Philosophy 2306.5001 Ethics
El Centro College, Arts & Sciences Division
Mark Thames, Ph.D., Instructor
Prerequisites: college-level reading.

A840, 3 credit hours
Fall, 2012
Tuesdays & Thursdays, 2:00-3:20pm
Program in Philosophy & Religion
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Catalogue Course Description
Consideration of what constitutes a good and a moral life. Using classical and contemporary theories, students will weigh such ingredients as pleasure, duty, power, and love as they apply to current issues of daily living. Students consider ethical problems in business, law, and medicine.

This Course: What You Want
You want credit for the course. Okay.
(1) Show up. If you aren’t here, you aren’t part of the course.
(2) Participate. Interact; figure out how to speak and ask questions. Give your presentation.
(3) Take the midterm and final.
(4) Write the paper. Learning to express yourself well is necessary.
Do these four things, perform them adequately, and you will pass and get credit.
Course completion at El Centro is a D, course success is a C
You want me to give you good value for your time and money. I will. I will be on time and prepared. I’ll stick to the syllabus. I won’t waste your time. I assign or recommend books worth reading. I love discussion, and put myself into it.

Honors Option.
(1) Meet me with other honors students in a public venue twice outside of class.
(2) An eight- or more-page paper on a more advanced topic of your choice.
(3) Make a B- or above on the paper and in the course.

This Course: What I Want
I want you to get the gist of three ideas, and make two efforts.
➤ First is the idea that everyone in the world has a value system, a sense of right and wrong. So you already have an ethics even if you’ve never thought about it. You also think about your life and the world around you, about what’s important and what you should do. That is, you already have the ability to think critically about what you value and why. What you need is tools for the job and time to do it.
➤ The second point to get across is that you have to do this yourself, but that you cannot do it by yourself. No one makes your decisions except you, but none of your decisions are made in a vacuum. Other people have input into your values and choices, but you make the call. When you choose what kind of ethical person you will be, other people are affected by you, no matter how isolated you may feel or how private you think your opinions may be. We are in this together,
whether we like it or not. What you need is to learn about others’ values, and time to think about and discuss them.

- Third, I want you to see that, since you’re the same person in all the different things you do and relationships you have, integrating your life so that you act consistently with your values will make you more reliable and trustworthy to others, and less tense and stressed yourself. Good questions can help you integrate your deepest beliefs with your choices and actions.

As for efforts I want you to make,

- The first effort I want you to make is to try to see why other people do what they do—how things look to them. You do this by reading and listening, and I check on your progress via tests.
- The other effort is, I want you to begin to tease out where you actually stand and what you think—and what you want to think—about the major issues in your life and world. You do so by writing and speaking, and I check it via class and papers.

El Centro College Program in Philosophy and Religion Curriculum Objectives

Whether as a supplement to other credit programs, as an Associate' degree-granting program itself, or as the home base of an academic pathway, the El Centro Program in Philosophy and Religion has its own notion of the conceptual relations between its different courses offered. Ethics is a sophomore-level course which

- introduces
- emphasizes
- reinforces

The Associate of Arts Degree with Emphasis in Philosophy and Religion

The El Centro Program in Philosophy and Religion offers an Associate's degree with emphasis in Philosophy and Religion. Ethics is an option in two of the three tracks offered.

Philosophy as Part of an El Centro Education

Why does El Centro College offer courses in philosophy, including Ethics?

Courses such as Ethics help the College carry out its mission, which is

- changing lives through higher education

This is primarily because of the social value to citizens, workers and entrepreneurs, and consumers of disciplined, critical, ethical thinking. Secondarily, exposure to diverse methods, views, and values prepares students for the real, globalized, diverse world.

Courses in philosophy, such as Ethics, conform to the College's purpose, to wit: this course provides:

- continuing adult education for occupational or cultural enrichment; and
- a sophomore course in the liberal arts.
Thus, this course channels the College’s vision, viz.:

- to recognize the unique opportunity offered by an urban, multicultural college—in this case, the chance to practice group ethical decision-making in a very diverse context;
- to purposefully promote mature global perspective, transcultural values and competencies, and responsible citizenship; and
- to focus on student success and lifelong learning.

Ethics is a practical as well as theoretical branch of philosophy. We have learned again in recent years that there is no neutral, value-free, purely technical way to solve social and personal problems. All solutions, and all methods intended to effect solutions, are value-laden in their content. Put positively, they imply a vision of the good society; negatively, they have a bias. Moreover, suggested solutions to social problems are judged by the public not merely on their efficacy but upon their rightness, goodness, and fairness. An informed ethical perspective is necessary for our private and public enterprises to become the kind of entities we can wholeheartedly support.

This course in Ethics embodies the College's values, that is:

- to provide exemplary and innovative instruction, improving such instruction over time by assessing student learning outcomes over time—you can see the learning outcomes below;
- to challenge individuals to embrace diversity though broadened concepts of self, and by expanding their view of the world and recognizing their roles in a global society—the explicit intent of the course is to train students in a crossculturally-appropriate model of ethical decision-making;
- to value academic freedom, respecting the rights and views of each individual by encouraging an honest, respectful, and continual exchange of views among students and faculty—which the course implements by encouraging students to express critically their own views; and
- to create high standards of performance through the acquisition of new knowledge and a commitment to constant responsiveness to the needs of our community of learners.

And this course helps the College attain its current goals, as follows:

- by June, 2015, increase the number of Associate degrees awarded to 530, compared with a 2008-2009 baseline of 480. Ethics is a Tier Two option for many Associate's degrees (Goal 1: Student Success, Objective 4.), and
- by 2015, increase by 33% the number of students earning Core requirements for transfer over the 2008-2009 baseline of 124, to 164. Ethics is a Core Curriculum course in the area of “Humanity, Creativity, and the Aesthetic Experience.” (Goal 1, Objective 5.)
Dallas County Community College District Philosophy & Religion Curriculum Objectives

The DCCCD District Philosophy and Religion Curriculum Committee recommends that courses at each college in the District have some common objectives. As the District is a funding and not an academic entity, each college being separately accredited, El Centro College seeks to cooperate with these recommendations. Those which are relevant to courses in Ethics are:

This Course: What the State of Texas Wants

Intellectual Competencies and Educational Objectives

The state wants this course to improve some of your intellectual competencies. So, in this course you will at least:

- READ The Idiot’s Guide to Understanding Ethics and Great Traditions in Ethics.
- WRITE a five-page paper. (critical thinking, writing)
- SPEAK your mind, including a presentation, and LISTEN to others speak theirs.
- CRITICALLY THINK about the views discussed in the course, including your own.

Texas also wants this course to attain some exemplary educational objectives. So the state wants you to come out of this course:

I. able to demonstrate an awareness of the scope and variety of the humanities;
II. able to understand the humanities in their breadth and depth as an expression of historically-situated, cultural human values;
III. able to respond to these values critically;
IV. able to demonstrate a knowledge of the influence of philosophy;
V. and able to articulate an informed personal reaction to it.

My intention is that the readings and class lecture will (I) expose you to the humane vision afforded by philosophical ethics, and will begin to convince you that, whatever else ethical values and systems are, they are (II) the ethics of human beings who have beliefs, a shared history, and culture; moreover, they (IV) influence and underlie all the decisions we make. The midterm and final exam will test how well you have become aware and understanding of major approaches to ethics, and have become able to demonstrate that awareness. I hope the class discussions and papers will provide you with formats where you can (V) respond to the values expressed in various ethical beliefs and theories, indicate its influence in your own areas of interest, and begin to articulate your own position.

Texas State Core Curriculum Objectives

Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board
Core Curriculum 2014, Chapter 4B Provisions

4.B.28(2). Core Objectives. Through the Texas Core Curriculum, students in philosophy courses will prepare for contemporary challenges by developing and demonstrating the following core objectives:
(A) Critical Thinking Skills: to include creative thinking, innovation, inquiry, and analysis, evaluation, and synthesis of information;
(B) Communication Skills: to include effective development, interpretation, and expression of ideas through written, oral, and visual communication;
(E) Personal Responsibility: to include the ability to connect choices, actions and consequences to ethical decision-making; and
(F) Social Responsibility: to include intercultural competence, knowledge of civic responsibility, and the ability to engage effectively in regional, national, and global communities.

Ethics does in fact enable students to achieve these statewide Core objectives:
4.B.28.2.A: This Ethics course encourages critical thinking, evaluation, and synthesis—in short, a critical-thinking approach to ethical decision-making;
4.B.28.2.B: Ethics is inherently a social discipline; while each person can only make her decision for herself, we cannot make them by ourselves, but must make them together, or at least taking others into account. Thus, ethics requires communication, and this course teaches the skill of a certain kind of ethical communication.
4.B.28.2.E and F: Ethics fundamentally concerns taking responsibility for oneself and one's group in a social and environmental context of many individuals and groups.

PHIL 2306 Course-Level Student Learning Objectives

Course Objectives
All stakeholders in a given course in higher education, including the instructor and students, may have multiple objectives for the course, of which only some will be educational in any strict sense. The above-mentioned, various intellectual and decision-making competencies and objectives express some of the desired outcomes of an El Centro education.

Student Learning Objectives
Any of a number of various kinds of specific learning objectives might exercise those competencies and achieve those objective in each of the several academic disciplines. However, the baseline for course success in this course is mastery of the following student learning objectives. [State Core objectives in brackets.] At the end of this course you should be able to:

I. fairly describe one of a defined range of ethical theories applicable to a plural society (virtue theory, utilitarianism, deontology, care theory, or contract theory); [Critical Thinking.]

II. critically evaluate at least one theory and one ethical “tool”; Critical Thinking.]

III. describe the “ethical toolbox,” composed of a set of these protocols; analyze a given ethically-problematic social situation in ethical-systemic terms; and deploy the “ethical toolbox,” composed of a set of these protocols, to assess ethical answers to a given social ethical problem in its ethical-systemic nature; [Inquiry and Analysis.]

IV. and begin to be able to articulate your own insights and observations on a selected current ethical issue, using the ethical toolbox given its theoretical basis. [Personal and Social Responsibility.]
Assessment

The usual way to tell if any given objectives have been met is through assessment. The primary mode of assessment in a content- and critique-oriented discipline such as philosophy is professional judgment based on personal interaction. However, as there are many different objectives, and many different kinds of objectives, for courses, depending partly on the many stakeholders, so also there are other modes of assessment, and societal, institutional, and professional goals for courses, in addition to pedagogical ones. Generally-accepted academic learning standards applicable to this course include the following:

- Critical Thinking: [http://www.aacu.org/value/rubrics/CriticalThinking.cfm](http://www.aacu.org/value/rubrics/CriticalThinking.cfm);
- Communication: [http://www.aacu.org/value/rubrics/WrittenCommunication.cfm](http://www.aacu.org/value/rubrics/WrittenCommunication.cfm);
- Personal and Social Responsibility: [http://www.aacu.org/value/rubrics/civicengagement.cfm](http://www.aacu.org/value/rubrics/civicengagement.cfm);

The credit for the design of these assessment standards is

Assignments

Not surprisingly, in philosophy many different assignments may faithfully assess a given student learning objective. There are different styles of teaching and learning, and certainly many different techniques for introducing, emphasizing, and reinforcing concepts, practices, and skills. So the choice by of assignments has to do with the professional judgment and insight into students of a particular instructor.

Thus, in this section of the course this semester with Dr. Thames your achievement in the four learning objectives will be assessed on the following assignments…

I. critical thinking on a midterm
II. critical thinking on a pretest and posttest, and a midterm
III. critical thinking on a term paper and a final
IV. personal responsibility shown on a term paper and a presentation

Details

Prerequisites

Students are required to have demonstrated college-level “reading, writing, and/or math skills” prior to enrolling in academic transfer core courses. In philosophical ethics you read and write. If you are weak in this area, get help. El Centro has many reading and writing resources.

Style Guide and Plagiarism Warning

Use the Chicago humanities format for your paper. Plagiarism is not tolerated, and will result in anything from a penalty of one letter grade to course failure, at the discretion of the instructor.

Recording Class Sessions

Please do not record me on any device without my written consent. No visible or audible electronic devices of any kind, including cell phones. You may take notes on a laptop or other device with written permission, but no texting, answering calls, surfing, blogging, twittering, etc.
Make-Ups
No makeups without a medical or legal excuse. All testing materials return to me.

Turning In Papers
Papers turned in late lose 2/3 letter grade for each class day late up to five such days.
Papers must be stapled; unstapled papers will not be accepted. No email submissions unless the instructor specifies ecampus SafeAssign.

Stationery for Quizzes, Papers, and Final
The midterm and final will be answered on blue books. Papers should be typed or machine-printed on (one side only of) letter-size (8 1/2 x 11”) white paper, and / or submitted electronically. The midterm and final may be in #2 pencil or blue or black ink only.

Amendments to the Syllabus
If I make any changes to the syllabus, I will do so in writing, distributed in class to you.

Attendance
Is always taken. Medical or legal excuses must be documented; religious holidays by personal statement due January 30, 2012.

Course Completion
Failure to attend is reported on census day, January 30, 2012. Drops and withdrawals by College policy. Failure to attend after April 19, 2012 results in a grade of NF. There is a six-drop maximum per student in the state of Texas. Course grades are reported via student econnect.

Disability Accommodation
Any student who may need accommodations due to a disability should contact Disability Services Office. Written notice to the instructor from Disability Services will result in appropriate mitigations if delivered by January 30, 2012.

Guests
With respect, your minor children may not be brought to class. Please make suitable arrangements. The El Centro Adult Resource Center may be able to help. If you have a request for an adult family member or friend to attend, you must obtain my explicit permission.

Academic Integrity
By attending, you claim that you seriously intend to participate in education. It is therefore appropriate for others to expect you to act accordingly. Obviously this applies to class disruptiveness, electronics usage, honesty, ethics, and plagiarism. It also applies to common-sense matters such as courtesy to others, not eating during class, attendance and attention, notifying your instructor of matters affecting your attendance or performance, and the like. A text or phone call is not a valid reason for leaving the classroom. For special circumstances, see the instructor at the beginning of class.

Grievances
It is best to resolve any conflicts or issues with the person concerned, not going behind or above them. If problems remain, or if the problem is with me, see me and then the College Ombudsperson.

Computing
The availability of on-campus computers means that econnect, ecampus, database research, and word processing capability is assumed for every student. Plan your work.
Miscellaneous
The course is governed by College policy, the student handbook, the syllabus and addenda, common sense and common courtesy, and the discretion of the instructor. I am here to educate, in a cooperative effort with you.

Grading
Class participation 30%
20% class discussion THINK, SPEAK, Objective IV.
10% class presentation using theories and tools in an area of applied ethics: READ, LISTEN, SPEAK; Objs. I, III.
Midterm 20% READ, THINK CRITICALLY; Objectives I, II, and III.
5-page Paper 25% WRITE; THINK CRITICALLY; Objectives II and III.
Final 25% THINK CRITICALLY, WRITE; Objectives I, II, III, & IV.

This Course: What You Need
Text

Writing Guide
I. What Is Ethics and How Do You Do It?


II. Problem: Is There Any Point?

6 II.7. “‘Us First’ Ethics.” pp. 75-86.  
11 II.8. “Cynical about Ethics?” pp. 87-98.  

III. A Solution: Ethical “Recipes” and the Ethical Toolbox

Philippa Foot. “Moral Virtue and Human Interest.” pp. 312-322. [48]  
Tool: Could I live with myself if I did this?

18 III.10. “Middle Age Virtues” pp. 111-120.  
Thomas Aquinas. “Morality and Natural Law.” pp. 74-87. [37]  
Tool: What would God—or whoever—have me do?

Tool: Is the sort of society we want to live in?

Tool: Is this the right thing to do or not?
Tool: What will happen if I do this? Who will it affect?  

*Great Traditions:* Annette Baier. “Ethics as Trusting in Trust.” pp. 323-337. [23]  
Tool: Is someone in need here? Am I responsible?  

**IV. Problem: Competing Theories or Complementary Tools?**  


11   **Midterm**  

**V. Applied Ethics I (and Presentations)**  


23   Legal Ethics.  


**VI. Problem: Are We Too Divided to Agree?**  

     I.3. “Convince Me That I’m Wrong”  pp. 25-34.  
     Kurt Baier. “Good Reasons in Ethics.”  pp. 288-299. [70]

**VII. Applied Ethics II: Social Ethics (and Presentations)**

|   |   | **Paper Due.** V.27. “Getting Our Just Des(s)erts.” | pp. 324-335. |

|   |   | Review. |
|   |   | **Final exam** 2:00-4:00pm |