

## **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 apply ethical principles to contemporary personal and world issues and synthesize those ethical concepts and arguments into a coherent set of principles that can guide personal conduct and thought.

#### **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 – Traditional lecture and online**

Luper, S. & Brown C., (eds.) (2005). *The moral life* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Fort Worth, TX: Harcourt Brace College Publishers.

Sader, T. (2007). *A brief guide to critical thinking: The foundations of ethico-philosophical reasoning* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Mason, OH: Thomson Custom Publishing.

#### **Telecourse**

Newton, L. H. (2004). *Ethics in America: Source reader* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Old Tappan, NJ: Prentice Hall.

Newton, L. H. (2004). *Ethics in America* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Old Tappan, NJ: Prentice Hall. Study Guide

*Ethics in America*, Ten one-hour video and three 1-hour audio tapes on DVD.

Sader, T. (2007). *A brief guide to critical thinking: The foundations of ethico-philosophical reasoning* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Mason, OH: Thomson Custom Publishing.

#### **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 views on the ethical issues in discussion and/or written documents in a clear and precise manner.

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

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

**Analytical Thinking Skills**

1. Critical thinking
  - Through the production of a research paper, the student will address an ethical issue presented in the course. He/she will present the views of two ethical writers and analyze those views, comparing and contrasting them with each other. The student will then apply the ethical principles of each to his or her own position on the issue.

**Communication Skills**

1. Creation and delivery of messages
  - Through a variety of types of written work, the student will practice his or her writing skills, including his or her use of standard English wording and phrasing and his or her knowledge of standard English spelling and punctuation and grammar.

**Technology Skills**

1. General computer use
  - Through the production of a major summative assessment task that requires that the text document be word processed and that the student make use of the internet to find information useful to his or her purposes, the student will use a computer to do research on his/her 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.

**Major Summative Assessment Task(s)**

These learning outcomes and the 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 a contemporary ethical issue from the text or, for the telecourse students, on a contemporary ethical topic from the telecourse video tapes. Present, analyze and critically appraise the two views, and then discuss your own position on the issue (supported by valid argument) and how their ethical principles guide your personal conduct and thought."

## **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 non-consequentialist theories of ethics
- II. Issues—Key areas of conflict that must be understood in order to achieve the intended outcome:

### **Traditional Lecture and Online**

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

### **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/Competencies—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 – Traditional lecture and online**

- 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 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. 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

### **Learning Units - Telecourse**

#### 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 of ethics

- III. Key concepts: Aristotelianism, Utilitarianism and Kantianism
  - A. Explain, critique and apply key concepts of Aristotelian ethical theory
  - B. to the following ethical issues
  - C. Explain, critique and apply key concepts of Utilitarian ethical theory to the following ethical issues
  - D. 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
  - B. of privacy and confidentiality
  - C. Discuss the perspective of those who state that society has an overriding
  - D. 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 circum-

### C. stances 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 the student to achieve the intended learning outcomes. Learning activities will be geared toward practices that will 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 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. Other learning activities include: 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 and class participation. 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.

Online course instruction is based on the use of the computer as a distance learning/communication tool. This course also 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 the assessment tasks as well as additional learning activities employed at the discretion of the individual instructor.