

Bergen Community College
Division of Arts & Humanities
Department of Philosophy & Religion

Course Syllabus

PHR-102 Contemporary Moral Issues

Basic Information about Course and Instructor

Semester and year:
Course and Section Number:
Meeting Times and Locations:

Instructor:
Office Location:
Phone:
Departmental Secretary: [optional]
Office Hours:
Email Address:

Course Description

PHR-102 Contemporary Moral Issues is an introduction to applied or practical ethics. This involves discussions of specific moral problems, issues, controversies, and questions. Topics may include abortion; euthanasia; the death penalty and other punishments; sexual morality; pornography and censorship; discrimination on the basis of race, gender, or sexual orientation; drugs; environmental ethics; the moral status of animals; and the meaning of virtue and vice.

3 lectures, 3 credits

General Education Course – Humanities Elective

Student Learning Objectives: As a result of meeting the requirements in this course, students will be able to

1. identify the basic problems of ethics;
2. identify and analyze the philosophical issues that pertain to the ethical questions addressed in the course;
3. reconstruct in detail, both orally and in writing, the views of philosophers whose essays/books are studied in the course;
4. use logical and critical thinking skills to analyze and evaluate the ways in which philosophers approach ethical issues; and
5. state and support their own views on the ethical issues addressed in the course, both orally and in writing, and with logical and critical precision, clarity, and rigor.

In pursuit of the foregoing objectives, the course is based on the reading and discussion of primary source materials by philosophers and other writers on ethical and moral issues; the basic principles and methods of logical reasoning are introduced; the techniques of philosophical research and writing are

reviewed; students are given the opportunity and are encouraged to participate actively in class discussions; and students are required to do a substantial amount of expository and critical writing in response to the material presented in the course.

The Student Learning Objectives (SLOs) in this course are intended to be aligned with as many of the college's Core Competencies and General Education Goals as possible. They are also correlated with the overall Learning Goals of the Philosophy Program. In addition, student progress in reaching the course's SLOs is to be assessed through a variety of assessment types (tools) and on the basis of a variety of assessment criteria. These alignments and correlations are depicted in the [attached document](#). [[Back to course listing](#)]

Course Content

PHR-102 is designed to introduce students to contemporary issues of social and ethical importance. Its concern, therefore, is primarily with applied ethics as opposed to moral theory. Although the topics chosen for discussion are left to the discretion of the instructor, a typical course will cover such issues as abortion, euthanasia, genetic engineering, surrogate motherhood, the death penalty, animal rights, sexual morality, racial and sexual discrimination, terrorism, social and economic justice, etc., that is, the issues typically found in many relevant texts available on the market (e.g., Olen, Van Camp, and Barry's *Applying Ethics*). The use of relevant films (e.g., *Whose Life is it Anyway?*, *A Clockwork Orange*, etc.) is recommended as an adjunct to the assigned readings.

Special Features of the Course (if any) [to be designated by the instructor]

E.g., the use of learning technologies in the course (Internet, PowerPoint, etc.); the inclusion of technological literacy and/or information literacy learning in the course; etc.

Writing and Critical Thinking Requirement(s)

Because PHR-102 is a General Education course, it requires students to complete a variety of critical thinking and writing assignments. These assignments may include class discussions and debates requiring the application of critical thinking skills, short in-class essays, out-of-class writing projects (journals, research papers, argument-analysis papers, book reviews, etc.), tests and examinations containing essay components, and so forth. Instructors will respond to and comment on students' writing in detail.

Grading Policy

A student's final grade for the course is based primarily on his or her performance on the required work for the course (writing assignments, examinations, class presentations, etc.) and on his or her overall mastery of the material covered in the course. A student's class participation may also be evaluated, and the grade thereon may be used as a factor in determining the student's final grade for the course; but a class participation grade will count for no more than fifteen percent (15%) of the final grade.

Attendance Policy

BCC Attendance Policy:

All students are expected to attend punctually every scheduled meeting of each course in which they are registered. Attendance and lateness policies and sanctions are to be determined by the instructor for each section of each course. These will be established in writing on the individual course outline. Attendance will be kept by the instructor for administrative and counseling purposes.

Philosophy and Religion Departmental Attendance Policy:

Students are expected to attend class regularly and punctually. Attendance will be taken at each class session. It is expected that class will be conducted such that students will benefit in their written work by the lectures and class discussion. If students occasionally arrive late, they should be encouraged to enter quietly, not disturbing the class. If students miss class, they should be encouraged to use the course calendar to stay abreast of material. It is probably a good idea for students to find study partners and to exchange telephone numbers. Make-ups for examinations should be allowed by the instructor if, in the instructor's judgment, the student has presented a good excuse for missing the work. Instructors may penalize work which is late; however, the instructor's policies for make-ups and late work must be clearly specified on the student guide.

Attendance Policy in this Course:

[To be designated by the instructor]

Course Texts and/or Other Study Materials

Recommended Texts: The current editions of any of the following texts are appropriate for use in PHR-102.

- Abelson, Raziell, & Marie-Louise Friquegnon (eds.), *Ethics for Modern Life*, St. Martin's Press.
- Beauchamp, Tom L., & Terry P. Pinkard (eds.), *Ethics and Public Policy*, Prentice-Hall.
- Bender, David, & Bruno Leone (general eds.), *The Greenhaven Press Opposing Viewpoints Series*, Greenhaven Press. The following individual volumes cover topics explored in PHR102: *Abortion, Animal Rights, Biomedical Ethics, Censorship, The Death Penalty, Euthanasia, Genetic Engineering, The Health Crisis, The Homeless, Homosexuality, Male/Female Roles, Poverty, Racism in America, Sexual Values, Social Justice, and Suicide*.
- Grcic, Joseph (ed.), *Moral Choices*, West Publishing Co.
- Mappes, Thomas A., & Jane S. Zembaty (eds.), *Biomedical Ethics*, McGraw-Hill.
- Thomas A. Mappes & Jane S. Zembaty (eds.), *Social Ethics: Morality and Social Policy*, McGraw-Hill.
- Olen, Jeffrey, Julie C. Van Camp, and Vincent Barry (eds.). *Applying Ethics: A Text with Readings*. Thomson/Wadsworth, 8th Edition, 2005. Current departmentally-approved text for PHR-102.
- Pojman, Louis P. (ed.), *Life and Death: A Reader in Moral Problems*, Jones & Bartlett.
- Rachels, James (ed.), *Moral Problems*, Harper & Row.
- Regan, Tom (ed.), *Matters of Life and Death: New Introductory Essays in Moral Philosophy*, Random House.
- Singer, Peter (ed.), *Applied Ethics*, Oxford University Press.

- Sterba, James P. (ed.), *Morality in Practice*, Wadsworth.
- Wasserstrom, Richard A., (ed.), *Today's Moral Problems*, Macmillan.

Recommended Supplements

- Bayles, Michael D., & Kenneth Henley (eds.), *Right Conduct: Theories and Applications*, Random House.
- Beauchamp, Tom L., *Philosophical Ethics: An Introduction to Moral Philosophy*, McGraw-Hill.
- Harris, Jr., C.E., *Applying Moral Theories*, Wadsworth.
- MacIntyre, Alisdair, *A Short History of Ethics*, Macmillan.
- Runkle, Gerald, *Ethics: An Examination of Contemporary Moral Problems*, Holt, Rinehart & Winston.
- Solomon, Robert C., *Ethics: A Brief Introduction*, McGraw-Hill.
- Van Wyk, Robert N., *Introduction to Ethics*, St. Martin's Press.

Other College, Divisional, and/or Departmental Policy Statements [optional but recommended]

<p><u>Examples:</u> Statement on plagiarism and/or academic dishonesty. ADA statement. Sexual Harassment statement. Statement on acceptable use of BCC technology. Statement on the purpose and value of faculty office hours.</p>
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Student and Faculty Support Services [optional but recommended]

List support services, e.g., the Writing Center, the Math Lab, the Tutorial Center, Online Writing Lab (OWL), Office of Specialized Services, etc. Include information on the BCC Library.

Example:

Student and Faculty Support Services

The Distance Learning Office – for any problems you may have accessing your online courses	Room C-334	201-612-5581 psimms@bergen.edu
Smarthinking Tutorial Service	On Line at:	www.bergen.edu/library/learning/tutor/smart/index.asp
The Tutoring Center	Room S-118	201-447-7908
The Technology Assisted Learning Lab (Math and English)	Room C-110	201-447-7988
The Writing Center	Room C-110	201-447-7136
The Online Writing Lab (OWL)		www.bergen.edu/owl
The Office of Specialized Services (for Students with Disabilities)	Room S-153	201-612-5270
The Sidney Silverman Library – Reference Desk	Room L-226	201-447-7436

Include the following statement on Logos – The BCC Philosophy Club

Logos – The BCC Philosophy Club

usually meets on Tuesdays during the Activities Period, 12:30-1:25 PM, in Room L-342. I encourage you to join the club. Since you are interested in the study of philosophy, you should find the meetings and other activities of the philosophy club very interesting. For further information, check the Philosophy & Religion bulletin board adjacent to Room L-325A or contact LOGOS Advisor, Dr. Vanda Bozicevic (L-331, 201-493-7528, vbozicevic@bergen.edu). (LOGOS does not hold regular meetings during the summer.)

Include a Course Outline and Calendar [can be combined in a single syllabus section]

The Course Outline and Calendar must include all of the following elements:

- A daily or (at least) weekly schedule of topics to be covered.
- Dates for exams, quizzes, or other means of assessment. (This does not mean that all evaluation of students must be in groups and at the same time. Exams and other means of assessment can be listed as "to be scheduled individually.")
- Due dates for major assignments – e.g., when is a paper due; if the topic has to be approved, when; if an outline or draft is an interim step, when it is due.
- Any required special events must be included in the outline/calendar, e.g., a lecture by a visiting speaker, a dramatic or musical performance, a field trip.
- Designation of Student Learning Objectives – by number – for each topic (see sample below).
- A note to students stating that the course outline and calendar is tentative and subject to change, depending upon the progress of the class.

SAMPLE COURSE OUTLINE FOR PHR-102
(Topics Only; Reading Assignments Not Specified)

- I. INTRODUCTION: THE NATURE OF ETHICS (OR MORAL PHILOSOPHY)
 - A. Ethics as a branch of philosophy.
 - B. Basic problems in moral philosophy.
 1. Normative ethics (general and applied) vs. non-normative ethics (descriptive ethics and metaethics).
 2. The language of ethics.
 3. Ethics and metaphysics: determinism vs. libertarianism; theology, religion, and morality; human nature and ethical theory; etc.
 4. Ethics and epistemology: cognitivism vs. non-cognitivism; universalism (absolutism and objectivism) vs. relativism (conventionalism and subjectivism); etc.
 5. Ethics and logic: the formulation and analysis of moral arguments.
 - C. Types of ethical theory: deontological theories (e.g., Kant); teleological theories (e.g., Mill); contract theories (e.g., Hobbes); etc.
- II. ISSUES IN BIO-MEDICAL ETHICS
 - A. Suicide, refusal of medical treatment, and medically assisted suicide ("alloicide").
 - B. Euthanasia and medical ethics.
 - C. Abortion and fetal research.
 - D. Surrogate motherhood and reproductive technology.
 - E. The ethics/morality of genetic engineering.
 - F. Human experimentation (in general, on children, on students, on prisoners, etc.).

- G. Animal rights and human treatment of non-human animals (food production, animal experimentation, etc.).
- H. Mental illness (involuntary civil commitment, behavior control technologies, psychosurgery, insanity as a moral/legal excuse, etc.).
- I. The health care crisis.

III. THE ETHICS OF HUMAN SEXUALITY

- A. Sexual morality.
- B. Homosexuality.
- C. Pornography and censorship.

IV. QUESTIONS OF JUSTICE AND INJUSTICE

- A. The death penalty.
- B. Sexual equality.
- C. Racial and sexual discrimination, affirmative action, preferential treatment, and "reverse" discrimination.
- D. Economic (distributive) justice.
- E. Poverty, affluence, welfare, and workfare.
- F. World hunger and famine relief.
- G. Violence, warfare, and terrorism.

V. ETHICS AND ECOLOGY: ISSUES IN ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS

- A. The environmental crisis (pollution, depletion of natural resources, etc.).
- B. Environmental ethics and our moral obligations to future generations.
- C. Overpopulation and population control.

SAMPLE FORMAT FOR COURSE OUTLINE AND CALENDAR

Note to Students: The following Course Outline and Calendar is tentative and subject to change, depending upon the progress of the class.

Week(s)	Date(s)	Topic/Activity	Learning Objectives	Assignments/Events
1				
2				
3				
4				
5				
6				
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8				
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10				
11				
12				
13				
14				
15				

SAMPLE COURSE OUTLINE AND CALENDAR

[with designation of Student Learning Objectives – by number – for each topic]

Note to Students: The following Course Outline and Calendar is tentative and subject to change, depending upon the progress of the class.

Week(s)	Date(s)	Topic/Activity/Assignments	Student Learning Objectives
1-2	Sep 6, 8, 13, 15	Introduction: The Nature of Ethics and Moral Theories Readings: John Stuart Mill, Immanuel Kant, Aristotle Quiz on major moral theories	1, 2
		Life and Death	
3-4	Sep 20, 22, 27, 29 Sep 20 Sep 29	Life and Death I: Euthanasia and Assisted Suicide Readings: J. Gay-Williams, James Rachels, Philippa Foot, Richard Brandt Group Work on NJ Statutes (Title 26) assigned (due by 10/10)	2-5
5-6	Oct 4, 6, 11, 13 Oct 6 Oct 13	Life and Death II: Abortion Readings: John T. Noonan, Judith Jarvis Thomason, Mary Ann Warren, Don Marquis, Rosalind Hursthouse Listen to Real Audio file of Don Marquis (on WWW) Study questions on abortion due (10/13)	2-5
7-8	Oct 18, 20, 25, 27 Oct 18 Oct 20	Life and Death III: The Moral Status of Animals Readings: Peter Singer, Tom Regan, Tibor R. Machan, Bonnie Steinbock Argument Analysis Paper assigned (due by 11/17) Midterm Examination	2-5
		The Personal Life	
9-10	Nov 1, 3, 8, 10	Sexual Ethics I The Three Ps: Perversion, Promiscuity, Prostitution Readings: Colin McGinn, Alan Goldman, Thomas Nagel Sexual Ethics II Masturbation, Casual/Plain Sex, Rape, Homosexuality Readings: Michael Levin, Timothy F. Murphy, John Corvino, Roger Scruton Short essay on the implicit casual sex contract due	2-5

Note: All readings are from Olen, Jeffrey, and Vincent Barry. *Applying Ethics: A Text with Readings*. Seventh Edition.

		Justice	
11-12	Nov 15, 17, 22, 24 Nov 15 Nov 22 Nov 25-28	Distributive/Economic Justice, Social Justice, Welfare Readings: John Rawls, Robert Nozick Argument Analysis Paper due Thanksgiving Weekend	2-5
13-14	Nov 29, Dec 1, 6, 8 Nov 29 Dec 8	Environmental Ethics Readings: Aldo Leopold, Paul W. Taylor, William F. Baxter, J. Baird Callicott Short (5-10 minutes) class presentation due Final Examination Study Guide distributed	2-5
15	Dec 13, 15	Final Examination Review Final Examination will occur on the last class session	3-5