Philosophy 2306-26401/93408: Ethics


Dallas County Community College District, Social Sciences
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Course Description:
Prerequisite: Developmental Reading 0093 or English as a Second Language (ESOL) 0044 or have met the Texas Success Initiative (TSI) standard in Reading. The systematic evaluation of classical and/or contemporary ethical theories concerning the good life, human conduct in society, morals, and standards of value. (3 Lec.)
Coordinating Board Academic Approval Number 3801015335

Required Materials:
- PDF files posted in individual course modules.

Communication: I try to review all newly posted material daily, so that I can correct errors if necessary. I grade assignments shortly after the assignment deadlines, though this is not always possible. Papers will obviously take longer. Also, you can usually expect me to respond to your e-mails within 24-48 hours (it may take longer on weekends). Be aware that while this is my general and intended practice, it is subject to the changes and chances of life—especially when papers are due. Also: MAKE SURE YOU HAVE YOUR CURRENT AND CORRECT EMAIL ADDRESS IN ECAMPUS! If you don’t, you will miss out on important announcements. Lastly, make sure to include your course and section number in any email communication.

Technical Requirements and Support: PHIL 2306-2401 requires access to a computer, the Internet and e-mail. If you should have any technical difficulties, you may go to the eCampus Technical Support and Help Desk at http://ecampus.dcccd.edu, or call 972-669-6402. There is a link for Technical Assistants where students may submit a ticket. Also alert the instructor concerning any technical problems. (if applicable)

Everything you need to know about the Dallas Community Colleges and distance education can be found at our website: http://www.brookhavencollege.edu/dl/ or http://online.dcccd.edu/

PHIL 2306 is included in the DCCCD Core Curriculum. This course provides students with the opportunity to develop the Core Curriculum Intellectual Competencies of reading, writing, speaking, listening, and critical thinking fundamental to all DCCCD Core Curriculum courses. It also provides students with the opportunity to achieve the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board's Exemplary Educational Objectives in the humanities and visual and performing arts.

Core Curriculum Objectives
PHIL 2306 satisfies the following Core Objectives defined by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board:
Critical Thinking Skills - to include creative thinking, innovation, inquiry, and analysis, evaluation and synthesis of information.

Communication Skills - to include effective development, interpretation and expression of ideas through written, oral and visual communication.

Social Responsibility: to include intercultural competence, knowledge of civic responsibility, and the ability to engage effectively in regional, national, and global communities.

Personal Responsibility - to include the ability to connect choices, actions and consequences to ethical decision-making.

PHIL 2306 Learning Outcomes
PHIL 2306 learning outcomes describe the goals for all PHIL 2306 courses at Brookhaven College. These outcomes address the Core Objectives: Upon successful completion of this course, students will:

- Read, analyze, and critique philosophical texts.
- Define and appropriately use important terms such as relativism, virtue, duty, rights, utilitarianism, natural law, egoism, altruism, autonomy, and care ethics.
- Demonstrate knowledge of major arguments and problems in ethics.
- Present and discuss well-reasoned ethical positions in writing.
- Apply ethical concepts and principles to address moral concerns.
- Apply course material to various aspects of life.
- Discuss ways of living responsibly in a world where people have diverse ethical beliefs.

Student absences due to religious observances:
Absences for observance of religious holy days are excused. A student whose absence is excused to observe a religious holy day is allowed to make-up an examination or complete an assignment within a reasonable time after the absence. This policy must, obviously, be adapted to an online course: if a deadline interferes with a religious observance, please let me know in advance.

ADA Statement:
If you are a student with a disability and/or special needs who requires accommodations, please contact the college Disability Services Office.

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 withdraw 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.

Financial Aid Recipients
Students who are receiving any form of financial aid should check with the financial aid office prior to withdrawing from classes. Withdrawals may affect your eligibility to receive further aid and could cause you to be in a position or repayment for the current semester. Students who fail to attend or participate after the drop date are also subject to this policy.

Third Attempt
Effective for the Fall Semester 2005, the Dallas County Community Colleges will charge additional tuition to students registering the third of subsequent time for a course. All third and subsequent attempts of the majority of credit and Continuing Education/Workforce Training courses will result in additional tuition to be charged. Developmental Studies and some other courses will not be charged a higher tuition rate. Third attempts include courses taken at any of the Dallas County Community Colleges since the Fall 2002 Semester.
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 Dallas County Community Colleges Code of Student Conduct published in the Dallas County Community Colleges Catalog. Please note: one instance of academic dishonesty – whether it is on a discussion board posting (yes, it happens!) or on a written assignment will result in an automatic failure for the course.

Stop before you drop:
For students who enrolled in college level courses for the first time in the fall of 2007, Texas Education Code 51.907 limits the number of courses a student may drop. You may drop no more than 6 courses during your entire undergraduate career unless the drop qualifies as an exception. Your campus counseling/advising center will give you more information on the allowable exceptions. Remember that once you have accumulated 6 non-exempt drops, you cannot drop any other courses with a “W”. Therefore, please exercise caution when dropping courses in any Texas public institution of higher learning, including all seven of the Dallas County Community Colleges. For more information, you may access: https://www1.dcccd.edu/cat1112/ss/oep/dw.cfm

Assignments and Grading Policy:

1. Discussion Board – There will be multiple discussion board assignments for a total of 100 points. Extra credit is possible on discussion board assignments if a student contributes to the conversation beyond the bare minimum requirements (see the grading rubric in the “start here” section for these requirements). Since the purpose of this section of the class is discussion with others, you must adhere to the schedule. Because of this, late postings will not be graded. These assignments are crucial to the class: you should engage in thoughtful debate and discussion with each other throughout the semester. I implore you take this seriously, because you will learn more by engaging in thoughtful debate and discussion with each other than you will by doing almost anything else. Additionally, this sort of assignment will help you develop habits of argument and rhetoric that will improve your written work across the board, not just in this class, but in all your classes. The first discussion board assignment will be an introduction, and therefore an easy 10 points. The second discussion board assignment will require you to make strong arguments in defense of certain contradictory positions, and will be worth 20 points (please note that this means that you will almost certainly be arguing for a position you disagree with – that is the whole point). Do not wait until the last minute to do these assignments! If you do, you are not only hurting yourself, because you are doing things in a hurry without adequate time to reflect on what your colleagues have said, you are also hurting others, insofar as you are denying them your insight and the opportunity to respond to you.

Discussion board postings will be graded according to the rubric mentioned above. Please note that you will not receive full credit for doing the barest minimum, and you will not receive any credit for low-content posts such as “I like what you said,” or “I agree.” Also note that it is possible to earn extra credit on this assignment by posting more than the required minimum – engaging in extended, serious and thoughtful discussion with your fellow students will earn you extra credit on each of these assignments. That adds up.

2. Midterm Exam – The mid-term essay will involve writing a well-thought out response to a prompt that I provide, and it will deal with the material you have studied in the Moral Philosophy portion of the course. It will be worth 100 points. You will have a few days in which to write it.
Thoughtful participation in the discussion boards will have prepared you to do this very easily.

3. Final Exam – the final essay exam will be worth **100 points** as well, and you will have a few days to write it.

4. Quizzes – there will be a few quizzes, including the orientation quiz (which is meant to ensure that you have read and understood the syllabus), which will be worth a cumulative total of **50 points**. The reading quizzes will focus on details from the assigned reading, and, unsurprisingly, you will do significantly better on them if you have done the readings first.

5. Research Paper – written in accordance with the prompt, this will be worth **50 points**. Please note that the prompt for the research paper has its own module; also note that you **must** complete the research paper to pass the course. Late papers will not be accepted.

6. Extra credit – this is specific to the online version of this course, and is related only to Part I. Find video clips on Youtube that illustrate principles that you see discussed in the readings in part I of the course, and send them to me in an email with an thoughtful explanation of how and why the clip you are sending illustrates the point you say it illustrates. **I do not want academic discussions of these ideas, but things that come from pop-culture. The Simpsons, for example, can occasionally be an excellent source of such things. IF – and only if – you can convince me that this video does in fact illustrate the point in question well, it will be worth 1 point of extra credit on your final course grade. Additionally, when it is shared with the class (which it will be, if I am convinced that it is valuable), I will credit you with providing the clip, unless you prefer to toil in nameless anonymity.**

7. You must complete all written assignments in order to pass this class. If you fail to do the midterm, final exam, or term paper, you cannot pass the course.

**Grading Scale:** this grading scale is based on the total number of points you earn through the assignments above. Because of the extra credit, it is possible to earn **more** than 400 points.

- 360-400 points is an A.
- 320-359 points is a B.
- 280-319 points is a C.
- 240-279 points is a D.
- 0-239 points is an F.

**Financial Aid:**
If you are receiving Financial Aid grants or loans, you must begin attendance in all classes. Do not drop or stop attending any class without consulting the Financial Aid Office. Changes in your enrolment level and failing grades may require that you repay financial aid funds. Students who fail to attend or participate after the drop date are also subject to this policy.
Make-up Exams:
Due to the nature of the course, there will be no make-up exams. If I give you a number of days
to write an assignment, it will not be accepted later than the specified deadline, and you will
receive a 0 for the assignment. If you have unusual circumstances that will warrant no penalty,
you must contact me before the assignment is due, not after.

Academic Dishonesty:
Academic dishonesty is not tolerated. The Student Code of Conduct, which is printed in
the college catalog, prescribes penalties for students found guilty of any form of "academic
dishonesty." According to this Code, any student found guilty of cheating, fabrication,
facilitation academic dishonesty, plagiarism, or collusion may receive an F in the course and be
suspended from college. For the purposes of this course, a single deliberate act of plagiarism will
result in failure for the course, regardless of performance in other areas of evaluation.
Furthermore, I will write a letter to the dean of the College recommending your expulsion. Your
enrollment indicates acceptance of the Dallas County Community Colleges Code of Student
Conduct published in the Brookhaven College Catalog.

A note about this course
Philosophy is hard. In contemporary usage, “philosophy” simply means one’s general point of
view. But this is not what philosophy means in an academic context. Likewise, the readings
assigned in this first half of this course are not “textbook” readings. Often they are translations of
works written hundreds, if not thousands of years ago. As such, they are not immediately clear in
their meaning. You cannot simply “skim” the text in order to understand it. Instead, you must
enter into a conversation with the text: asking the author why he or she makes this argument, what
does it mean or imply, and how does it relate to other parts of the book or to other philosophers.
Your goal here is not to learn about the philosophers we read, but to learn from them.

Because of this, it is highly recommended that you write in your books. Underline passages that
seem important. Mark cross-references, and write comments, notes and questions in the margins.
To truly engage these philosophers, one must enter into a conversation with them, and not read
them passively. Real reading is done with a pen or pencil in hand.

Niccolò Machiavelli’s description of his reading habits might serve as a useful illustration:

On the coming of evening, I return to my house and enter my study; and at
the door I take off the day’s clothing, covered with mud and dust, and put on
garments regal and courtly; and reclothed appropriately, I enter the ancient
courts of ancient men [his library], where, received by them with affection,
I feed on that food which only is mine and which I was born for, where I
am not ashamed to speak with them and to ask them the reason for
their actions; and they in their kindness answer me; and for four hours
of time I do not feel boredom, I forget every trouble, I do not dread poverty,
I am not frightened by death; entirely I give myself over to them.
And because Dante says it does not produce knowledge when we hear
but do not remember, I have noted everything in their conversation
which has profited me...

He describes himself as entering his library where he is in the presence of ancient men. Reading
is described as a conversation, where he questions those ancients and they, through their books,
answer him. Finally, he takes careful notes in order to ensure that he remember what they said
and profits from it.
It is best not to think of this class as a series of discreet and unconnected texts (they are not—they have been selected because of their relation to one another), but as your opportunity to participate in a great conversation that has been going on for thousands of years, and which has shaped the world around you. As economist John Maynard Keynes famously wrote:

> The ideas of economists and political philosophers, both when they are right and when they are wrong, are more powerful than is commonly understood. Indeed the world is ruled by little else. Practical men, who believe themselves to be quite exempt from any intellectual influence, are usually the slaves of some defunct economist. Madmen in authority, who hear voices in the air, are distilling their frenzy from some academic scribbler of a few years back. I am sure that the power of vested interests is vastly exaggerated compared with the gradual encroachment of ideas” *(The General Theory of Employment, Interest and Money*, p. 383).

Keynes’ point stands today. We live in a world shaped by the thinkers we will read in this class (as well as others); to understand these thinkers is to understand that world, and those who have been shaped by it—including ourselves.

> The instructor has the right to add, delete or revise segments of this course or syllabus, including assignments, policies, and due-dates.

**Schedule of Readings**

This course employs a modular approach. Each module of the class is devoted to a specific thinker or a specific topic. There are 15 modules overall, not including the “start here” module. You should work through them sequentially. The Schedule button will tell you *when* things must be completed.