

THREE RIVERS COMMUNITY COLLEGE

ETHICS (PHL K111; 3 CREDITS)

Fall 2013; Thursday 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: We may make our way through life not ordinarily considering that there are a variety of tools to use to make moral decisions. In fact, 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 students an overview of several of the major moral theories that have been proposed by thinkers over the ages, including: divine command theory, 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.

Course Requirements and Grading Criteria:

Class participation & homework =	20%
Two 6 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. More than 3 absences will result in 10% of your grade being factored as an "F". Students who sleep in class will be marked absent. Likewise, more than 5 late arrivals will result in 10% of your grade being factored as an "F".

Tests:

The midterm and final will be open note. 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; 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. Listening to what other people have to say about things makes life interesting and enriches our own understanding. 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. Since class participation and preparation are 20% of your course grade, if you choose not to participate willingly, expect to be called on occasionally.

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.

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. Likewise, laptops may be used during class time with permission of the instructor only.

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

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:

Date	In Class	Homework Due for <u>Following Class</u>
8/29	Introduction to Ethics	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.
9/5	Discuss Ethical Relativism	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.
9/12	Discuss Myself or Others	Read about media ethics and business ethics, pp. 671-694 and primary reading: "Ethics as a Vehicle for Media Quality", p. 726-728. Answer questions 1 and 2 on p. 728.

9/19	Discuss media ethics, business ethics, and just war theory	Read handout "Don't Be Evil" and answer attached questions.
9/26	Watch movie <i>Enron: The Smartest Guys in the Room</i> , and discuss movie and handout	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.
10/3	Discuss Utilitarianism; Thesis statement for paper 1 must be turned in by this date.	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.
10/10	Discuss Kant's Deontology	Study for midterm; Complete paper
10/17	Midterm; Paper 1 Due	
10/24	Discuss personhood, rights, and justice	
10/31	Discuss animal right and environmental ethics	
11/7	Discuss Virtue Ethics	
11/14	Discuss Aristotle's Virtue Theory	
11/21	Discuss Contemporary Perspectives; Thesis Statement for paper 2 must be handed in by this date	
12/5	Discuss Gender Ethics	Study for final; Complete paper
12/12	Final; Paper 2 Due	

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 6 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..."

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 on the part of your audience 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** make an **evaluation** of any texts or author. Do not say 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.
- Remember your audience has reasonable familiarity with the issue. Do not assume he/she is totally ignorant.

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. It may be a forcefully stated opinion with which others may disagree.
- You need to 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**.
- To make sure your reasons are tied to your thesis, look at what your thesis is asserting and make sure you are supporting all aspects of the thesis AND that you are not trying to make a point not connected to the 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.
- If appropriate, set up the quotation 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. Remember, you should always say something

about any quotations you include – you should 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 for us.

- Do not fall into summarizing instead of making an argument.
- You will need to 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 better/the right thing to do; 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 previous sentences in your essay word for word, restate ALL 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. You may want to give a quotation that helps you make this final point.
- Make sure your conclusion would not work better as your introduction. Also double-check in your conclusion that what you are stating is what you actually have been arguing for during the essay.

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.
- Do not automatically write a five paragraph essay; make your argument as long as it needs to be. Organize your essay around your argument, not around how long you think an essay is supposed to be.
- 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.) and will often use repetition (you may want to repeat part of your thesis, a phrase used in a previous paragraph, a similar structure to your last transition, etc
- **Documentation and integrating quotations:**
- You should use correct MLA documentation in your essays with parenthetical notations and a works cited page.
- 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.

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 from one idea to another
in persuasive essays

Causes or Reasons:

for the reason that
because
as
due to

being that
seeing that
Since

in view of
for
inasmuch as

Conclusions:

therefore
finally
consequently
in consequence
accordingly

Thus
given these points
in summary
as a result
for this/these reason

In conclusion
so
overall
hence

The addition of a further point:

further, furthermore
what is more
in fact
alternatively

Also
in addition
Actually
on the other hand

moreover
besides
additionally
not to mention

Giving an example:

such as
as an illustration
in particular
for instance

Particularly
to illustrate
for one thing
Especially

including
for example
to illustrate
by way of example

Comparing:

similarly
equally

in the same way
Likewise

by the same token
in a like manner

Clarifying:

in other words

that is to say

Signaling Conflict or Opposite Positions:

but

However

in contrast

on the other hand
whereas

While
Conversely

by way of contrast
although

Emphasizing:

above all
more importantly

even more

indeed

Conceding a point:

even so
admittedly
despite this, in spite of
although
granted that

Nevertheless
on the other hand
Regardless
Yet

even though
however
still
though

Stating a condition:

on the condition that
as/so long as
given that

in the event that
providing that
only if

granting that
if

Stating a purpose:

for the purpose of
in order that, in order to

with this intention
so as to

With this in mind
so that

Signals of chronological or logical sequence:

in the first/second place
at first
previously
before this

to begin/start with
firstly, secondly, thirdly
Eventually
Afterwards

initially
subsequently
next
then