

## THREE RIVERS COMMUNITY COLLEGE

### ETHICS (PHL K111; 3 CREDITS)

Spring 2015; Wednesday 6:30-9:15

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Office hours by appointment

Text: *The Moral of the Story: An Introduction to Ethics*, by Nina Rosenstand, 7th ed.

Course Description: One of the very first questions that intrigued people and encouraged them to philosophize is this: What makes a person a good person? This course will offer you an overview of several of the major moral theories that have been proposed by thinkers over the ages, including: moral relativism, natural law theory, utilitarianism, Kant's moral theory, and virtue ethics. A variety of interesting and thought provoking contemporary ethical issues will be examined and discussed in the light of these theories.

#### Learning Outcomes:

- 1) To be able to discuss the defining concepts of the major ethical theories presented throughout history.
- 2) To be able to use these theories to analyze current ethical issues of interest and importance.
- 3) To come to an understanding of the fact that we each depend upon our own personal framework or theory in making moral decisions.
- 4) To realize the pervasiveness of moral issues in our lives.
- 5) To improve on the ability to analyze and formulate persuasive oral and written arguments for ethical viewpoints.

#### Course Requirements and Grading Criteria:

Class participation & homework =	20%
Two 4 1/2-5 page position papers =	40%
Midterm=	20%
Non-Cumulative Final=	20%

Instructional Strategies: homework, lectures, class discussion, small group discussion, papers, tests

Make-up Policy: All papers must be received on the date they are due. Students will receive one-half grade off for each day they are late. Not coming to class is not an excuse for not turning in papers on time. If you cannot attend class, you should email your paper to me. Test make-ups will only be given in the event of extenuating circumstances.

Attendance: Attendance is expected unless there are extenuating circumstances. A dentist or doctor's appointment is not considered to be an extenuating circumstance unless it is an emergency; please do not make appointments during class time. Students who sleep in class or leave class early without a valid excuse will be marked absent and receive a "0" on their homework grade for the week.

#### Tests:

The midterm and final will be open note, but not open book. The midterm will cover the first half of the course, and the non-cumulative final will cover the second half. Tests will be short answer/short essay and mid-length essay format.

### Paper Topics and Guidelines:

Guidelines for the papers are attached to this syllabus. Please note that both require a **minimum of three references** to be listed on a works cited page. One of these three references must be an academic reference from the College library's research databases. If you do not know how to access these databases, please see me or go to the College Writing Center for assistance.

Also attached to this syllabus are the following: 1) a handout on writing a thesis statement, which you should find helpful in thinking about how to formulate theses for your papers. If you have any questions, see me or visit the College Writing Center. Your thesis statements will count as homework assignments and will be GRADED; 2) a handout on indicator words, which help you to transition from one idea to the next in your papers- use indicator words liberally! 3) a handout on how to do a rebuttal- see the paper guidelines for a definition of a rebuttal.

### Papers:

In an effort to encourage you to think about how this course is relevant to your major or area of interest, you should choose as paper topics ethical issues in your career of choice. As we proceed through the first couple of classes and you begin to get a sense of what constitutes an ethical issue, you should be able to find many ethical issues of relevance to your profession by doing directed searches on the web or on the library databases. If you have difficulty identifying a topic, see me and I will provide assistance. However, please do some searching on your own first, as the search process is itself instructional in letting you know what is out there. Relating your topic to the theories and examples that we discuss in class is encouraged.

### Preparing for class/Class participation:

A significant part of the class will involve discussion of ethical issues and problems. In order to participate meaningfully in discussion, you must obviously be prepared by having read the assignment for that day. My best suggestion to ensure reading comprehension and recollection is as follows: For each section of the text following a heading in bold type, try to summarize it by writing a single sentence that captures its purpose. Under this you may want to jot down any pertinent cases or examples that were given to illustrate the point. Doing these two things will give you a handy outline to refer back to as we discuss the chapters in class.

The importance of class discussion is that it makes topics that might otherwise seem rather dry come to life, and the way that they resonate differently for each person in the class makes it possible for a wide variety of perspectives to be aired. The more actively you are involved in the class the more likely that your papers will be interesting and your understanding for the exams will be enriched. Class participation and preparation are 20% of your course grade.

Finally, as part of class preparation, once during the course of the semester each person will be responsible for bring in a short article that concerns an ethical issue. These articles will be used for small group discussion. If you are scheduled to bring in an article for a given class, you must email a copy of it to me by the Tuesday before class so that I can preview it and make

copies for everyone. Please DO NOT FORGET to turn in your article when it is your turn or you will receive a “0” for this assignment.

### Plagiarism and Cheating:

My expectation is that you will turn in work that is neither plagiarized nor paraphrased. Both are surprising easy for an instructor to detect. In addition, the College's policy on plagiarism and cheating is strict and unambiguous. It can be found in detail in the College catalog or online. If you have any questions about what constitutes plagiarism, ask me or go to the College Writing Center.

### Electronic Devices in the Classroom:

It is the right of every college student to be educated in an environment that is free from distraction. Consequently, all electronic devices, including cell phones, MP3 players, iPods, or pagers, must be turned off during class time. In the case of medical emergency, or family need, when contact with the student is required, a cell phone may be left on during class time, with permission from the instructor. Laptops may be used during class time only for the purpose of taking notes.

### MyCommnet Alert:

myCommNet Alert is a system that sends text messages and emails to anyone signed up in the event of a campus emergency. Additionally, TRCC sends messages when the college is delayed or closed due to weather.

All students are encouraged to sign up for myCommNet Alert. A tutorial is available on the Educational Technology and Distance Learning Students page of the web site. This link should be shared with students.

[http://www.trcc.commnet.edu/div\\_it/educationaltechnology/Tutorials/myCommNetAlert/MIR3.html](http://www.trcc.commnet.edu/div_it/educationaltechnology/Tutorials/myCommNetAlert/MIR3.html)

### Email:

All TRCC students are now assigned a college email address - instructions may be found on the Website in how to access -students are encouraged to access and use this email.

### Course Outline:

<b>Date</b>	<b>In Class</b>	<b>Homework</b>
1/28	Introduction to Ethics	
2/4	Discuss Ethical Relativism	Read ch. 3, Ethical Relativism, pp. 119-138 (except boxes) and "Possessing the Secret of Joy", pp. 165-167. Answer in writing questions 1 and 2 on p. 167.
2/11	Discuss Myself or Others	Read ch. 4, Myself or Others, pp. 171-188 and 196 (bottom)-200 (except boxes). Also read "Primates and Philosophers: How

		Morality Evolved", pp. 218-220, and answer questions 1 and 2.
2/18	Discuss media ethics and business ethics	Read about media ethics and business ethics, pp. 671-687 and primary reading: "Ethics as a Vehicle for Media Quality", p. 726-728. Answer questions 1 and 2 on p. 728.
2/25	Watch movie <i>Enron: The Smartest Guys in the Room</i> , and discuss movie and handout	Read handout "Don't Be Evil" and answer attached questions.
3/4	Discuss Utilitarianism; <b>Thesis statement for paper 1 must be turned in by this date.</b>	Read ch. 5, Utilitarianism, pp. 231-236, 241-247, and 249-260 (no boxes). Also read "Extreme Measures", pp. 275-277 and answer questions 1, 2 and 6.
3/11	Discuss Kant's Deontology	Read ch. 6, Kant's Deontology, pp. 282-298 and "High Noon", pp. 308-310. Answer questions 1, 3, 4, and 5 on p. 310.
3/25	<b>Midterm; Paper 1 Due</b>	Study for midterm; Complete paper
4/1	Discuss personhood, rights, and justice	Read pp. 337- top of 357 (no boxes); Answer questions 1 and 5 on p. 362.
4/8	Discuss animal right and environmental ethics	Read pp. 694-707 ( <b>including boxes</b> ), "The Declaration on Great Apes," pp. 734-735, and the readings on ethics and the environment about climate change on pp. 737-740. Answer questions 2 on p. 735 and question 5 on p. 740.
4/15	Discuss Aristotle's Virtue Theory	Read pp. 444-462, and 472-474. Answer questions 1-3 on p. 474.
4/22	Discuss Just War Theory	Read pp. 688-694 and 731-734. Answer questions 1-3 on p. 734.
4/29	Discuss Gender Ethics; <b>Thesis Statement for paper 2 must be handed in by this date</b>	Read section entitled "Feminism and Virtue Theory," pp. 608-610, and pp. 625-637. Also read the excerpt from "In a Different Voice" on pp. 648-650. Answer question 3 on p. 641 and question 2 on p. 650.
5/6	<b>Final; Paper 2 Due</b>	Study for Final; Complete second paper

## Paper Guidelines

*use 1-inch margins*

**Description:** Using a minimum of 3 secondary sources, with at least ONE of them an article from the College library website database, write a 4-5 page essay that supports the thesis statement you have developed. Develop a persuasive essay supporting your position with clear, sufficient, and relevant **reasons** and convincing **evidence and explanation**. I encourage you to connect your topic with the theories and examples from the text if possible. Though you should put your text on your works cited page if you use it, it may not count as one of your 3 secondary sources.

**Topic:** You must have your topic/thesis statement approved by me **before you begin writing**.

**Purpose:** To persuade your audience of the reasonableness of your position.

**Audience:** You may assume that your audience has reasonable familiarity with the issue that you are discussing. In effect, you don't have say things like, "Ethics is..." or "The Webster dictionary defines 'euthanasia' as..."

**Points to consider:**

### 1. Present Your Issue Clearly (Introduction):

- Explain the issue about which you are writing - -what is the central question being answered?
- Establish interest with an **interesting lead-in**.
- Avoid general and cosmic statements, such as "there are some good things and some bad things about x."
- Do **NOT evaluate** a text or author, saying an author does a "great job" or that a text is a "good text."
- **Set up your persuasive stance** by stating your thesis and forecasting your main reasons.

### 2. Clear, Specific, and Unambiguous Position (your thesis):

- Your thesis will be a clear, specific, and unambiguous statement that takes a position on the issue you have chosen.
- Avoid being vague, overly broad, or simplistic.

### 3. Develop an persuade your readers with clear, sufficient, and relevant reasons

- To support your position, you need reasons that are **tied to your thesis**. Build your essay around the points you need to support your thesis.
- Remember that the **first sentence** of each paragraph should be a reason that ties back to the thesis. You should thus be able to read through the first sentences of each of your paragraphs and it should be absolutely clear what the main points that support your thesis are.
- Remember that you are writing a focused essay: you will not be able to talk about everything, so pick and choose the most important points that relate to your thesis.

### 4. ... and with Convincing Evidence and Explanation (support):

- The remainder of each paragraph should support your reasons with **specific evidence and examples**, and with **explanation** instead of summary, generalities, and assumptions.
- When using quotations, **quote only as much as you need**: for instance, do not give five sentences if all you are talking about is a three-word phrase.
- Set up quotes by **giving the qualifications of the person you are quoting** - for instance, "Social historian Alan Cummings has noted that..." When you use a quotation, you must **explain it so**

your readers can see HOW it supports your reason. Never expect your quotations to do the work for you. Don't assume we'll agree with your evidence or see how it supports your point: spell everything out.

- Do not fall into summarizing instead of making an argument.
- Cite your sources correctly (MLA guidelines).

#### 5. **Rebuttals:**

- All papers/essays derive **great scholarly benefit** (and consequently a better grade) by considering how other people have taken a different viewpoint from the one that you are presenting. To acknowledge another viewpoint and then to show how your viewpoint is better in some way is called a **rebuttal**.
- To make a rebuttal, you might say "So-and-so says that such-and-such would be the better choice; However, (here is where you explain why your viewpoint is better)". Try to use **at least one** rebuttal in each of your papers.

#### 6. **Conclusion:**

- Without simply repeating yourself word for word, restate your main points -- both your thesis and the reasons (hint: look at your topic sentences).
- Don't introduce new ideas that support your argument - for instance, don't mention a new reason that also supports your thesis, don't give a quotation that would have supported your assertion back in paragraph three, don't change your mind about what your thesis is, etc.
- Once again, avoid general and cosmic statements.
- Once again, do not make an evaluation of a text or author.
- Take your thesis one step further by suggesting to us why this thesis is worth thinking about. Give us a sense of closure, but also leave us wanting to explore the ideas you've raised further

#### 7. **Organization:**

- Think of your argument as a pyramid: a broad foundation of evidence and explanation supports a smaller section of reasoning that supports the very small top of the pyramid, which is your judgment or thesis. Thus, the bulk of your essay will be EVIDENCE AND EXPLANATION.
- Your introduction is like a table of contents for your essay, so make sure the points you raise in the body of your essay are in the same order that you raise them in your introduction.
- Transitions show the connections between and among your ideas, so you need to understand how your ideas are connected to each other before you can make clear transitions. A good transition needs clear cue words/phrases (such as Next, However, In addition, Most importantly, In contrast, Not only ... but also, etc.)

#### 8. **Documentation and integrating quotations:**

- You should use correct MLA documentation in your essays with parenthetical notations and a works cited page. There are many excellent internet sources on proper documentation formats. One frequently used is: <https://owl.english.purdue.edu>.
- Integrate all quotations of less than four lines into your paragraphs. If a quotation is more than four lines long, set it off as a "block" quotation. See a style manual for more information.
- For every quotation, you will use parenthetical documentation listing the page number (put the number only - do not put "pp." or "pg," etc..)

**Academic Honesty:** I strongly encourage you to review the college's academic honesty policy and to consult with me if you have any questions. Any student caught plagiarizing will automatically receive an F on the assignment and will have to begin again with another topic from scratch. You will also be reported to the Dean's office. Note that plagiarism includes any of the following:

- \* Copying an author's words verbatim without citation.
- \* Copying even a two-word phrase from an author without citation.
- \* Discussing an author's ideas without citation.

**Penalties and Grading:**

- For each day that the paper is late, one-half grade will be dropped from your grade.

## Thesis Statements

A good thesis statement will typically include the following attributes:

1) It will cover a subject.

a. This subject will express a single main idea.

b. This subject will be neither too broad nor too narrow for the given assignment.

2) It will assert your viewpoint about the subject. In essence, then, the thesis statement can be boiled down to the following simple equation:

**subject + your viewpoint = thesis**

Let's say that you have been looking at some websites on ethics in scientific research, and you find the topic of falsification of data intriguing. The phrase:

**falsification of scientific data**

is not a thesis statement. It simply indicates a general subject. In fact, it is too general a subject for a 4-5 page paper. After reading about the subject a bit more, you recognize that a recent case of data falsification, the controversy about the data on global warming from the Institute of Space Studies, has had a worldwide impact. Now you are zeroing in on a more manageable topic, specifically:

**the Institute of Space Studies global warming data controversy**

Still, you should note that this fragment is not yet a thesis statement because you have not yet taken a viewpoint on the topic. After reading more, and reflecting a bit, you realize that

the potentially false data made the development of an ethically responsibly environmental policy very difficult, so you come up with the following thesis statement:

**The potentially falsified data presented on global warming by the Institute of Space Studies injuriously delayed the development of an ethically responsible environmental policy.**

You now have an excellent thesis statement.

## **Rebutting an Opposing Viewpoint**

### Rebutting/Refuting Cue Words

Admittedly...

Even though...

Although... or Though...

Despite... or Despite the fact that...

In spite of... or In spite of the fact that...

Regardless of... or Regardless of the fact that...

Granted... or Granted that...

While it's true that...

There is some truth to the argument (or the fact) that... but/however...

It is (or may be) true that... but/however...

Even if... or Even if it's true that...

Some people (or such-and-such a person) claim(s) that... but/however...

Some have argued that... but/however...

### Sample (short form) Rebuttals



Although some critics have argued that Wal-Mart destroys communities by wiping out mom-and-pop stores, this overlooks the fact that Wal-Mart has benefited communities by holding down household expenses more than any social or government program.

Despite the fact that many people argue that by supporting capital punishment we risk putting innocent people to death, the elimination of this form of ultimate punishment would send the wrong message to perpetrators of violent crimes.

Dr. Oppenheimer has argued that the changes in world temperatures reflect a natural cyclical warming trend; however, the steepness of this change suggests that he is wrong.

### Indicator Words to assist with transitions between ideas in persuasive essays

#### Causes or Reasons:

for the reason that	being that	in view of
because	seeing that	for
as	Since	inasmuch as
due to		

#### Conclusions:

therefore	Thus	In conclusion
finally	given these points	so
consequently	in summary	overall
in consequence	as a result	hence
accordingly	for this/these reason	

#### The addition of a further point:

further, furthermore

Also

moreover

what is more

in addition

besides

in fact

Actually

additionally

alternatively

on the other hand

not to mention

### **Giving an example:**

such as

Particularly

including

as an illustration

to illustrate

for example

in particular

for one thing

to illustrate

for instance

Especially

by way of example

### **Comparing:**

similarly

in the same way

by the same token

equally

Likewise

in a like manner

### **Clarifying:**

in other words

that is

### **Signaling Conflict or Opposite Positions:**

but

However

in contrast

on the other hand

While

by way of contrast

whereas

Conversely

although

### **Emphasizing:**

above all

even more

indeed

more importantly

### **Conceding a point:**

even so

Nevertheless

even though

admittedly

on the other hand

however

despite this, in spite of

Regardless

still

although

Yet

though

granted that

### **Stating a condition:**

on the condition that

in the event that

granting that

as/so long as

providing that

if

given that

only if

### **Stating a purpose:**

for the purpose of

with this intention

With this in mind

in order that, in order to

so as to

so that

### **Signals of chronological or logical sequence:**

in the first/second place

to begin/start with

initially

at first

firstly, secondly, thirdly

subsequently

previously

Eventually

next

before this

Afterwards

then