

SYLLABUS: PHILOSOPHY 213

Note: You will be expected to use Educator to access some of the materials for this course; not all will be printed out or made available through the bookstore, but can be accessed and downloaded from Educator.

TEXTS: Michael C. Brannigan, *Ethics Across Cultures: An Introductory Text With Readings*
Ralph P. Forsberg, *Supplement for Philosophy 213* and *On line materials on Educator*

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

The following are the course objectives:

1. To give you a practical background in critical thinking generally and as applied specifically to ethical analysis, argumentation, discussion, writing, and the justification of ethical positions.
2. To acquaint you with some of the terms, concepts, and theories of historical importance in ethics. The emphasis is on learning and understanding specific ethical theories developed in the history of philosophy. Included may be the theories of Classical Western Philosophy and Non-Western Philosophy. We will examine the details of the theories, how to apply them, and the justification for them given by their proponents.
3. To understand and evaluate the various theories in order to provide you with a practical set of guidelines for your own thinking about ethical issues. The goal is NOT to get you to adopt any one of the theories, but to see the various ways philosophers have approached ethical reasoning as the background to developing your own ethical point of view.
4. To allow you to apply critical thinking and ethical analysis to various personal conflicts, case studies or controversial current issues. The aims are to develop your ability to apply critical thinking and ethical theories to various types of ethical issues, to be able to analyze personal ethical conflicts you might face, to be able to apply classic theories to ethical issues, and to be able to critically assess other people's analyses of ethical conflicts. Here the arguments on either side of an issue or in support/against a theory will be examined, outlined and discussed. The emphasis is on understanding the issues, applying the theories, analyzing articles, terms, the pro and con arguments, and being able to critically analyze this material as a basis for formulating and defending your own conclusions.

The specific topics may include:

The nature of ethics, criteria for a good ethical theory, virtues - Eastern and Western views, rights, duty, responsibility, role duties, the role of culture in determining ethical point of view, Buddhism's 8-fold Path, Dharma, Karma, and others. Issues may include: euthanasia and assisted suicide, global justice and development, sexual ethics, surrogacy, terrorism, cloning, the ethical status of animals, and various personal ethical conflicts. Throughout the course we will stress the important aspects of critical thinking, personal moral decision making and the evaluation of ethical arguments.

METHODS:

Since the material we are covering is of a number of different types (articles, case studies, theories, and a film or two) we will use a number of different approaches in class, most often the discussion of a theory, case study, of articles taken from the text, or a film. This entails that you read the assigned case studies and articles, ***including those on Educator***, before class and come willing and able to present your analysis of each. The discussions may take the form of Socratic dialogue, open exchange of opinions and objections, or more formal debates that utilize a group study approach. There will be two or three such formal debates during the semester (instructions for these debates are covered on line in Educator and will be reviewed in class before the first debate). Some introductions to methods, theories, issues or topics will be presented in lectures, especially in the early portions of the semester.

Emphasis will be placed on critical thinking and ethical analysis. You will engage in classroom

discussions of case studies and readings, group work, presenting your opinions orally, or work on ungraded in-class or take-home writing assignments that will form the background for discussions and prepare you for the more formal, graded, written assignments. These tasks will allow you to develop your ability to think critically, teach you how to think through ethical issues and how to work with others to solve and defend your solutions to various moral conflicts. Discussions may be in small groups or class-wide.

The focus will be on a group approach to learning the basics of philosophical and ethical analysis. The reasons for this are: 1) philosophy is most effective as a group endeavor; 2) group discussion is good philosophy and standard practice in much of the working world (business, science, and health care have discovered the value of “task groups”) since a large group of informed people, who share a common problem and a familiarity with the issues can formulate more diverse and helpful approaches to an issue than can a single person working alone; 3) in-class discussions are very important since you are helping each other master philosophy and ethical analyses. The discussions train your mind in the techniques of sound critical analysis, while preparing you for the task of writing down your own opinions and justifications. The ungraded writing assignments help prepare you to discuss your views with others and serve as practice runs for graded papers. You have as much, if not more, to learn from each other as from me; I will assist you in learning together, but the primary job is yours as a group, so attendance and preparation are important.

UNGRADED NOTEBOOK ASSIGNMENTS

Purpose: To train your mind to think philosophically and critically so that you do better in class and on graded assignments, both of which will be going on throughout the semester, not just at the end. Keep all in-class and take-home, ungraded, assignments in the notebook. Both types of assignment are part of your complete journal and count as one entry each.

Explanation of a notebook entry: I will ask a question, make a statement for you to think about, refer you to a critical thinking, thought question, case analysis worksheet, critique of a reading or film as the basis of some entries (some may be collected that day for evaluation). Specific worksheets will often be used - these will be passed out in class or be available on Educator.

Entries will be evaluated as either “acceptable” or “not acceptable.” There will be no rewrites allowed. Do not just throw something down on paper to meet the minimum requirements. Serious thought is expected in these entries, but not polished thought or writing (you will not be graded on the content of any of the assignments or entries individually, but you will receive no credit for uncritical or non-reflective work, as gauged by the Universal Intellectual Standards in your Critical Thinking Mini-guide). Force yourself to think seriously on paper in the journal - it will not always be easy, but when it is difficult you are forcing yourself to think, thus, when you have something to say of personal interest you will have developed the discipline to write it down and develop it (sometimes these entries may serve as the basis for a graded assignment, as well).

Examples of the types of questions you might answer include: What did you make of a reading or film? What questions do you have about a reading, lecture, or discussion? What was the author, a fellow student, your professor saying in the book, film, or class, do you agree and why? How would a Kantian, utilitarian, virtue theorists, Buddhist, Hindu, etc., analyze this case or issue? What is “the logic of...”, which values are relevant, which are significant, and other such questions related to critical thinking about ethical issues.

Evaluation of notebooks: I will collect the assignments when appropriate - usually on the day we finish the topic for which they were assigned. I will not grade them for content, grammar, or writing skills, but I will note whether or not they contain the minimum material and whether or not you are honestly working through philosophical ideas. You will receive no credit for shallow or superficial entries. At the end of the year a grade will be assigned to the overall journal, based on the number of entries credited to you. The grade will be assigned as follows based on the number of acceptable entries compared to the overall number of entries assigned. (E.g., if there are 15 assignments and you do 10 that are accepted, that would be 67%.)

If you have missed a class day in which an assignment was made, you may make up that assignment but any late assignments will receive only half credit - the purpose of these assignments is to

get you ready for the day's discussion, group work, or topic; doing them or turning them in late defeats this purpose. Assignments not deemed acceptable will not be counted and rewrites not allowed. Assignments not done, obviously will not count, either.

Thus, you will be graded primarily on the quantity of entries, not on content except insofar as the entries will count if they contain acceptable content, judged by the critical thinking standards appropriate for each assignment. Remember that entries can be a source for paper topics, related to the preparation of your in-class debates, and are practice for philosophical writing - the better your practice, the better your graded papers will be.

EXAMS AND PAPERS:

The grade for the course is computed by averaging the grades earned for the following:

(85%) Papers, Case Analyses, Exams, Critical Thinking Exercises for Notebook: These include standard analysis papers, in class or take home exams, critical analyses using the Elements of Reasoning, and other critical thinking exercises for your journal. These will be weighted as appropriate, with the journal being weighted as equivalent to one paper or exam. There may be a final, in-class, multiple choice/short essay exam covering the various ethical theories we studied throughout the semester. This exam, if given, will be cumulative in so far as it covers all the **theories** presented during the semester. The weight given to the notebooks will depend on how many assignments we have, but usually it will be 10%, as compared to 15% for papers and exams.

(15%) Class participation and peer debate grades: Class participation is determined by my evaluation of your contributions to the discussions, attendance and the quality of your participation in other in-class activities. The peer debate grades are based on the evaluations of your group members during debate preparations and are explained in debate instructions on Educator. My evaluation of your participation will be added to the peer grade you receive, each is half of your overall participation grade. Attendance will be used only in borderline cases to help determine a final grade.

The grading scale is: A = 94+, A- = 90-93; B+ = 87-89, B = 83-86, B- = 80-82; C+ = 77-79, C = 73-76, C- = 70-72; D+ = 67-69, D = 63-66, D- = 60-62, E = -59.

The paper grades will be assigned in the following manner. I will read your paper twice, making comments and assigning the letter grade, then assign a numerical grade reflecting the letter grade. Suppose the letter grade is a B+. I would then assign a numerical grade that reflects the B+, the range of a B+ would be 87-89 (a B- = 80-82, a B = 83-86); if the paper is very close to the A- range, I would give it an 89, less close but still a high B would get an 88, a little less close would get an 87 (a solid B paper would get somewhere between 83-86, etc.). I will try to assign you the most points that I think the paper deserves. To compute your final grade you simply average the **numerical** scores (note: a B+ is still a B, e.g. an 89.2 average is not the same as a 90.0 average).

Grade Profiles:

The Grade of E: E level work fails to display an understanding of the basic nature of philosophical thinking or of philosophical topics and issues. The work is vague, imprecise, and unreasoned - as much at the end of the course as at the beginning. There is little evidence of being genuinely engaged in the task of taking charge of one's own philosophical thinking. Many assignments seem to have been done with no thought or effort and without putting significant effort into thinking through the issues or assigned tasks. Consequently, the student is not analyzing philosophical issues clearly, not formulating philosophical information accurately, not distinguishing relevant from irrelevant information, not identifying key philosophical assumptions, not clarifying key philosophical concepts, not identifying relevant philosophically competing points of view (or arguments), not reasoning carefully from clearly stated premises, nor tracing philosophical implications and consequences. The student's work does not display recognizable philosophical reasoning and analytic skills.

The Grade of D: D level work shows a minimal level of understanding of what philosophical thinking is, along with the development of some, but very limited, philosophical thinking skills or abilities. D work at the end of the course shows only minimal use of philosophical thinking skills, but frequent

uncritical philosophical thinking. There is some, slight evidence that the student is reasoning through the assignment. Often the student seems to have missed the spirit or depth of the assignment. Philosophical issues are rarely analyzed clearly and precisely, philosophical information almost never formulated accurately, the relevant rarely distinguished from the irrelevant, key questionable assumptions rarely questioned, key philosophical concepts rarely defined or used effectively, philosophical language frequently misused compared to established professional usage, relevant competing philosophical points of view (or arguments) only rarely considered, reasoning carefully from clearly stated premises almost never demonstrated, or important implications and consequences rarely stated. D level work shows poor philosophical reasoning and grasp of philosophical information.

The Grade of C: C level work illustrates some but inconsistent achievement in grasping what philosophical thinking is, along with the development of average philosophical reasoning skills and grasp of philosophical information. C level work at the end of the semester shows some emerging philosophical thinking skills, but also some obvious weaknesses. Some assignments are reasonably well done, others are not. There are more than occasional lapses in reasoning. Philosophical terms and distinctions are sometimes used effectively, sometimes ineffectively. C level thinking displays moderate levels of understanding and reasoning, but rarely real depth. On occasion C level work does display intellectual discipline and clarity. However, it only sometimes analyzes philosophical issues and arguments clearly and precisely, formulates philosophical information accurately, distinguishes the relevant from the irrelevant, recognizes key questionable assumptions, clarifies key philosophical concepts effectively, uses philosophical language in keeping with established professional usage, identifies relevant philosophical points of view (or arguments), and reasons carefully from clearly stated premises, or recognizes important philosophical implications and consequences. On the whole, C level work shows modest or average philosophical reasoning and analytic skills.

The Grade of B: B level work represents demonstrable achievement in grasping what philosophical thinking is and a good range of specific philosophical thinking skills and abilities. B level work at the end of the semester is, on the whole, clear, precise, and well reasoned, though with occasional lapses into weak reasoning. Generally, philosophical terms and distinctions are used effectively. Philosophical issues are often analyzed clearly and precisely, philosophical information often stated accurately, the relevant from the irrelevant usually distinguished, key questionable assumptions often recognized, key philosophical concepts usually clarified effectively, philosophical language typically used in keeping with established professional usage, relevant philosophically competing points of view (and arguments) frequently presented, and reasoning shows a general tendency to move carefully from clearly stated premises, as well as a noticeable sensitivity to important implications and consequences. B level work displays good philosophical reasoning and analytic skills. The weakness most often noted will be lack of great depth or breadth, though some of each may be shown.

The Grade of A: A level work demonstrates real achievement in grasping what philosophical thinking is, along with the clear development of a broad range of specific philosophical thinking skills or abilities. The work at the end of the course is, on the whole, clear, precise, and well reasoned, though with some minor lapses into weak reasoning. Philosophical terms and distinctions are used effectively. The student usually analyzes philosophical issues (and arguments) clearly and precisely, often formulates philosophical information accurately, usually distinguishes the relevant from the irrelevant, often recognizes key questionable assumptions, usually clarifies key philosophical concepts effectively, typically uses philosophical language in keeping with established professional usage, frequently identifies relevant competing philosophical points of view (and arguments), shows a general tendency to reason carefully from clearly stated premises, and clearly recognizes important implications and consequences. A level work consistently displays excellent philosophical reasoning and analytic skills, great depth and breadth, and originality of thought.

POLICIES OF NOTE:

PLAGIARISM:

Briefly defined, plagiarism is: ***Representing someone else's work as your own; this includes falsifying sources or quotations, purchasing of papers from outside suppliers, having someone else write your paper for you, or copying someone else's work without attribution.***

Some things that you should be aware of when deciding if you must cite a source or if a particular work of yours contains any plagiarized materials:

1. If you have either directly quoted or paraphrased an author or outside source, you must cite the source clearly, using an acceptable citation format. If there is any question in your mind that a source needs to be cited, **CITE IT!** There is no penalty for citing a source when unnecessary, but there is for not citing one when necessary. Take no chances.

2. Any material taken from or found on the Internet and used in your paper, whether directly quoted or paraphrased, must be cited according to the same rules outlined in #1 above. Material on the Internet is **NOT** there for public use without citation. The same rules that govern the use of printed or spoken material govern use of Internet material. When in doubt **CITE IT!**

3. Any paper that is completely copied from any source constitutes plagiarism and will result in a failing grade for the course. Even if this were not plagiarism, there is no paper for this class that is not supposed to be your own work and thought, therefore turning in someone else's work can never fulfill the assignment.

4. If you are quoting someone's spoken words (from an in class lecture, for example), be sure to cite this fact. Here you may simply write: "Oral lecture" or "Personal conversation" or some other appropriate description indicating that you are quoting someone's spoken words.

To be clear as to penalties for plagiarism: these are up to the discretion of the instructor and there may be mitigating circumstances involved. If the plagiarism is the result of a simple error (typing, forgetting to include a footnote citation, unclear citation, etc...) and is not deemed to be intentional, the penalty may be slight. If the plagiarism is determined to be extensive, intentional, or the result of other forms of cheating, the penalty will be failure for the entire course. But be very clear that if an entire paper is copied, reproduced, downloaded, borrowed or otherwise taken from some outside source, this will mean an "E" for the class - there are no acceptable excuses for this action. Determination of the seriousness of the plagiarism is up to the instructor. Rulings are subject to the appeals process as outlined in the Delta Senate Handbook, as cited in the syllabus.

OTHER POLICIES

Attendance will be taken and class participation will be noted. Both will be figured into your final average as explained in the section "Exams and Papers" above. The reason for this policy is simply that this is a discussion class in which you help each other learn, if you are not there or cannot participate when asked, you haven't helped anyone (least of all yourself). Philosophy in this class is a cooperative effort, to cooperate means you must be in class and prepared. Even if you feel you have mastered the material on your own, you do have an obligation to help others who may not have as easy a time learning on their own; share your abilities and knowledge and it will benefit you more than you might imagine.

All work is expected to be done and handed in on the assigned due date. In class exams or essays must be taken on the day scheduled. Late penalties will apply at the rate of 5% off per week late. The due dates are absolute, barring serious illness or prior arrangements with me. Printer problems, too many other assignments, and other such excuses are not sufficient. If you are absent the day of exams or due dates for papers, this is not an excuse and late penalties apply, unless for serious illness or prior arrangements have been made.

Handwritten papers or papers done on sheets torn from notebooks will not be accepted; this does not apply to take-home worksheets or in-class exams. Papers must be printed.

No exam scores will be dropped. No extra credit will be given. No rewrites will be allowed unless the assignment specifically included this option as part of the original instructions.

You are expected to purchase and use every text listed on page one, as well as to access all the materials on Educator. Assigned readings, whether in the text, a handout or on Educator, are expected to be done, even if we do not discuss them in class. Readings often form the background for discussions, debates and future exams, failure to keep up with the reading will hinder you in all these activities.

Courtesy in discussions and debate is expected. When someone is talking, do not interrupt. Raise your hand when you wish to comment and you will be called on as soon as possible, or else join the discussion when there is a pause. Listen to what others are saying before you try to respond. Do not

talk privately to others while discussions or lectures are in progress. I may not correct you openly but I will take disruptive behavior into account when deciding class participation grades - being disruptive will count against you.

Incomplete grades will only be given if you have requested one, I will not simply turn in an incomplete if you have missing work; in such cases the missing work will be weighted and averaged at the discretion of the instructor (most often they will be averaged as a zero). Be aware, however, that the track record for completing incompletes is under 50%.