Instructor: Elizabeth Escalante  
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Course Description, Focus, and Assumptions

Prerequisite: Developmental Reading 0093 or English as a Second Language (ESOL) 0044 or have met the Texas Success Initiative (TSI) standard in Reading. The catalogue course description for this course states the following: "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 may consider
ethical problems in business, law, and medicine."

Why a course in ethics? Everyday we make moral decisions. Everyday we make moral choices. We shall, no doubt, discover as we share in this virtual classroom experience together, that the issue of morality is one that is never far from any question regarding human action, human hope, and an affirmation of human existence. As Socrates said, moral philosophy deals with "no small matter, but how we ought to live." Of course, when we "do philosophy," we know that we are undertaking controversial topics -- that is, there are almost no conclusive answers. On the other hand, as humans we must all -- in some way -- address the question, "How should we live our lives?" We must consider what it might mean to be a conscientious moral agent. We must try to determine if there is a way of guiding or judging our moral conduct as humans. We have to understand how well we are making moral choices. This course can help us answer these questions.

This course will be conducted primarily as a reading and discussion class; therefore, your active participation is required for successful completion of the course. We will consider a wide range of issues relating to moral philosophy. In addition to our own responses to these critical issues, we will consider the ideas of philosophers, and others who have given their attention to the issue.

Instructor's Aspirations for Students.

This course should have a direct connection to and influence on your life -- your life as a student, of course; however, even more important to me, your life beyond the walls of the virtual college. My primary aspiration is to help you walk the earth when you complete this course in a way that is at least somewhat different from the day you began. In short, I hope that when we part you are a changed person, that I am a changed
person too, and that we both have changed for the better. My aspiration in teaching this course is for us to have a learning adventure together. Students who have curious, active minds and who are eager to engage the topic and material are encouraged to join me in this adventure.

**Learning Objectives for the Course**

It is important to understand and acknowledge that in courses in the humanities, such as philosophy, some of the most important learning objectives cannot be easily measured or are impossible to measure. For example, some of the learning objectives in Ethics that are difficult or impossible to measure are as follows:

- developing intellectual humility
- developing intellectual courage
- developing intellectual empathy
- developing personal and intellectual integrity
- developing intellectual perseverance
- developing confidence in reason
- developing self knowledge
- developing a sense of wonder

The fundamental course objective that can be measured is that students learn the elements of moral philosophy. In learning the elements of moral philosophy students will develop further their own capacities in three specific and interrelated areas: 1) as conscientious moral agents; 2) as critical thinkers; and, 3) as students with mastery of particular content.

1. As conscientious moral agents students will:

- improve ability to use reason
- recognize the importance of impartiality and fair-mindedness
- develop further appreciation for facts and evidence
• develop skills in listening to reason
• appreciate the importance of revising positions when appropriate
• appreciate the importance of acting upon moral decisions

2. As critical thinkers in philosophy students will understand that critical thinking in Ethics:

• has a purpose, objective, or function
• is an attempt to figure out something, settle a question, or solve a problem
• is based on information, evidence, experience, or research
• involves inferences from which we draw conclusions
• recognizes that conclusions are only as sound as the assumptions on which they are based
• is expressed through and shaped by concepts and ideas
• has implications and, when acted upon, has consequences
• occurs within some frame of reference or point of view
• strives to be fair-minded
• strives to distinguish between what one knows and does not know
• is willing to challenge popular beliefs
• requires that one demands the same standards from oneself as one expects others to meet
• requires working through complexities and frustrations without giving up
• recognizes that good reasoning is the key to living a rational life, and to creating a more fair and just world
• involves taking responsibility for one's thinking, beliefs, morals, and values
• involves working to overcome native egocentric, ethnocentric, and culture-centric tendencies
• involves self-directed, self-monitored learning
• involves placing questions at the heart of one's learning
• involves reading carefully, reflecting, and understanding the most important ideas in texts
• involves identifying central issues and reasoning well through those issues
• involves developing skills in recognizing bias
3. As students with mastery of particular content one must understand:

• what is morality and the minimum conception of morality
• cultural relativism and the challenges it presents to morality
• subjectivism and the relationship it has to morality
• the relationship of morality and religion
• the basic concepts, ideas, and problems associated with various historical moral theories (Ethical Egoism, Utilitarianism, Duty Ethics, Divine Command Theory, Social Contract Theory, Ethics of Care, Virtue Ethics)
• how to apply moral reasoning to practical moral issues
• the likely elements of a satisfactory personal moral theory

**Learning Activities**

Too often, I believe, we limit the way we think about learning. First, real learning is something we all love to do and have loved to do since we were babies. Learning is exciting and fun and that's part of the reason we love it. We are fortunate to be able to use technology to assist us in our learning together. As for the structured learning experiences that will lead to an evaluation of your work for this course, there are four main learning activities:

a) Writing protocol papers (each approximately 750 words in length) in response to assigned chapters in the text. (The protocol paper assignment can be viewed in Assignments -- Unit One. You will also find a sample protocol to give you an idea of what is expected.)

b) Taking four examinations over material covered, including a final examination;

c) Writing a final paper;
d) Reading books, articles, essays on moral questions and philosophy; and

e) Using the Discussing Board to interact with professor and other students about ideas that emerge from the above activities.

**Evaluation**

Your final course grade will be determined on the following basis: You will earn numerical grades for your performance in each of the above learning activities. The maximum number of points that one could make is 1000

900+ = A
800- 899 = B
700 - 799 = C
600 - 699 = D
Below 600 = F

a) Protocol Papers -- (six grades) you will be provided with a simple protocol to follow in preparing these short papers as responses to what you have read. I will also provide you with a sample paper before the first assignment is due. (The protocol paper assignment can be viewed in Assignments -- Unit One. You will also find a sample protocol to give you an idea of what is expected.) There will be six protocol papers assigned and each will be worth a total of 50 points. (Maximum of 300 points)

b) Examinations - you will be given four examinations during the course. Each examination will be worth a total of 100 points. Examinations are timed. If you exceed the allotted time for an examination, the instructor has the right to adjust your examination score accordingly. (Maximum of 400 points)
c) Paper Assignment -- (one grade) you will be given an assignment to write a final paper of approximately 4-5 pages in length. (Maximum of 100 points)

d) Class Participation -- As participation in class "discussions" is an essential aspect of success in this course, you will receive a class participation grade that is based upon your contributions to the discussions on the Discussion Board. There will be 4 in-depth discussions during the course, so your participation in each discussion will be worth a maximum of 50 points. (Maximum of 200 points)

Text

The Elements of Moral Philosophy, 7th Edition - James and Stuart Rachels (ISBN# 0078038242)

Competencies for Philosophy/Religion Courses

Reading: Students will be asked to read from philosophy and religion textbooks written for students reading at the 12th grade level or above. Students may be asked to read some short passages from primary sources. Student achievement will be measured by such methods as exams, quizzes, and in-class discussion of the material.

Writing: Students will be given opportunities to write essays and papers about philosophical and religious issues. The student's progress in improving academic writing will be communicated by such methods as instructor remarks written on papers and individual student conferences.

Speaking: Students are expected to participate in such speaking activities as class discussions, small group
discussions, and class presentations. The instructor will evaluate their speaking skills.

Listening: Students will enhance their listening skills by practicing speaking one at a time and attending to the speaker. Students may be asked to summarize or repeat an argument they have just heard.

Critical Thinking: Students' writing and class participation will be evaluated continually by such criteria as clarity, consistency, coherence, comprehensiveness, compatibility, and fairness in thought and expression.

Scope and Variety in Philosophy and Religion: By studying a wide range of ideas, purported by different historical periods, ages, and cultures, the student will demonstrate through written and spoken work an awareness of the scope and variety of issues and ideas studied in philosophy and religion. Some non-western ideas may be presented and discussed.

Expressions of Individual and Human Values within a Social and Historical Context: In class ideas will generally be presented within a historical, cultural, and social context, so students can understand why and how the ideas emerged. Students will be encouraged, in class discussions and in written work, to relate the ideas studied in philosophy and religion to ideas studied in other courses (e.g., literature, psychology, history, etc.).

Critical Response: Students will practice, in speech and writing, giving reasoned, critical responses to the ideas and theories presented. Unsupported statements of likes or dislikes will be treated as seminal material by the instructor for the development of a reasoned, critical response to a theory, idea, or religion.
Informed Personal Reaction: Students will be encouraged by the instructor to personalize the material studied and to react to it. The instructor, however, may ask students to support reactions by such means as the use of logic, reason, and bibliographical research.

Influence of Philosophy/Religion on Intellectual Experiences: Through such means as written papers and exams, class participation and discussions, oral presentations, and small group activities, students will relate the ideas and theories studied in religion and philosophy to various related intellectual experiences.

Exemplary Educational Outcomes

1. To demonstrate awareness of the scope and variety of works in the arts and humanities.

2. To understand those works as expressions of individual and human values within an historical and social context.

3. To articulate an informed personal reaction to works in the arts and humanities.

4. To demonstrate knowledge of the influence of literature, philosophy, and/or the arts on intercultural experiences.

Department Mission Statement

The mission of the Philosophy/Religion Department at Richland College is to provide to students and teachers alike interactive and cooperative learning environments in which they may examine ideas related to their cultural, philosophical, and religious heritages. The Department further strives to develop skills in analysis and evaluation of arguments and the ability to
write and to speak clearly about philosophic and religious issues, which pertain to values, knowledge, reality, human nature, and God. The Department aims at translating these skills into considered actions in the lives of those involved and into reasoned interactions with the greater global community.

Institutional Policies

These policies may be viewed at the following website www.richlandcollege.edu/syllabusinfo/syllabusInformation.pdf

Disclaimer

The instructor reserves the right to amend this syllabus as necessary.

The Richland College Statement on Academic Honesty

This statement clarifies academic honesty for the Richland College teaching-learning community. It identifies appropriate student behavior and describes teachers' expectations of students.

We-the Richland College faculty, administration, and staff-are committed to honesty and fairness as we work with our students. We also expect our students to be honest and fair in the work they submit to us. This statement on academic honesty describes:

1) what we expect from students.
2) the consequences of their failing to meet those expectations.
Note: As we use the terms "honesty" and "dishonesty," we are referring to actions and behaviors; we are not judging the character of our students.

The Richland College faculty believes only a small minority of students "cheat," However, we believe academically dishonest students cheat the academically honest students. Therefore, we expect students who are aware of cheating to act honorably and report instances of academic dishonesty to the faculty or the appropriate academic dean.

Expectations

1. We believe academic honesty is essential, and students should avoid actions that misrepresent academic success. We believe Richland College students are academically honest, and they want to be fair and honest in the assignments they submit.

These guidelines apply to all testing situations-test administered in the classrooms, tests administered in the Testing Center, and tests administered by someone other than the professor.

2. All forms of cheating on tests are academically dishonest. Students cheat when they:
   - participate in any activity that falsely represents their ability to answer test questions.
   - copy-with or with permission-from another student’s test.
   - use notes (either written or electronically stored in calculators or computers) or any other unauthorized materials.
   - request answers or assist other students with answers without authorization.
   - obtain test questions prior to the test (soliciting or in any other way obtaining test questions, answers, or portions of
tests).

3. **Student's presenting another person's work as their own is unacceptable.** Often, academic work permits and even encourages students to use another person's words or ideas, but students must document those words and ideas correctly. Therefore, students cheat when they:
   - Summarize, paraphrase, or quote another person without giving proper credit.
   - Submit papers written by someone else.
   - Copy verbatim (word for word) from other sources (books, Internet, and other similar materials).

When they have questions about when and how to credit other sources, students must seek clarification from the faculty. These matters are the student's responsibility.

4. **Unauthorized collaboration on assignments or tests is unacceptable.** Richland College supports authorized collaborative, cooperative learning. Therefore, we encourage study groups when students are preparing for tests, but students cheat when they:
   - Provide other students with answers on homework assignments.
   - Present work completed by someone else.

If they have a question about the appropriateness of collaboration, students should seek clarification from the faculty. **These matters are the student's responsibility.**

**Consequences**

1. Faculty determine the appropriate consequences for students
who fail to be academically honest. Even if the course syllabus fails to address the matter, students are obliged to be academically honest. By enrolling in a course, students are promising to be academically honest.

2. As consequences for academic dishonesty, faculty may:

► assign a performance grade of "F" for the assignment or test.

► document the incident in the student's Richland College file.

► assign additional work.

► take over appropriate disciplinary actions.

Repeated violations may result in the student's expulsion or suspension from the college. Students must understand that academic dishonesty carries serious consequences. However, if they believe they have received unfair treatment, students can file a grievance as described in the "Student Code of Conduct" in the Richland College Catalog or published in the DCCCD Catalog at http://www1.dcccd.edu/cat0506/ss/code.cfm

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Academic Dishonesty

Scholastic dishonesty is a violation of the Code of Student Conduct. Scholastic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to,
cheating on a test, plagiarism, and collusion.

As a college student, you are considered a responsible adult. Your enrollment indicates acceptance of the DCCCD Code of Student Conduct published in the DCCCD Catalog. https://www1.dcccd.edu/cat0506/ss/code.cfm The Richland College Statement on Academic Honesty is attached at the end of this syllabus. If you have any questions about what is or is not academically honest, do not hesitate to contact me.

**Withdrawal Policy**

If you are unable to complete this course, it is your responsibility to withdraw formally. The withdrawal request must be received in the Registrar's Office by the official drop date. Failure to do so will result in your receiving a performance grade, usually an "F." If you drop a class or withdraw from the college before the official drop/withdrawal deadline, you will receive a "W" (Withdraw) in each class dropped.