Foundations of Professional Ethics -- Summer 2014

PHIL 3340.002 (50378); MTWR 10:00-11:55, CI 109
PHIL 3340.004 (50240); MTWR 2:00-3:55, CI 106

Instructor and office information:
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Office hours: MTW 12-1:30 and by appointment.
Instructor’s web-site: http://falcon.tamucc.edu/~sencerz/stefan.htm.

Course description: This course is an introduction to contemporary ethical theories and their applications to practical issues. We will begin with an overview of ethics, including the nature of ethical reasoning and some basic ethical theories. Subsequently, we will apply this basis to explore some current ethical debates; such as the morality of suicide and euthanasia, capital punishment, legalization of recreational drugs, animal rights and social and environmental responsibilities of professionals.

Learning outcomes: Students taking the course will be expected to
1) demonstrate (on test questions) the understanding of ethical theories and principles;
2) apply those theories and principles to professional ethics issues, in essays and case study analyses;
3) develop their reasoning skills, and demonstrate that development on test questions;
4) construct and evaluate ethical arguments in papers and essays.

Additional readings will be provided on the web site for the course http://ethics.tamucc.edu [W], or distributed in class as handouts [H]. If you miss a class, make sure that you have copies of all additional handouts distributed in the class. Please remember that outlines and handouts do not cover all of the material on which you may be tested, and they do not contain complete accounts of the topics that are covered in lectures and readings. Merely memorizing the handouts will not enable you to pass the course.

Attendance & participation: All materials discussed in the lectures and covered in the readings are the potential basis for test and exam questions. Students are therefore expected to attend all class meetings and keep up with assigned readings. In general, if you don’t attend class or don’t read required texts, don’t expect to pass. Usually on T and R (and perhaps other days), there will be an attendance quiz testing a material to be discussed on a given day. Two worst grades will be dropped; the rest will contribute 25% to your final grade.
You can miss 2 classes without penalty. Those are free passes; use them wisely. Each additional unexcused absence will result in the loss of credit you would have earned during that class. Except for the cases of demonstrable emergency I do not accept late work.

Make up tests & incompletes: Students who miss a test for a good (e.g. medical) reason will have a chance to take a make-up test, during a few days after the original test, at a time arranged with the instructor. An incomplete for the course is possible only in cases where course work is nearly complete, and the student has a legitimate reason for not completing the course work by the end of the semester.

Graded Assignments and Attendance
Tests will include a combination of objective (multiple-choice) questions and short essays. Attendance quizzes will consist be mostly of multiple-choice questions.
25% -- The 1st test (June 15)
25% -- The final test (July 01)
10% -- Draft of a paper (June 18)
20% -- The final version of a paper (July 02)
20% -- Attendance and homework
Grading will be on the standard 90-100% = A, 80-89% = B, and so on.
Plagiarism and academic dishonesty: As a student at TAMU-CC, you are bound by the student code of conduct. Cheating, plagiarism or any other form of academic dishonesty is grounds for failing the course. Plagiarism is the presentation of work as one’s own while, in fact, it was authored by someone else. In particular, if you rely on someone’s work please cite the source of the material. University policy strictly prohibits plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty. The penalty for an act of academic dishonesty is a negative credit as a grade for the assignment in question. For example, of the work is worthy 10% and it is plagiarized, you will get -10%.

Freedom of speech and classroom etiquette: You are free to ask any questions about the material. In many cases, if you do not understand something, this is because it has not been explained clearly to you. So, you will be doing your colleagues and yourself a service if you request clarification. You are also free to argue for any ethical position you find compelling, as long as you provide reasons for your point of view. It is inevitable that during discussions individual points of view will differ. When they do, our reaction will always be to patiently listen to the reasons offered for a particular ethical conclusion and cooperatively evaluate those reasons.

E- etiquette: Please turn off all cell phones, pagers, etc. If your cell phone rings (or sings) during class, I will stop the lecture and answer it for you. If you feel the urge to text message or make a call, please leave the classroom and do not return (until next class). The lectures are for lecturing and discussion. Any student who disrupts a lecture by using a personal electronic device will be asked to leave.

Advisement: Professional academic advisors are available to assist students with course selection, degree plans, and other academic matters. In our college the undergraduate advisor is Natasha Crawford (825-3466; Natasha.crawford@tamucc.edu). The graduate advisor is Rachelle Stanley (825-5896; Rachelle.stanley@tamucc.edu). Both are located on the second floor of Driftwood. Students who have yet to declare a major are advised by the Academic Advising Transition Center. For more information please call (361) 825-5931 or log on to http://www.tamucc.edu/~aac.

Notice to Students with Disabilities: TA&MU-CC complies with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) in making reasonable accommodations for qualified students with disabilities. If you suspect that you may have a disability (physical impairment, learning disability, psychiatric disability, etc.), please contact the Services for Students with Disabilities Office, located in Driftwood 101, at 825-5816. If you need disability accommodations in this class, please see me as soon as possible.

Grade Appeal Process: As stated in University Rule 13.02.99.C2, Student Grade Appeals, a student who believes that he or she has not been held to appropriate academic standards as outlined in the class syllabus, equitable evaluation procedures, or appropriate grading, may appeal the final grade given in the course. The burden of proof is upon the student to demonstrate the appropriateness of the appeal. For complete details, including the responsibilities of the parties involved in the process and the number of days allowed for completing the steps in the process, see University Rule 13.02.99.C2, Student Grade Appeals, and University Procedure 13.02.99.C2.01, Student Grade Appeal Procedures. These documents are accessible at: http://www.tamucc.edu/provost/university_rules/index.htm. For assistance and/or guidance in the grade appeal process, students may contact the Office of Student Affairs.

The fine print: For all matters concerning course withdrawal, appeal of grades, academic misconduct, etc, students are strongly advised to consult the rules outlined in the Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi Student Handbook and on the web at: http://studentaffairs.tamucc.edu/.
FOUNDATIONS OF PROFESSIONAL ETHICS -- TENTATIVE COURSE SCHEDULE
(this schedule may be further updated after the first meeting when we take a vote about what topics we want
to discuss in class in depth)

WEEK 1 (June 01-04):
MT Organization and general introduction; What Does It Mean To Prove an Ethical Point?
   Readings: Rachels, chapter 1, "What is Morality?"
   Sencerz, “What is Ethics?” [Web]
WR Cultural Relativism and Ethical Egoism
   Readings: Rachels, Chapter 2; Sencerz, “Relativism” [W]
   Rachels, Chapter 5; Sencerz, “Egoism” [W]

WEEK 2 (June 08-11)
MT Consequentialism (continued) – Utilitarian Ethics
   Chapters 7-8; Sencerz, “Utilitarian Ethics” [W]; also J.S. Mill, Utilitarianism [W]
WR Deontology and the Ethics of Respect for Persons
   Rachels, Chapters 8-9, Kant, The Categorical Imperative; Sencerz, Deontology [W]

WEEK 3 (June 15-18)
M     The First Test (25%)
T     The Idea of Social Contract (Rachels, Chapter 10)
WR    Extended examples: Euthanasia, Assisted Suicide, Environmental Ethics, and whatever issues we
      will decide to discuss
R     First Draft of the Paper is due (10%)

WEEK 4 (June 22-25)
      Rachels, Chapter 4, Harris, The Ethics of Natural Law, Aquinas: Ethics and Natural Law
      Sencerz, Natural Law Theory [W]
      http://falcon.tamucc.edu/~sencerz/Harris_Nat_Law.htm

WEEK 5 (June 29 - July 02)
MT    “What Would Satisfactory Theory Be Like?”
      Extended Examples continued
      Rachels, Chapter 13
W     The Final Test (20%)
      The Final Paper is due (20%)
R     (TBD)
FOUNDATIONS OF PROFESSIONAL ETHICS
SOME OF THE TOPICS THAT WE MAY DISCUSS IN CLASS

During the first meeting we will take a vote on what issues and problems we would like to pursue in depth. Based on this vote, we will decide what topics and readings we will pursue during the rest of the semester.

Here are some of the topics we may discuss in class. Your input is important and will contribute to the selection of topics for the class. Thus, please, rank each topic using the following scale:

A - I would hate to discuss this topic in class.
B – I would not like to discuss this topic in class.
C – I am indifferent about discussing this topic in class.
D – I would like to discuss this topic in class.
E – I would love to discuss this topic in class.

1. What are relations between morality and religion? Is morality dependent on religion?
2. What are relationships between morality and cultural customs? Is morality relative or are there some objective (universal) moral standards?
3. Is euthanasia or assisted suicide ever morally permissible? Why or why not? Under what conditions?
4. Is abortion morally permissible? Why or why not? Under what conditions?
5. Is war ever morally permissible? What are the rules for the just war conduct?
6. Is death penalty justified? Why or why not?
7. Do animals have moral rights? Morally speaking, what can we do to animals?
8. On what principles should we base our attitudes to nature?