

Umbrella Syllabus

PHI 300 – Ethics and Values

Course Description:

PHI 300 is an upper-level general education ethics course designed to introduce students to philosophical reasoning about ethical issues. Emphasis on the course will be both on the ethical systems of major moral philosophers (from Plato to the present, possibly including non-Western thinkers) and on contemporary moral issues. Ethical perspectives discussed in PHI 300 may include cultural relativism, ethical subjectivism, the Divine Command theory, the social contract theory, utilitarianism, ethical egoism vs. altruism, virtue ethics, the Categorical Imperative, and existentialism. Current issues covered may include the environment, medical issues such as euthanasia and abortion, academic honesty, capital punishment, animal rights, sexual ethics, corporate responsibility, job discrimination, hunger, and welfare.

Course Objectives:

- (1) To introduce students to philosophy, philosophical method, and traditional philosophical problems and concerns in a way that will help them define and shape their own lives.
- (2) To expose students to philosophical argumentation in such a way that they will feel confident in handling philosophical concepts and terminology, as well as in constructing cogent arguments of their own.
- (3) To provide students with a representative sampling of the major ethical systems, as well as a number of essays on recent moral problems.
- (4) To help students recognize and deal with ethical problems in everyday contexts.
- (5) To encourage students to think for themselves, to rely primarily on their own powers of reasoning and discrimination in solving problems.

Course Requirements:

- (1) A minimum of two examinations.
- (2) A minimum of one paper (instructors may substitute a paper for one or more exams).
- (3) Relevant out-of-class activities—speakers, films, performances—may be required.

Texts:

Readings will vary by section.

Prerequisite:

Junior standing (60 hours completed). PHI 300 is a capstone course which draws on and synthesizes previous coursework.