Syllabus:

**ETHICS IN SOCIETY (GE265)**

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**COURSE DESCRIPTION:**

This course provides a practical framework and a personal method for ethical thinking and decision-making on issues in contemporary society. Students will analyze some of the major ethical dilemmas of the modern world.

**MAJOR INSTRUCTIONAL AREAS:**

1. Critical thinking and the definition of ethics
2. Analysis of societal ethical dilemmas
3. Theoretical ethical approaches to contemporary dilemmas
4. Personal code of ethics to develop social responsibility in the 21st century

**COURSE OBJECTIVES:**

1. Evaluate theories that provide a practical framework for everyday moral reasoning and critical decision making.
2. Analyze contemporary ethical issues concerning life and death.
3. Analyze issues concerning reward and punishment in contemporary society, including the duties of the state in pursuing war and punishing criminals.
4. Analyze contemporary ethical issues related to matters of social justice.
5. Analyze ethical issues related to mankind’s responsibility for nature.
6. Analyze issues related to professional and social responsibility in the 21st century.
7. Apply a system of personal ethics to the critical analysis of contemporary moral issues and the evaluation of moral viewpoints.

Related SCANS Objectives:

SCANS is an acronym for Secretary’s Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills. The committee, created by the National Secretary of Labor in the early 1990s, created a list of skills and competencies that the committee believes are necessary for employees to function in a high-tech job market.

1. Communicate thoughts, ideas, information, and messages in writing.
2. Research to gain knowledge and propose solutions based on research.
3. Synthesize information.
4. Demonstrate critical thinking while problem solving.
5. Use logic to draw conclusions and judges logical consistency.
6. Examine information for relevance and accuracy.
7. Demonstrate social awareness and responsibility.
8. Justify ethical decisions or courses of action.

**TEACHING STRATEGIES:**

This course will use various strategies for learning. Scenarios relating to each of the issues will introduce the various topics. Multiple instructional strategies will be used, including interactive lectures and collaborative learning through discussion. You will be assessed through your oral assignments, exercises, quizzes, and a final project.

**COURSE RESOURCES:**

Student Textbook Package:

Hinman, Lawrence M. *Contemporary Moral Issues: Diversity and Consensus*. 3 rd ed. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Prentice Hall, 2006.

References and Resources:

ITT Tech Virtual Library:

Login to the ITT Tech Virtual Library (<http://www.library.itt-tech.edu/>) to access online books, journals, and other reference resources selected to support ITT Tech curricula.

Books:

Aristotle. *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. Roger Crisp. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000.

Audi, Robert. *Business Ethics and Ethical Business*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2009.

Boylan, Michael. *Basic Ethics*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Prentice Hall, 2009.

Clark, Stephen R. L. *Biology & Christian Ethics*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000.

Cohen, Hermann. *Ethics of Maimonides*, trans. Almut S. Bruckstein. Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 2003.

Day, Richard B., and Joseph Masciulli. *Globalization and Political Ethics*. Boston: Brill Academic Publishers, 2006.

Gini, Al, and Alexei M. Marcoux. *Case Studies in Business Ethics*. Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Prentice Hall, 2009.

Harvey, Peter. *Introduction to Buddhist Ethics: Foundations, Values and Issues*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000.

Herring, Jonathan. *Medical Law and Ethics*. 2 nd ed. Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2008.

Hongladaram, Soraj, ed. *Information Technology Ethics: Cultural Perspectives*. Hershey, PA: IGI Global, 2006.

McNeill, Desmond. *Global Poverty, Ethics and Human Rights: the Role of Multilateral Organisations*. London: Routledge, 2009.

Mitchell, C. Ben. *Biotechnology and the Human Good*. Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2007.

Novak, David. *Sanctity of Human Life*. Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2007.

Pojman, Louis P. *Environmental Ethics: Readings in Theory and Application*. Belmont, CA: Thomson Wadsworth, 2008.

Reed, Esther D. *Ethics of Human Rights: Contested Doctrinal and Moral Issues*. Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2007.

Robinson, Dave, and Chris Garratt. *Introducing Ethics*. London: Totem Books, 2005.

Schultz, Robert, A. *Contemporary Issues in Ethics and Information Technology*. Hershey, PA: IGI Global, 2005.

Shaw, William H. *Social and Personal Ethics*. 6 th ed. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth/Thomson Learning, 2008.

Sterba, James P., ed. *Ethics: the Big Questions*. Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009.

Whisnant, Rebecca, and Peggy DesAutels, eds. *Global Feminist Ethics*. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2008.

Other Resources:

The following web sites may be found outside of the ITT Tech Virtual Library.

Web sites

* Ethics Matters
  + <http://ethics.sandiego.edu>
  + For ethics students and their instructors, this site has information on ethics resources as well as updates on current literature, both popular and professional, that relates to ethics.

All links to Web references outside of the ITT Tech Virtual Library are always subject to change without prior notice.

**EVALUATION AND GRADING**

**Evaluation Criteria Table**

The final grade will be based on the following weighted categories:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Categories** | **Weights (%)** |
| Exercises *(Listed in This Syllabus)* | 35% |
| Oral Assignments *(Listed in This Syllabus)* | 15% |
| Quizzes *(At the End of Each Class, Cannot be Made Up)* | 20% |
| Final Project | 30% |
| **Total** | **100%** |

**Grade Conversion Table**

Final grades will be calculated from the percentages earned in class as follows:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Grade** | **Percentage** | **Credit** |
| A | 90-100% | 4.0 |
| B+ | 85-89% | 3.5 |
| B | 80-84% | 3.0 |
| C+ | 75-79% | 2.5 |
| C | 70-74% | 2.0 |
| D+ | 65-69% | 1.5 |
| D | 60-64% | 1.0 |
| F | <60% | 0.0 |

**Late Work Policy**

Assignments turned in at or before the beginning of the next class period after the assignment is due will be worth 75% of the credit they would have received if turned in on time. Assignments turned in at or before the beginning of the second class after the assignment is due will be worth 50% of the credit they would have received if turned in on time. Assignments not turned in at or before the beginning of the second class after the assignment is due will automatically receive zero credit.

**Perfect Attendance Policy**

In this course, attendance and participation in weekly activities and discussion is key to your learning and success in the course. As a result, you may reduce your out-of-class writing burden by having perfect attendance for the course. For each three weeks of perfect attendance, you may choose to skip one Exercise (those assignments which are in the Exercises category). Please note that you must complete all four parts of your Course Project regardless of attendance; you may not skip any of the Course Project requirements. However, you may skip one Exercise for every three weeks of consecutive perfect attendance. You will receive an "X" on your grade report for that assignment, meaning it will not count for you or against you. You are responsible for tracking your own attendance and informing the instructor of your intent to skip an assignment due to perfect attendance. If you have perfect attendance for the entire quarter, or only one absence, you would be eligible to skip three of the Exercises under this policy. Please remember, this does not give you any grade for this assignment, it merely exempts you from having to complete it.

**Academic Integrity Policy**

ITT Technical Institute defines academic dishonesty as the “submission of work completed by another person as your own.” All ideas, words, or work from others that are included in a student’s submitted work must be identified and cited. Failure to appropriately identify the ideas, words or work of others included in a student’s work is considered academic dishonesty and violates the conduct section of the School’s Catalog. Academic dishonesty may result in a zero on the graded activity, suspension and/or termination from one or more of the courses the student is taking or the student’s entire program of study at the school.

Ideas, words or work that require citation include, but are not limited to, hard copies or electronic publications, whether copyrighted or not, and visual and verbal communication that clearly originates from an identifiable source. This policy applies to all courses whether taught in residence or online and all source whether electronic or hardcopy.

It is academically unethical and unacceptable to:

* submit work completed in whole or in part by another person as if it were your own;
* restate or paraphrase another writer’s work without acknowledging the source;
* copy another student’s homework and submit the work as if it were the product of your own labor.
* attempt to gain an advantage through the use of crib sheets, hidden notes, viewing another student’s paper, revealing the questions or answers on exams or quizzes to other students or viewing quiz or exam questions obtained by another student; and
* store or communicate information not distributed to students through the use of electronic devices, recording devices, cellular telephones, headsets or portable computers.

**COURSE OUTLINE**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Unit # / Date** | **Content Covered/Reading** | **Assignments** |
| Unit 1 / December 6th | Introduction to Everyday Moral Reasoning and Analysis for Critical Decision Making  Introduction, pp. xiv-xxviii |  |
| Unit 2 / December 13th | Contemporary Ethical Concerns about the Beginning of Life  Matters of Life and Death, pp. 1-2  Chapter 2, “Abortion”, pp. 45-84 | General Views of Ethics DUE  **Project Part One DUE** |
| Unit 3 / January 10th | Contemporary Ethical Concerns about the End of Life  Chapter 3, “Euthanasia”, pp. 95-131 | Abortion Case Study DUE |
| Unit 4 / January 17th | Contemporary Perspectives on State Justices and the Death Penalty  Chapter 4, “Punishment and the Death Penalty,” pp. 137-159 | **Project Part Two DUE** |
| Unit 5 / January 24th | Issues of Diversity and Equality  Chapter 6, “Race and Ethnicity,” pp. 207-253 | Death Penalty Case Study DUE |
| Unit 6 / January 31st | Theories and Issues of Gender and Sexism  Chapter 7, “Gender,” pp. 259-295 | **Project Part Three DUE** |
| Unit 7 / February 7th | 21st Century Social Responsibility for Global Hunger and Poverty  Chapter 9, “World Hunger and Poverty,” pp. 327-369 | Ethnicity and Gender Case Study DUE |
| Unit 8 / February 14th | Environmental Ethics and Issues  Chapter 11, “Environmental Ethics,” pp. 417-462 | Social Responsibility Case Study DUE |
| Unit 9 / Field Trip | To Be Announced. | Environmental Ethics Case Study DUE |
| Unit 10 / February 28th | Business Ethics  (Outside Reading)  *Chapter 2, “Practicing Ethical Behavior and Social Responsibility”* |  |
| Final / March 7th | Final Project Presentations and Course Review | **Project Part Four DUE** |

**EXERCISES**

General Views of Ethics (Assigned in Unit 1, Due in Unit 2)

In the introduction to our textbook, and in the first session of class, a number of general approaches to viewing ethics and morality are discussed. These include Moral Disagreement (moral absolutism, moral relativism, moral pluralism), Morality as Consequences (ethical egoism, utilitarianism, consequentialism), Morality as Act and Intention (religious morality, natural law, rights), and Morality as Character (human flourishing, virtue ethics). In this assignment, you will integrate and evaluate these views.

* Describe these various viewpoints in your own words.
* How do they relate to one another? What relationships do you see between these various views as presented in text and discussed in class? Are they exclusive of one another, or can you hold views that are consisted with multiple approaches simultaneously? If not, why not? If so, how so? You may wish to compare and contrast these views to help with your analysis of the relationships between them.
* How do these various approaches fit with your own system of morality and views of ethical living? Now that you know these terms and what these views represent, do you see yourself as fitting into any of these categories? Are there any you disagree with strongly? Why?

Your completed assignment should be about 2 pages in length, Times New Roman, 12 point font, double spaced.

**Case Studies**

The remaining writing assignments are Case Studies. You are presented with information regarding a situation that relates to the topic in the week. You will then respond to the case in writing. Your response will be graded according to a rubric (attached at the end of the syllabus). First, consider all of the details of the case study, and incorporate these details into your analysis. Make clear how these details play into your analysis. Then, utilize relevant theories in analyzing this information. You have been exposed to ethical theories in the first week of class, as well as the differing viewpoints presented on this issue in the textbook. Can you analyze this case study from these different points of view, assessing their relative strengths and weaknesses in this particular situation? You will also be assessed on your use of personal connection to the material. This might mean personal example, or a way of connecting the material in text and the scenarios in the case study emotionally. Another domain you will be assessed for is the ability of imaginatively applying these scenarios forward into your own career path and future life. What connections can you draw? Finally, you will be assessed on the quality of writing, including grammar, spelling, and writing style.

Abortion Case Study (Assigned in Unit 2, Due in Unit 3)

Read and respond to the following case study scenarios:

* Valerie, 15, has found that she is two months pregnant. She and her mother are Roman Catholics. Her mother does not want her to have an abortion, but she does not want to help Valerie raise a child either. She insists that Valerie should give the baby up for adoption. Valerie’s father, an attorney, is an agnostic and wants her to have the abortion so that she can also become an attorney. Valerie is very confused and does not know what to do. (Source: Fictional ITT/ESI Scenario)
* Marsha, 25, and Neal, 26, discover that they are carriers of the Tay-Sachs disease after Marsha becomes pregnant. They have a one in four chance of bearing a child with this fatal, degenerative disease. In the fifth month, Marsha finds that she is indeed carrying a child with Tay-Sachs. (Source: Fictional ITT/ESI Scenario)

Death Penalty Case Study (Assigned in Unit 4, Due in Unit 5)

Read and respond to the following case studies:

* On June 23, 2000, Gary Graham was executed in Texas, despite claims that he was innocent. Graham was 17 when he was charged with the 1981 robbery and shooting of Bobby Lambert outside a Houston supermarket. He was convicted primarily on the testimony of one witness, Bernadine Skillern, who said she saw the killer's face for a few seconds through her car windshield, from a distance of 30-40 feet away. Two other witnesses, both who worked at the grocery store and said they got a good look at the assailant, said Graham was not the killer but were never interviewed by Graham's court appointed attorney, Ronald Mock, and were not called to testify at trial. Three of the jurors who voted to convict Graham signed affidavits saying they would have voted differently had all of the evidence been available. (Source: AP)
* On April 13, 1986, Philip Hallford forced his pregnant 15-year-old daughter to lure her boyfriend to a secluded bridge. He had been sexually abusing the daughter for years. He then shot the boyfriend multiple times and disposed of the body, collected the shell casings, made a necklace out of them, and forced the daughter to wear the necklace as a reminder of the murder. He murdered the boyfriend out of jealousy because he was sexually abusing his daughter. He was convicted of murder in 1987 and executed in November of 2010. (Source: State Records)

Ethnicity and Gender Case Study (Assigned in Unit 6, Due in Unit 7):

* In 2003, a survey of female veterans found that 30 percent said they were raped in the military. A 2004 study of veterans who were seeking help for post-traumatic stress disorder found that 71 percent of the women said they were sexually assaulted or raped while serving. And a 1995 study of female veterans of the Gulf and earlier wars, found that 90 percent had been sexually harassed. When Specialist Suzanne Swift reported her sergeant for repeatedly raping her over months and then refused to redeploy under him, the army tried her by court martial for desertion and put her in prison for a month. When Cassandra Hernandez of the Air Force reported being gang-raped by three comrades at her training academy, her command charged her with indecent behavior for consorting with her rapists. When Sergeant Marti Ribeiro reported being raped by a fellow serviceman while she was on guard duty in Afghanistan, the Air Force threatened to court martial her for leaving her weapon behind during the attack. "That would have ruined by career," she said. "So I shut up." All the men who were accused in these cases went unpunished. Several of them even won promotions. Even when the military does accept a report of sexual assault, the consequences to the perpetrators tend to be negligible. Of the assaults reported and recorded by the Defense Department in the fiscal year 2008, 49 percent were dismissed as unfounded or unsubstantiated—meaning there wasn't enough proof of assault, or that the women recanted or died—and only 10.9 percent resulted in court martial. (Source: NPR)
* Research has consistently shown the disproportionate hiring tendency toward white applicants. One example of how early in the process this begins is that when applications are sent out with “white sounding names” and “black sounding names” on them, that are identical in every other way, the “white sounding names” receive many more calls requesting interviews. In one study, the white sounding names received over 50% more calls, in another more than 60% more calls. The issue was not one of qualification, because the rest of the resume was the same, with the exception of the name. Identical resumes are also rated significantly higher on intelligence, work ethic, experience, and likelihood to hire for white-sounding names in a similar experiment. (Source: Original Research and Various Articles)

Social Responsibility Case Study (Assigned in Unit 7, Due in Unit 8):

* The number of Americans struggling with hunger remained stable in 2009 despite the economic downturn but remained at the highest recorded level, according to new federal figures. The U.S. Department of Agriculture recently released statistics that showed one in seven American households could not buy adequate food last year because of a lack of money and other resources. The number of people suffering from "food insecurity" increased only one-tenth of a percentage point from 2008, but that number is almost more than 4 percentage points higher than it was 10 years ago, and the highest since 1995. Hunger was more prevalent in large cities than in rural areas and suburbs and was substantially higher in black and Hispanic families. (Source: AP)
* Nearly one million people starved to death when a murderous famine gripped North Korea in the 1990s. Now, the most backward, isolated country in the world may be about to see history repeat itself. According to diplomats, United Nations officials and a variety of non-government organizations, North Korea stands yet again on the brink of a major food shortage. "The prospect of hunger-related deaths in the next few months is approaching certainty," says Marcus Noland, a senior fellow at the Peterson Institute and co-author of a just released study, raising alarms about the prospect of renewed famine. In fact, one Seoul-based NGO, the Research Institute for North Korean Society, asserts that there have already been a handful of people in small, agricultural villages who have died from starvation. (Source: TIME)

Environmental Ethics Case Study (Assigned in Unit 8, Due in Unit 9):

To Be Announced.

**COURSE PROJECT**

Your project for this course involves the creation and carrying out of a community service project serving the population of your choice. Throughout the quarter, you will turn in “parts” of your project to allow for continual review and revision of your project based on mutual feedback and the creative input of you, your instructor, and your classmates. You will choose a population or cause you want to serve with your community service project, identify a means of service through leadership which can realistically be carried out in the 11 weeks of the quarter, and will then provide leadership and carry out your project as you proposed it. In the end, you will be evaluated not only on the quality of your submitted work, but also on how well you provide leadership for your service project and how well you complete your stated objective(s).

Part One (Due in Week Two):

Identify your chosen population or cause. Who do you want to work with? Or, what cause do you want to benefit? This is left intentionally open-ended so that you can find a cause you are passionate about, but it should be a reasonable, charitable cause or population. Next, gather information on organizations that benefit this population or cause, and ways in which you can help this cause. This needs to be more than getting cash or directly donating your time. Remember that you are providing leadership for a service project to benefit this organization, so this needs to be something you can get others involved with in some way. Directly raising cash (through people donating money) is difficult, and simply donating your time does not involve anyone beyond yourself. Ideally, you may wish to call or visit an organization or two to see if there are any needs they have that are not being met. There may be programs you can assist with directly.

For part one, you will turn in a short description of who/what you want to benefit with your service project, what organizations you have looked into with regards to your service project, and what ideas you might have about how to move forward with providing leadership for community service (i.e. actual project ideas). There is no real length guideline for this paper, but it should be a couple of paragraphs.

Part Two (Due in Week Four):

Identify your service project plan. What will you do to provide leadership for a community service project to benefit your chosen cause/population? What exact tasks will you carry out? Are you working directly with an organization? If so, which one? How will you involve others in your project? Your classmates will be a resource for involving others, but remember that most of them will have limited time and resources to contribute. Your chosen organization may be able to help you think of a project to carry out, and you can also ask your course instructor for some limited guidance, though the decision and details for this project must be your own.

For part two, you will turn in a description of what exact project will carry out, how it will benefit your chosen cause/population, how you will provide leadership for this task (involve others), and what the timeline is for your project to be completed within the quarter. Again, there is no real length guideline for this paper, but it should be a couple of paragraphs long.

Part Three (Due in Week Six):

Provide a progress report on your service project. Are you on track with the timeline you provided in Part Two? What obstacles have you encountered in this process? How have you overcome these obstacles? Provide an updated plan and timeline for the remainder of the quarter. If you have to revise your project based on the obstacles you have encountered, also include your revised project in part three.

Part Four (Due in Week Eleven):

This is your final project presentation. You will present your project to the class during the final class period. Include a description of the cause/population you benefited, what your project involved, how you provided leadership for this project, what exactly happened during the course of carrying out your project, what barriers you encountered, how you overcame them, what you learned, and what the overall impact of your project was on the cause/population you were targeting. The presentation should be about 10 minutes and should include a visual aid (i.e. PowerPoint or any other visual aid of your choosing).

Final Project Grading Breakdown:

The final project is worth 30% of your grade. Part Four is double-weighted, meaning it is worth twice as much as any of the other elements. Parts One, Two, and Three are worth 6% of your grade each. Part Four is worth 12% of your grade. Keep in mind, without completing each part in sequence, it becomes very difficult to complete the subsequent parts of the project.

**ORAL ASSIGNMENTS**

Every student will participate in one debate throughout the course of the quarter. You will debate a topic of cultural relevance, which will be assigned to you during the first week. These assignments will be pseudo-random.

Each debate will consist of opening statements from each side (approximately 5 minutes in length) in which you state your case for why your side of the issue is morally and/or ethically right. In your opening statement, you will use a number of arguments and examples to support your position. You will be graded in part on the quality and soundness of these arguments and examples. Be sure to use at least three arguments with the support of either an example or some other form of logical or empirical support.

The next stage of the debate consists of each side being able to rebut the others arguments. In other words, you will have the opportunity to state why you believe your debate opponent’s claims are false, misleading, or should not be considered as strongly in light of other evidence. You will offer as many rebuttal claims as you wish, but should plan to offer a rebuttal to at least their main arguments.

If you do your pre-debate research well, you should be fairly well able to predict which arguments your opponent will use and, as a result, be well prepared for the rebuttal stage.

The final stage is audience participation. The entire class will now have an opportunity to participate in the debate and ask questions of or challenge either side of the debate.

The Debate Grading Rubric is included in the syllabus for your reference.

Finally, students are likely to be assigned positions counter to their naturally held positions as an exercise to stimulate critical thinking. In other words, if you are assigned the Death Penalty as your topic, and you support it, you are likely to be assigned to debate against the death penalty to challenge your own thought processes.

Be sure to take the time to put together a quality presentation of your issue. This is the sole assignment in the Oral Assignments category, which is worth 15% of your grade.

**GRADING RUBRIC FOR DEBATE PARTICIPATION**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Levels of Performance** | | | |
| **Criteria** | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| **1. Organization and Clarity**:  viewpoints and responses are outlined both clearly and orderly. | Unclear in most parts | Clear in some parts but not over all | Most clear and orderly in all parts | Completely clear and orderly presentation |
| **2. Use of Arguments:**  reasons are given to support viewpoint. | Few or no relevant reasons given | Some relevant reasons given | Most reasons given: most relevant | Most relevant reasons given in support |
| **3. Use of Examples and Facts:**  examples and facts are given to support reasons. | Few or no relevant supporting examples/facts | Some relevant examples/facts given | Many examples/facts given: most relevant | Many relevant supporting examples and facts given |
| **4. Use of Rebuttal:**  arguments made by the other teams are responded to and dealt with effectively. | No effective counter-arguments made | Few effective counter-argumentsmade | Some effective counter-arguments made | Many effective counter-arguments made |
| **5. Presentation Style:**  tone of voice, use of gestures, and level of enthusiasm are convincing to audience. | Few style features were used; not convincingly | Few style features were used convincingly | All style features were used, most convincingly | All style features were used convincingly |