

NOVA COLLEGE-WIDE COURSE CONTENT SUMMARY PHI 220 - ETHICS (3 CR.)

Course Description

Provides a systematic study of representative ethical systems. Lecture 3 hours per week.

General Course Purpose

To introduce students to classical and contemporary writings on such matters as good and evil, relativism, happiness, virtue, egoism, moral education, abortion, and social policy. We will seek to answer, using critical reasoning, a series of questions about these issues as raised by the course readings. In addition, students will engage each other in sustained discussion of these issues. This course will provide the student with the opportunity to critically read and write about primary texts, commentaries and textbook materials in moral philosophy and ethics.

Course Prerequisites/Corequisites

None

Course Objectives

At the completion of this course the student will be able to identify and critically evaluate the major ethical systems. The student will be able to use these theories to analyze contemporary moral issues. Specifically, the student will be able to:

- Summarize and explain some of the views of some historically important moral philosophers (e.g., Plato, Aristotle, Kant, Nietzsche, Singer). (Relates to General Education objectives 1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 1.4, 3.4 and 5.2)
- List and explain the main concepts and theories of ethics (e.g., egoism, altruism, rights, duties, utilitarianism, Kantianism, virtue ethics). (objs 1.1-1.5, 2.2-2.6, 3.2-3.4)
- Apply moral concepts and theories to case studies and contemporary moral issues. (objs 2.1, 2.2, 2.3, 2.5, 3.2, 3.5)
- Articulate in writing an understanding of connections between reason and feeling and between cultural and intellectual traditions. (objs 1.1-1.5, 2.2-2.6, 3.1-3.5)
- Express conclusions with awareness of the degree to which these conclusions are supported by evidence. (objs 1.1-1.5, 2.2-2.6)
- Present effectively in writing an extended argument on a topic of ethical importance. (objs 1.1-1.5, 2.1-2.6, 3.2-3.4, 4.1 – 4.4)

Major Topics to be Included

Critical attention will be given to the following basic questions of ethics:

- Are all standards of right and wrong conditioned solely by the cultural norms by which one lives? What other alternatives are there?
- How can we determine what is right for us to do? What are the rules for determining moral rules?
- What obligations do we have to others? What is the source of those obligations?
- What has genuine value for the human person? Why do we value what we do?
- What rights do we have as human beings? What is the basis of our entitlement to those rights?