at the discretion of the individual instructor. These methods may be used individually or in combination by all instructors. A Center for Independent Study is available for those students having difficulty in a particular area to seek additional assistance in course work.

