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Office Hours by Appointment

Houston Community College
Northwest Campus/Town & Country
Saturday: 9:00am-12:00pm
Core Course-Humanities Area

PHIL 2306 INTRODUCTION TO ETHICS

AUGUST-DECEMBER 2009

I. COURSE DESCRIPTION:

This course provides a practical, community-minded introduction to questions of character and human excellence in a multi-cultural, global environment. *Traditional and contemporary views concerning the nature of goodness, happiness, duty, and freedom* (HCCS Catalog) serve as points of departure for this largely thematic inquiry into right conduct. Particular emphasis is placed on the scope and problems of ethical reasoning and decision-making and may include correlative inquiries into current social, workforce, and professional moral issues. Among these are questions that involve human rights.

This course fulfills ethics requirement for various academic and professional four-year college majors, and HCC concentration in philosophy.

NOTICE: Students who are pursuing an HCC AA-degree plan are advised that except as noted, this course may not be used to satisfy any other HCC Core requirement, though it may satisfy certain transfer institution college major requirements.

Students who are in doubt about their enrollment in this course should immediately see an HCC academic counselor who may review his or her AA-degree plan.

II. COURSE OBJECTIVES (cognitive, affective, and behavioral):

The unexamined life is not worth living. ~ Socrates

1. Among its goals, this course stresses the HCC core competencies of reading, writing, speaking, listening, critical thinking, and computer literacy. Students will:

- *Acquire* a working knowledge of traditional and contemporary ethics
- *Define* human excellence and its acquisition in practical, everyday terms.
- *Determine* the difference between ethical and utilitarian values.
- *Develop* a clear sense of ethical judgment and how it is cultivated.
- *Consider* the concerns of ethics from a multi-cultural, gender sensitive perspective.
- *Discover* how learning and character relate to freedom and community well-being.

- *Cultivate* a critical understanding of the concept of human rights, its origins, justification, and social/political extension.

III. TEXTBOOKS:

This is a course about the origins of philosophical discourse and history of ideas, including the formalization of logic and sound argument, and their relation to our concept of knowledge and learning, particularly as that concept impacts on our judgment of values and morality. The standards of thinking and expression found in philosophy embrace every principle and method found in core critical thinking competencies. Readings are taken from a range of primary sources beginning with ancient philosophers, then to the medieval period, the moderns, and finally to thinkers on the contemporary.

REQUIRED:

Plato's *Meno* (Hackett Publishing, 2nd Edition, 1980). ISBN: 0-915144-24-7.

Thomas Aquinas, *The Cardinal Virtues* (Hackett Publishing, 1st Edition, 1988). ISBN: 0-87220-745-5.

Immanuel Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysic of Morals*, translated by Mary Gregor, 1st edition (Cambridge University Press, 1997). ISBN: 0521626951.

Jeremy Bentham and John Stuart Mill, *Classic Utilitarianism*, edited by J. Troyer, 1st edition (Hackett Publishing, 2003). ISBN: 0-87220-649-1.

Simone, de Beauvoir, *Ethics of Ambiguity*, translated by B. Frechtman (Carol Publishing Group, 1990). ISBN: 080650160X.

Mahatma Gandhi, *Selected Political Writings*, 1st edition (Hackett Publishing, 1990). ISBN: 0-87220-330-1.

RECOMMENDED:

Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* (Prentice Hall, 1st edition, 1962). ISBN: 0-02-389530-6.

Robert Audi, editor, *The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy*, 2nd edition (Cambridge University Press, 1999). ISBN 0-521637-22-8.

J. Budziszewski, *Written on the Heart: Case for Natural Law* (Downer's Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1997). ISBN-10: 083081891X.

David Hume, *An Enquiry into the Principles of Morals* (BiblioBazaar, 2007). ISBN-10: 143467066X.

C. S. Lewis, *Abolition of Man* (HarperOne, 2001). ISBN-10: 0060652942.

Nietzsche, Friedrich, *Genealogy of Morals* (Doubleday & Co., Anchor Edition, 1980). ISBN 0385-09210-5.

Pappas, Gregory, *John Dewey's Ethics: Democracy as Experience* (Indiana University Press, 2008). ISBN-10: 0253219795.

Weston, Anthony, *A Rule Book for Arguments*, 3rd Edition (Hackett Publishing, 2000). ISBN 0-87220-552-5.

Stanley J. Grenz & Jay T. Smith, *Pocket Dictionary of Ethics* (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 2003).

IV. COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

A. **1st Examination:** Plato, Aristotle, and Aquinas.

The first examination will cover the central ideas and arguments examined from our reading, class lecture, and discussion of Plato, Aristotle, and Aquinas.

B. **2nd Examination:** Kant, Bentham, and Mill.

This second examination will cover the central ideas and argument examined from our reading, class lecture, and discussion of Kant, Bentham, and Mill.

C. **Cumulative Final Examination:** Simone de Beauvoir and Gandhi and material covered on first two exams.

V. COURSE POLICIES:

A. **Weight Given to Course Requirements for Grading:**

1. First Exam: 33.3%
2. Second Exam: 33.3%
3. Final Exam: 33.3%
4. Any student wishing to earn extra credit may do so by writing a thoughtful summary and critique of any one of the books on ethics listed from recommended list (Aristotle; Budziszweski; Hume; Lewis; Nietzsche, and Pappas). This analysis and critique is to be in your own words; no outside sources, whether organic or inorganic, are allowed to assist you in completing this extra-credit paper. I welcome the opportunity to consider any other book you may want to examine. However, it is mandatory that you receive prior permission from me.

5. A maximum of 10 extra credit points can be earned towards your final course grade. All papers for potential extra credit must be submitted to the professor by **5 December 2009** (beginning of class).
6. Your professor has the right to alter the requirements or grading at his discretion and that the schedule of assignments is subject to change at the professor's discretion

B. Class Participation:

1. Class participation is expected. All students are required to be present for announced exams. Because of the nature of this course, it is in your best interest to attend class and engage material.
2. Always be sensitive to the topics at hand, professor, and fellow students. We only have so much time to cover the material prepared for that day of lecture (no rabbit trail conversations, please).
3. Since this is a course on college level, be sure to write down lecture notes; it is *your* responsibility to keep good notes.
4. If you miss a particular class, be sure to ask your fellow student for a copy of his or her notes.
5. I will not distribute my lecture notes.

C. Attendance:

1. Students are expected to attend all classes in which they are enrolled.
2. Students are allowed to miss 12.5% of all class time without penalty
3. Absences totaling more than 12.5% of class time will result in an automatic "W" or "F."
4. If you are more than 30 minutes late to class you will be counted as absent for that particular class.
5. Please do not be tardy to class; it is discourteous to both students and professor.
6. Attendance will be recorded for every class.

D. Late Assignments:

1. You are required to be present for each and every exam.
2. Any missed exam or scheduled presentation without a cogent documented excuse will be counted numerically as a zero (00). This is considerably lower than an average F. .

E. Attendance:

1. Students are expected to attend all classes in which they are enrolled.
2. Students are allowed to miss 20% of all class time without penalty (no more than 3 absences).
3. Absences totaling more than 20% of class time will result in an automatic "F"
4. If you are more than 30 minutes late to class you will be counted as absent for that particular class.
5. Please do not be tardy to class; it is discourteous to both students and professor.

F. Letter/Numerical Grade Scale:

All grades will be figured according to the following grading scale:

A = 90%-100%

B = 80%-89.9%

C = 70%-79.9%

D = 60%-69.9%

F = 0% - 59.9%

VI. COURSE SUPPLEMENTAL INFORMATION:

A. **Classes will involve a blend of lecture, interaction, and guided class discussion.** Students are expected to be attentive not only to the instructor but to each other. Active participation in the classroom will greatly enhance each student's benefits from the course. Students should be aware that the instructor will sometimes argue for positions he does not believe, or argue against positions he does believe, in order to motivate and challenge students to develop and articulate biblical moral convictions.

B. **Class Schedule:**

1st class: Introduction to Ethics. 22 August.

2nd Class: Platos's *Meno*. 29 August.*

*Guest Speaker.

3rd Class: Aristotle's Ethics. 05 September.

4 th Class:	Intro. to Aquinas.	12 September.
5 th Class:	Aquinas' <i>Cardinal Virtues</i> .	19 September.
6 th Class:	First Examination.	26 September.
7 th Class:	Introduction to Kant.	03 October.
8 th Class:	Kant's <i>Enquiry</i> .	10 October.*
* Guest Speaker		
9 th Class:	Kant's <i>Enquiry</i> .	17 October.
10 th Class:	Intro. to Utilitarianism.	24 October.
11 th Class:	Bentham and Mills.	31 October.
12 th Class:	Second Examination.	07 November.
13 th Class:	Simone de Beauvoir.	14 November.
14 th Class:	Gandhi.	21 November.
15 th Class:	Review.	05 December.
16 th Class:	Cumulative Exam:	12 December.

C. Other Important Matters:

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA): Any student with a documented disability (e.g. physical, learning, psychiatric, vision, hearing, etc.) who needs to arrange reasonable accommodations must contact the Disability Services Office at the respective college at the beginning of each semester. Faculty are authorized to provide only the accommodations requested by the Disability Support Services Office.

Plagiarism: Students who unintentionally or intentionally plagiarize (copy material from other sources without citing references) are committing a very serious offense. Those who plagiarize may be subject to grade reduction, discipline and/or dismissal from HCC.

The pressure to earn high grades and belief that *a good end can justify any means whatsoever* leads many students to try cutting corners by resorting to less than honest methods. Do yourself a favor by avoiding that trap.

The HCC *Student Handbook* lists cheating, plagiarism, and collusion as scholastic dishonesty. It defines *plagiarism* as "the appropriation of another's work and the unacknowledged incorporation of that work in one's own written work offered for credit." It defines *collusion* as "the unauthorized collaboration with another person in preparing work for credit." Any work submitted for this course that is determined by the professor to be the result of either cheating, plagiarism, or collusion will earn a "0" for that assignment, and may easily cause the student to receive either an "F", or "I" in the course depending on your professor's stated requirements for the assignment and the weight it carries in determining your course grade. Students receiving an "I" for a course are ineligible for graduation until the "I" has been removed from a student's transcript. Your professor may also recommend a further punishment of probation, or dismissal from HCC and ALL of its several colleges. See the *Student Handbook* for further information.

Attendance and Withdrawal Policies: HCC Students are expected to attend class regularly. A daily record of absences will be maintained throughout the semester.

NOTE: IT IS THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE STUDENT TO DROP, OR OFFICIALLY WITHDRAW FROM THIS COURSE IF, FOR ANY REASON, THAT STUDENT IS NO LONGER ATTENDING. NEW RULES ARE IN EFFECT THAT GREATLY CHANGE HOW AND WHEN THAT CAN BE DONE. YOU WILL NOT BE WITHDRAWN FROM THIS COURSE BY YOUR PROFESSOR. FURTHERMORE, THERE ARE POSSIBLE PENALTIES OTHER THAN LOSING ONE'S PAID TUITION THAT EVERY STUDENT MUST CONSIDER CAREFULLY BEFORE WITHDRAWING. THESE INCLUDE:

- (1) Students who repeat a course for a third, or more times, may face a significant tuition/fee increase at HCC and other Texas public colleges and universities.
- (2) The Texas Legislature passed a law limiting new students (those starting college in Fall 2007) to no more than six total course withdrawals throughout their academic career in obtaining a baccalaureate degree. There may be future penalties imposed.
- (3) No student may withdraw from a course following the set "last date to withdraw", which for spring semester is **Thursday, November 12th, 2009** by 4:30 pm. After that date, a student can only be given a grade earned, or an "I" for incomplete. Incompletes must be made up by the end of the following long semester, after which they will automatically change to a grade of "F".

All Students Are Advised: Contact your professor/counselor about opportunities for tutoring and other assistance prior to considering withdrawal, or if you are not receiving passing grades. There are many opportunities available to assure your success!

International Students: Receiving either a "W", or "I" in a course may affect the status of your student Visa. Once a W is given for the course (after you have submitted withdrawal form formally), it will not be changed

to an F because of the visa consideration. An “I” does convert to an “F”, but only after six months have passed from the end of the term it was received. Please contact the International Student Office at 713-718-8520, if you have any questions about your visa status and other transfer issues.

Cell Phone and Electronic Device Policy Classroom disruption by cell phones or other electronic devices is prohibited. All cell phones and similar electronic devices must remain turned off and out of sight for the duration of class. Electronic devices utilized in a learning context, such as laptops and language interpreters, may be permitted at the professor’s discretion. A student may face a zero and/or failure in the class if an electronic device is used for cheating during a test. Cheating at HCC is not tolerated and may result in expulsion.

Tutoring Opportunities. Limited face-to-face tutoring is available from the course instructor during office hours, or by appointment. In addition, all PHILOSOPHY students are encouraged to use HCC’s online tutoring system for help with any philosophy class. Questions submitted to the ASK queue will be answered within 24 hours – and usually much before that. Tutors are on duty 7 days a week, 365 days a year. Online tutors will not do homework for you, but they will guide you in the right direction. To maximize the effectiveness of the system, be specific when you ask questions, and let the tutor know what class you are taking. You will receive two responses – one from an English tutor and one from a philosophy tutor.

Registering for online tutoring is easy. Go to www.hccs.askonline.net. Select a user name and password that you will remember. Use any e-mail address, and add your student ID number (W number). It will probably take five minutes to set up your askonline account. After that, you can submit questions in seconds. Tutor responses are not e-mailed to you. To see the answers, log back in to the system and click the bright yellow NEW button.

Online tutoring is also available for accounting, history, government, chemistry, physics, biology, math, English, and papers in all disciplines.


D. How to do well in this class:

- Carefully read assigned books. Bombard your assigned readings with the following questions: why, where, what, when, who, and so what?
- Consider making an outline of the major units of thought in your readings. As you formulate your outline from the reading, ask yourself the following question: “*What do I see?*” The more observations you make, the better your interpretation of the author’s position or claim may be. Afterwards ask, “*What does it mean?*”
- After you outline the author’s position/claim go back and see what arguments are being provided to support that position or claim. Keep asking yourself, “*What is the issue?*” Then consider what objections can be raised against that issue, position, or claim. Lastly, what replies can be given to defend the position or claim against these objections.

- You should consult with me as often as possible to make sure you are understanding the material. Do not wait until the day before a test to begin studying. This is not the kind of course for which you can cram and expect to do well. Take advantage of the office hours.
- Consider forming study groups to prepare for quizzes and exams.
- Make sure you are able to contact another student for lecture material in case you happen to miss a class (es). Once again, I do not distribute my notes.
- Ten Strategies for First-Rate Studying:

Read Thoughtfully
Read Repeatedly
Read Patiently
Read Prayerfully
Read Meditatively
Read Selectively
Read Imaginatively
Read Purposefully
Read Acquisitively
Read Telescopically

If you want to improve your reading comprehension skills I would encourage you to purchase Mortimer J. Adler's informative work, *How to Read a Book*.

 *This syllabus is subject to change as deemed necessary by the instructor to accommodate instructional and/or student needs.*

OTHER NOTES: