Ethics

Spring 2019

Department of Political Science and Philosophy

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This text is absolutely necessary and students should purchase a copy before semester begins. Buying the text after week 2 or 3 will leave you insufficiently prepared for the course and unprepared for the first test.

Course Description

Sometimes called MORAL PHILOSOPHY, Ethics serves to introduce students to ethical dilemmas and how philosophy approaches these. This is the branch of philosophy that questions what is good and bad, and why certain actions are right or wrong. In this class we will deal with questions such as: What is ethics? Are there universal moral principles? Should/can all human beings have the same moral values? How do we know what is good? Where do moral values come from; reason? Emotion? Experience? The senses? Or perhaps morality is produced by culture and convention, or from social acculturation? Is an action good or bad in itself? Does it depend on our intentions? What is the relation between ethics and religion? Can we have one without the other?

In the first half of the course you will gain conceptual tools, and learn something of the ethical systems of the Western philosophical tradition, such as moral relativism, utilitarianism, Kantian ethics, virtue ethics and the feminist ethics of care. In the second half of the course you will apply your knowledge of ethical theories and systems to analyze and evaluate topical controversial issues such as euthanasia, abortion, economic justice, environmental responsibility, cloning, animal rights, violence and war.
The Class
For most, if not all of you, this will be your first philosophy class. First, please note that this is not a lecture class. I confine the lecture format to classes with 40 students or above. I have lectured on occasion to 300 to 450 students. At ASU we are fortunate that we have relatively small classes, thus a more active and participatory learning environment is both possible and desirable. I will open each class with a 20 minute introduction to the subject matter of the afternoon, and I will open the class to debate and discussion of the course materials for that week, or that particular class. Occasionally I will ask students to lead the discussion of the material or reading assignments for the week, especially if we find ourselves falling behind schedule.

Class Attendance Policy
Class attendance at ASU is mandatory and a class roll will be taken. If you miss three consecutive classes the ASU registrar will be informed. If you miss more than five classes during the semester you may receive a fail for the course overall (depending on the circumstances). The only legitimate reasons for missing classes or leaving classes early are sickness or medical appointments, or a domestic emergency (i.e. ‘car trouble,’ for example, is not a domestic emergency). Exceptions to this reviewed on a case by case basis.

Class Etiquette
Participation yes, but boorish behavior and/or verbal bullying is unacceptable. I reserve the right to ask any student to leave the classroom. In the event that any student refuses to leave the classroom when asked the campus police may be called (I have been teaching at ASU for 15 years and I have never had to do this but there is always a first time). Be respectful when you address other people (either other students or me). You may disagree with what other people say but the challenge is to show the weaknesses in their arguments and to build better ones.

Class Prohibitions (*unless I am presented with an accommodation)
NO SLEEPING IN CLASS (If you are too tired to stay awake in class you should not be in class)
NO PHONES
NO EARBUDS
NO DIPPING
NO VAPE
*NO LAPTOPS
NO HOT FOOD
PLEASE DON’T PASS MESSAGES
DO NOT LEAVE CLASS AFTER SIGNING IN WITHOUT PERMISSION
DO NOT ENGAGE IN DISTRACTING BEHAVIOUR

Class Preparation
Always bring your textbook to class
Bring notebook or note paper and pencil/pen
Always complete the reading assignment before class
Be prepared to listen and answer questions

Multiple Choice Tests
You will take THREE multiple choice tests. These tests will be on the subject matter of the previous three or four weeks of class, these are not cumulative. Each test is usually 30 multiple choice and
true/false questions, and you will have 30 mins to take the test. This test is NOT designed to be open book. It is assumed that you have completed the reading assignments and attended class before taking the test. This test will take place in the classroom with a scantron answer key.

**Final In-class Blue Book Exam**
The final class exam is open book. A detailed rubric of how these papers are assessed is posted on Blackboard. You will be expected to write an answer of about 1000-1200 words (roughly four or five sides of the Blue Book). You will be given an exam paper with several optional questions based upon the last weeks of the course. In my experience the main reason why students here at ASU under-perform with regard to finals is that they do not engage with course material. Papers often tend towards ‘stream of consciousness’ with few references to what has been studied. It is expected in a philosophy class, even an intro class, that you have learned some of the philosophers names and can accurately point to what ideas are associated with these philosophers and how to deploy these ideas in a coherent fashion. Higher grades will be awarded to those who can do some of this.

* All course work must be completed for a final grade.

**The Angelo State University Honor Code**
Angelo State University expects its students to maintain complete honesty and integrity in their academic pursuits. Students are responsible for understanding the Academic Honor Code, which is contained in both print and web versions of the *Student Handbook*. In other words, when you submit your work, you claim that the work is yours. If someone else wrote it for you or you got it from someone else (internet, other student’s class…), then you are not the author and thus will get a zero for that assignment. Any idea that is not yours should be properly referenced.

**Disabilities**
Please let me know if you have any special need due to any learning disability. Persons with disabilities which may warrant academic accommodations must contact the Student Life Office.

**ASU Mission Statement**
Angelo State University, a member of the Texas Tech University System, delivers undergraduate and graduate programs in the liberal arts, sciences, and professional disciplines. In a learning-centered environment distinguished by its integration of teaching, research, creative endeavor, service, and co-curricular experiences, ASU prepares students to be responsible citizens and to have productive careers.

**Grading Scale**
A-90% Outstanding  
B-80 Very good  
C-70 Satisfactory  
D- Min required  
F- Fail
Assessment
ASU Student Learning Objectives

Critical Thinking Skills (CT)

CT1. Gather, analyze, evaluate, and synthesize information relevant to a question or issue.

CT2. Develop and demonstrate a logical position (i.e. perspective, thesis, and hypothesis) that acknowledges ambiguities or contradictions.

Communication Skills (CS)

CS1. Develop, interpret, and express ideas through effective written communication.

CS2. Develop, interpret, and express ideas through effective oral communication.

Social Responsibility (SR)

SR1. Demonstrate intercultural competence.

SR2. Demonstrate knowledge of civic responsibility.

SR3. Demonstrate the ability to engage effectively in the campus, regional, national or global communities.

Personal Responsibility (PR)

PR1. Demonstrate the ability to evaluate choices, actions and consequences as related to ethical decision-making.

The Course
(I reserve the right to change the course from time to time when necessary)

PART 1
Systems of Ethics

Weeks 1 & 2
Class Discussions: Ethical Relativism & Egoism

Reading Assignments: pps. 20-32, and pps. 33-51

Weeks 3 & 4
Class Discussions: Utilitarianism and Kant’s Moral Theory
Reading Assignments: pps. 52-73 and pps. 74-95
First Multiple Choice Quiz

Weeks 5 & 6
Class Discussions: Aristotle’s Virtue Ethics, Feminist Ethics, Ethics of Existentialism and Psychoanalysis.

Reading Assignments: pps. 124-143, and pps. 144-161 & PDFs

PART 2
Ethical Issues

Weeks 7 & 8
Class Discussions: Euthanasia and Abortion

Reading Assignments: pps. 162-194, and pps. 196-228

Second Multiple Choice Test

Weeks 9 & 10
Class Discussions: Sexual Morality and Economic Justice

Reading Assignments: pps. 230-252, and pps. 279-310

Weeks 11 & 12
Class Discussions: The Death Penalty and the Environment
Reading Assignments: pps. 312-338, and pps. 340-373

Third Multiple Choice Quiz

Weeks 13 & 14
Class Discussions: Animal Rights and Cloning

Reading Assignments: pps. 375-400, and pps. 402-431

Week 15
Class Discussions: Just War Theory

Reading Assignments: pps. 433-457
FINAL
In-Class Blue Book
Exam
Monday, May 6, 6:00-8:00pm