

THREE RIVERS COMMUNITY COLLEGE

ETHICS (PHL K111; 3 CREDITS)

Spring 2012; TR 2:30-3:45

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Office hours by appointment

Text: *Ethics for Life: A Text With Readings*, by Judith Boss, 5th ed.

Selected readings from additional sources to be handed out or posted on Blackboard

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:

Three 4-5 page position papers=	60%
Midterm=	20%
Non-Cumulative Final=	20%

Instructional Strategies: lectures, class discussion, written assignments, films, 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. 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 book and 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 format, requiring approximately 2-4 sentences to answer each question.

Paper Topics and Guidelines:

Guidelines for the papers are attached to this syllabus. Please note that all three papers 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.

Paper #1:

Discuss an issue in which media/communications integrity is of significance within your chosen major or profession. Remember to clarify the standpoint you are taking with a clearly formulated thesis statement. An example of a thesis statement about media/communications integrity in a profession is presented on the Thesis Statement handout attached to this syllabus.

Paper #2:

On page 5 of the Environmental Ethics handout on the Blackboard there is a list of questions. Choose one of these questions and formulate a thesis that addresses it.

Paper #3:

Refer to the handout on the Blackboard entitled *Social Entrepreneurship*. In this handout are two case studies of individuals who have exhibited extraordinary qualities of character. On the last page of this handout is a map of a number of other social entrepreneurs. Your task for this paper is to choose one of these and discuss, vis-a-vis the chapter in the text on virtue ethics, how the person exhibited excellence of moral character in their accomplishments. Note that the emphasis (given that this is a class on ethics) is NOT so much on WHAT the person did, as on the character traits that allowed them to accomplish what they did. Reference to the reading in the text on virtue ethics is expected.

Other Class Behavior:

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. Class discussion 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. Consequently, class participation is extremely important. Though participation is not graded directly, 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. Students who are active class participants will always be given the benefit of the doubt when grades fall on the line. Don't just sit back! Take a stand! Participate!

Plagiarism and Cheating:

The College's policy on plagiarism and cheating is strict and unambiguous. It can be found in detail in the College catalog. 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.

Course Outline:

Date	In Class	Homework
1/19	Introduction to Ethics	Read pp. 77-98
1/24	Discuss Ethical Subjectivism	Media Ethics readings on Blackboard
1/26	Media Ethics- film	
1/31	Media Ethics- discuss film + reading	Thesis Statement Paper 1 due Read 100-123
2/7	Discuss Cultural Relativism	Read 123-142
2/9	Discuss Cultural Relativism	Environmental Ethics readings on Blackboard
2/14	Environmental Ethics- film	
2/16	Environmental Ethics- discuss film + readings	Read 147-167
2/21	Discuss Morality and Religion	Paper 1 Due Read 167-185
2/23	Discuss Morality and Religion	Read Ethical Dilemmas on Blackboard
2/28	Discuss Ethical Dilemmas	Thesis Statement Paper 2 due Read 187-206
3/1	Discuss Conscience + Moral Development	Read 207-229
3/6	Discuss Conscience + Moral Development	Study for Midterm
3/8	Midterm	
3/13	Business Ethics- film	Business Ethics readings on Blackboard
3/15	Business Ethics- discuss film + reading	Paper 2 Due; Read 268-286
	Spring Break	
3/27	Discuss Utilitarianism	Read 287-304 See Social Entrepreneurship readings on Blackboard
3/29	Discuss Utilitarianism	Read 396-403; 405(bottom)-415; 417-419
4/3	Discuss Virtue Ethics	Thesis Statement Paper 3 due Free Will readings on Blackboard

4/5	Ethics and Free Will- film	
4/10+12	No Classes	
4/17	Ethics and Free Will- discuss film + readings	Read 307-327
4/19	Discuss Ethics of Duty	Read 328-349
4/24	Discuss Ethics of Duty	Read 352-372
4/26	Discuss Rights Ethics	Read 373-393
5/1	Discuss Rights Ethics	Medical Ethics readings on Blackboard
5/3	Discuss Medical Ethics	
5/8	Discuss papers	Paper 3 Due
5/10	Final	

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 to 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**.

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 or APA 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 a 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 or APA 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 environmental policy that is responding to the actual circumstances 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 was extremely harmful to the development of environmental policy that could address the actual threat.

This statement asserts your position, but you also realize that at least part of the reason that the development of valid environmental policy was made difficult by this controversy was that people were now distrustful of any data on global warming. You decide to make a final modification of your thesis statement as follows:

The potentially falsified data presented on global warming by the Institute of Space Studies was extremely harmful to the development of environmental policy that could address the actual threat, in that people were now distrustful of any global warming data.

You now have an excellent thesis statement.

Rebutting an Opposing Viewpoint **(short form)**

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
on the other hand

however
While

in contrast
by way of contrast

whereas

conversely

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