Philosophy 111- Introduction to Ethics

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Course Description:

Philosophy 111 is an introductory survey course designed to expose students to the fundamentals of ethics, including an introduction to the origins and nature of moral rights and responsibilities, sources of ethical paradigms, and historical and contemporary theories of ethical decision-making. Students will be asked to analyze ethical situations through the perspectives provided by common traditions in the field (i.e. utilitarian, Kantian, virtue ethics, religious ethics, etc…). In addition, students will be required to demonstrate understanding of independent scholarship and the ability to apply specific theories to a range of genres and contexts. The goal of the course is not to necessarily decide what is right or wrong for everyone, but rather to provide an understanding of different ways to approach morality and ethics.

Course Objectives:

After completion of PHL 111, students should be able to:
- o Identify the main historical theories that have been developed for ethics
- o Recognize important differences and similarities amongst teleological, deontological, ethological, and virtue approaches
- o Assess personal, professional and social issues for key ethical content
- o Articulate personal ethical systems through writing and reflection
- o Communicate effectively about personal views of social issues that require ethical processing

Required Texts/Stuff:

The Moral of the Story: An Introduction to Ethics, most recent edition, by Nina Rosenstand
Thinking Critically About Ethical Issues, most recent edition, by Vincent Ryan Ruggiero
Two-month subscription to Netflix or ability to rent 4-6 films from a local video store
        (I will be asking you to view a few film narratives during the course)
Ability to access a computer/the Internet daily during the course of the term

Grading and Due Dates:

Grading- The grading for this course is flexible and will be decided during the first day of class. The categories below indicate the evaluative components of the course. Instructions for the ethical will, research project, and the case study responses will be available from the first week of class. Information about the format for discussion board postings can be found here and on the discussion board page.

Research project (applying an ethical framework) ---------------------   200 points
Ethical will assignment --   100 points
Midterm and final exams --   200 points (100 for each)
Case study responses (5) ---   250 points (50 for each)
Weekly discussion postings ---   250 points

Letter grades are then generated at the end of the term based on a strict percentage scale. Grades with an attached "+" or "-" will be given for those point totals which fall within the top or bottom 2% of each grade category (there is no "A+"!). For example, a student with 830 points would receive a straight "B" grade. A different student, who had accumulated only 810 points, would receive a "B-" (810= the lowest 2% of the "B" category or .81x1000=810).

Due Dates- Due dates are included in the syllabus and are not generally flexible. Late papers will *not* be accepted unless a student is experiencing/has experienced a personal tragedy or some other *extreme* situation. In such cases, please speak to me privately *before* the fact, if possible.

Discussion Board Guidelines:

You will be expected to post at least three times every week to the course discussion board. One posting should be an original response to one of the topic threads that is available for the week's content; another should be a substantive response to the posting of someone else in the class; the third posting is your choice- it can be another original response, another reply, or a posting on a topic not covered by the threads that I have listed.

Try to be creative, articulate, and respectful in your postings. Substance is important and extensive summary is discouraged. Feel free to disagree with opinions presented by authors we read, by me, or by other students in the course. However, all disagreements should keep to the facts and not turn into personal attacks of any kind. There are a few potential discussion board behaviors that will NOT be tolerated:

- Profanity, racial slurs, or other derogatory language
- Divulging unique personal information (i.e. SS number, personal e-mail, phone number, etc…) about yourself or another student
- Plagiarized postings from other web sites or other discussion boards
- Rants or monologues, especially those not related to the subject of the week

I will be giving more information on discussion board postings as the course progresses. As always, if you have any concerns about this aspect of the course, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Writing Papers:

Submitting papers- I will accept paper submissions either directly via e-mail or through the digital drop box in the Blackboard environment. If you send an e-mail to me directly, please be sure you get some acknowledgement from me indicating that I have received your paper. If you do not get one, I did not receive it!

MLA format- All out of class assignments must be typed and double-spaced with realistic margins according to MLA format. Any up-to-date English/writing reference will have a section on how to use this set of writing conventions. If you have questions about the style, please contact me as soon as possible, and I can set you up with a few good resources.

Returned Papers- Generally, all graded copies of papers will be returned one week after the due date. I am more concerned about content than grammatical troubles, but papers that are not carefully proofed will receive point deductions accordingly. Returned papers will have comments inserted using MS Word "reviewing" toolbar conventions, so you will need a version of that program to view your returned documents.

Computers- Try to get into the habit of using a word processing program when you initially compose your work and save to a separate digital storage device. It will make revisions more convenient, and it will also give you experience using the technology. All papers should be proofed thoroughly *by a human*! Computer spell-checks and grammar checks are notoriously fallible! You can also take advantage of the writing tutors in the Writing Center by making a face-to-face appointment or submitting a paper via e-mail at TRWritingCenter@trcc.commnet.edu

General Policies:

Plagiarism- Plagiarism is the unacknowledged use of another person's words or ideas in your writing. Conscious plagiarism is an unacceptable academic behavior that will result in a "0" for the plagiarized assignment, with no re-write possibilities. Any repeat offense will result in a failing grade in the course. Plagiarism by omission or "unconscious" plagiarism will be dealt with on a case-by-case basis.

All students will be asked to review the information on the [TRCC Writing Center web site](#) related to plagiarism and submit a completed [post test](#) indicating knowledge of the basic aspects of plagiarism and plagiarism prevention.

Withdrawal policy- A student who finds it necessary to discontinue a course once class has met must provide written notice to the registrar. No punitive "W" grades are assigned to any withdrawal requested before the unrestricted withdrawal deadline for the semester. Withdrawal requests received after this deadline must bear the signature of the instructor. No withdrawals are permitted after the last class preceding the final exam. Students who do not obtain an official withdrawal, but simply stop attending classes, run the risk of receiving an "F" grade for the course

Revisions to Syllabus:

The information contained in the syllabus is subject to revision at my discretion. I will inform all of those who are enrolled in the course if any changes are made.

Reading and Assignment Schedule for Philosophy 111:

Week 1

Introduction to the course, active reading strategies, writing responses, syllabus quiz, themes, course ground rules; in class dilemmas

Moral of the Story- Chapter 1- thinking about values, narrative for ethical study, sources of values; Aesop and "Thumbcutter" narratives

Thinking Critically About Ethical Issues- chapters 1 and 2

 Week 2

Moral of the Story - Chapter 2- examples of narrative, seeing personal experience as ethical narrative, Plato and Aristotle intro readings; *Pulp Fiction* narrative

Moral of the Story - Chapter 3- ethical relativism, cultural differences, anthropological concerns, multiculturalism; Benedict reading; Do the Right Thing narrative

Thinking Critically About Ethical Issues- chapter 5; choose an inquiry question from pp 62-64 for assignment below

> **Case study response #1 due by end of the week**

Week 3

Moral of the Story - Chapter 4- versions of egoism, altruism, *Lord of the Rings* narrative example, Katz reading

Moral of the Story - Chapter 5- introduction to utilitarian theories, Bentham, Mill, act and rule utilitarianism, Dostoyevsky reading, LeGuin reading; using matrices

Thinking Critically About Ethical Issues- chapter 7 and chapter 10; choose an inquiry question from pp 92-96 for assignment below

> **Case study response #2 due by end of the week**

Week 4

Moral of the Story - Chapter 6- Kantian deontology, the categorical imperative, Kant excerpt readings, *High Noon* narrative

Moral of the Story - Chapter 7- Personhood, human rights, perspectives on justice, UN declaration of human rights, King reading, *Gattaca* narrative; Nussbaum handout

Thinking Critically About Ethical Issues- chapter 8; choose an inquiry question from pp 103-106 for assignment below

Case study response #3 due by end of the week

Week 5

Take midterm exam

Moral of the Story - Chapter 8- Socrates, Plato, and introduction to virtue ethics

Week 6

Moral of the Story - Chapter 9- Aristotle and more virtue theory, objections to virtue theory, changing or situational virtues, Nicomachean Ethics reading, *As Good as it Gets* narrative

Moral of the Story - Chapters 10 and 11- more contemporary perspectives, existentialism, Nussbaum, *The Searchers* narrative

Thinking Critically About Ethical Issues- chapter 9; choose an inquiry question from pp 114-117 for assignment below

Case study response #4 due by end of the week

Week 7

Moral of the Story - Chapter 13 (just war section and media ethics section)
SR- just war packet- Intro to just war theories; examples of spin and media bias

Moral of the Story - Chapter 13 (bioethics topics and animal rights topics)
SR- bioethics mixed reading packet; just war theories continued; bioethical issues, animal rights and speciesism

Thinking Critically About Ethical Issues- pp 173-183 choose an inquiry question for assignment below

Case study response #5 due by end of the week

Week 8

Take final exam

Ethical will and "lifeboat" paper due by the end of the week