VALENCIA COLLEGE

ETHICS & CRITICAL THINKING

PHI 2600, W03 or W05

CRN 11532(W03) ; CRN 11534(W05)

Fall 2014 COURSE SYLLABUS

INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION

NAME : Dr. Andrew Alexander

OFFICE : 5-259

PHONE : 407-5821473

E-MAIL : AAlexander@valenciacollege.edu

OFFICE HOURS : MW 9-10; 11:30-12:30

 TR 1-3

INSTRUCTIONAL METHODS :

This course involves lectures and group discussions; individual, as well as group work, is required.

COURSE INFORMATION

CONTACT HRS/WK : 3

LOCATION : West, 5-227(W03) ; 7-206 (W05)

TIME : MW, 10-11:15 (W03) ; 11:30-12:45 (W05)

TERMS OFFERED : Every term as needed

CREDIT HOURS : 3

PREREQUISITE : NONE

REFUND OF FEES : The Drop Refund deadline for this course is 9/2/2014

TEXT : Waller, Bruce, Consider Ethics, 3rd ed.,

 ISBN 13: 978-0-205-01773-7

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

Study of major theoretical principles on which claims to good life and moral action have been based, such as hedonism, utilitarianism and rationalism. Each theory illustrated by representative selections from works of great philosophers from classical period to 20th century.

COURSE LEARNING OUTCOMES

1. Students will be able to define moral concepts
2. Students will be able to identify key assumptions and implications of major theories and concepts
3. Students will be able to identify key assumptions and arguments in the public debate on contemporary moral issues.
4. Students will be able to evaluate moral argument for coherence, consistency and plausibility using understanding of moral theories
5. Students will be able to reflect on the connection between moral perspectives and personal and civic responsibilities

VALENCIA’S CORE COMPETENCIES

Valencia’s core competencies are essential skills that promote life-long learning. These interrelated competencies refer to thinking, valuing, communicating and acting. In this course we promote critical thinking, reflective valuing, effective communicating and responsible acting. Students are encouraged to ask critical questions, explore various theories, detect assumptions and implications, make connections and distinctions, define concepts with generic criteria and specific examples, articulate objections and answer objections with arguments containing clearly stated premises or supporting reasons.

CLASSROOM BEHAVIOR

Listen to the lectures. Engage in honest and respectful group discussions and debates. Do not use electronic devices (cell phones, computers etc.). Updating your Facebook status, sleeping, texting and making excessive noises are not acceptable. Disruptive behavior may result in very negative consequences, including expulsion from the classroom or even referral to the proper authorities.

Baycare Behavioral Health’s Student Assistance Program

Valencia is committed to making sure all our students have a rewarding and successful college experience. To that end, Valencia students can get immediate help that may assist them with psychological issues dealing with stress, anxiety, depression, adjustment difficulties, substance abuse, time management as well as relationship problems dealing with school, home or work. Students have a 24 hour unlimited access to the Baycare Behavioral Health’s confidential student assistance program phone counseling services by calling (800) 878-5470. Three free confidential face-to-face counseling sessions are also available to students.

COURSE OUTLINE

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| --- | --- | --- |
| Sessions | Dates | Topics |
| 1 | 8/26 | Course Intro |
| 2 | 8/28 | Unit Intro |
| 3 | 9/2 | Fallacies, Theological Voluntarism; Unit 1#1 |
| 4 | 9/4 | Egoism, Relativism; Unit 1#2 |
| 5 | 9/9 | Sentimentalism, Intuitionism; U1#3 |
| 6 | 9/11 | Kantian Rationalism; U1#4 |
| 7 | 9/16 | Hedonism, Utilitarianism; U1#5 |
| 8 | 9/18 | Pragmatism; U1#6; |
| 9 | 9/23 | Social Contract; U1#7 |
| 10 | 9/25 | Virtue Ethics; U1#8 |
| 11 | 9/30 | Care Ethics U1#9 |
| 12 | 10/2 | Review Unit 1 |
| 13 | 10/7 | Test #1 |
| 14 | 10/9 | **No classes on West** |
| 15 | 10/14 | Non-objectivism Unit2#1 , Moral Realism U2#2 |
| 16 | 10/16 | Morality’s Scope; Unit 2#3 |
| 17 | 10/21 | Free Will, U2#4 |
| 18 | 10/23 | Moral Responsibility, U2#5 |
| 19 | 10/28 | Project Review |
| 20 | 10/30 | Project (Paper &Presentations) |
| 21 | 11/4 | Moral Difficulty Lecture) |
| 22 | 11/6 | Review Unit2 |
| 23 | 11/11 | Test #2 |
| 24 | 11/13 | Intro., Unit 3#1 |
| 25 | 11/18 | Pro Arguments; Unit 3#2 |
| 26  | 11/20 | Con Arguments; Unit 3#3 |
| 27 | 11/25 | Textual Arguments; Unit 3#4 |
| 28 | 12/2 | Work-In-Progress; Unit 3#5 |
| 29 | 12/4 | Work-In-Progress; Unit 3#6 |
| 30 | 12/9or 12/11 | Final Exam, Papers & Presentations |

**UNIT 1**

**Reading Assignments and Discussion Questions**

1. Pages 1-15
2. How would you define and illustrate the following fallacies – red herring. Ad hominem, and strawman?
3. Are ethical principles based on fixed eternal universal ethical truths or changing particular natural guidelines?
4. What are the merits and possible problems with theological voluntarism?
5. Pages 20-27
6. Explain the similarities and differences between egoism and relativism.
7. What are the strengths and limits of these theories?
8. Pages 39-54
9. Explain the similarities and differences between sentimentalism and intuitionism.
10. What are the positive and negative implications of these theories?
11. Pages 71-78
12. What is the basis for morality, according to Kant?
13. What is the categorical imperative?
14. What are the strengths and limits of Kantian Theory?
15. Pages 85-94
16. What is the basis for moral judgment according to utilitarianism?
17. How do we know what is really right?
18. What are the strengths and limits of utilitarian theory?
19. Pages 105-111
20. Define value pluralism and pragmatism.
21. What are the merits and problems of pragmatism?
22. Pages 131-139
23. How is the social contract theory found in Hobbes, Rousseau, Rawls, and Gauthier?
24. Are moral norms objectively discovered or socially invented?
25. Pages 149-160
26. What is the virtue ethics?
27. What are its strengths and limits?
28. Pages 164-171
29. Explain the value of care ethics.
30. Is it necessarily feminist ethics?

**UNIT 1 REVIEW**

1. Define and illustrate (exemplify) the following logical fallacies: Red Herring, Ad Hominem and Strawman.
2. Match the following theories with the relevant descriptions:

**THEORIES DESCRIPTIONS**

\_\_\_\_ 1. Theological voluntarism a. universal rational principle

\_\_\_\_ 2. Egoism b. individual pleasure

\_\_\_\_3. Cultural relativism c. social agreement

\_\_\_\_ 4. Hume’s sentimentalism d. self interest

\_\_\_\_ 5. Intuitionism e. valuable character traits

\_\_\_\_ 6. Kant’s rationalism f. happy social consequences

\_\_\_\_ 7. Hedonism g. God’s will

\_\_\_\_ 8. Utilitarianism h. feeling of benevolence

\_\_\_\_ 9. Pragmatism i. concern for personal relationships

\_\_\_\_10. Social Contract j. immediate apprehension

\_\_\_\_11. Virtue Ethics k. workable belief system

\_\_\_\_12. Care ethics l. cultural conventions

1. Using some of the following distinctions, explain the similarities and differences between the 12 theories:

**KEY DISTINCTIONS**

1. universal \_\_\_\_\_\_ social \_\_\_\_\_\_ individual
2. absolute \_\_\_\_\_\_ relative \_\_\_\_\_\_ subjective
3. duty \_\_\_\_\_\_ happiness \_\_\_\_\_\_ pleasure
4. reason \_\_\_\_\_\_ emotion
5. principles \_\_\_\_\_\_ consequences
6. fixed (unchanging) \_\_\_\_\_\_ fluid (changing)

**Use the numbers from the matching exercise:**

How are the following theories similar?

1 and 2, 5 and 4, 7 and 8, 8 and 10

How are the following theories different?

 1 and 2, 4 and 6, 6 and 8, 2 and 12

1. What are the advantages and disadvantages of each theory?
2. How would you rank order all of these theories?
3. Which theories represent your top three choices? Why?
4. Which theories represent your bottom two choices? Why?
5. Explain your criteria for a “Good Ethical Theory”.

**UNIT II**

**Reading Assignments and Discussion Questions**

1. Pages 180-186 (Ethical Nonobjectivism)
2. Are there objective truths in ethics?
3. How do the arguments from “moral diversity”, “simplicity”, and “the impossibility of argument” try to refute the idea of objectivity in ethics?
4. Pages 192-199 (Moral Realism)
5. Are there real moral facts?
6. Is nonobjectivism a better paradigm than moral realism?
7. What is the basic assumption of a modest moral realism?
8. Pages 201-209 (Morality’s Scope)
9. Who gets moral consideration according to theological voluntarism, social contract theory, Kantian theory and utilitarian theory?
10. How would you evaluate Tom Regan’s idea of “animal rights”?
11. What is the range of moral concern in Eastern religions and Darwinian ethics?
12. Pages 220-232 (Free Will)
13. Contrast “determinism” and “free will.”
14. Is compatibilism a good mediating theory?
15. What are the arguments for determinism based on religion, physics, biology, social science and literature?
16. What is the difference between “simple”, “deep”, and “rationalist” types of compatibilism?
17. Explain the difference between Campbell’s idea and Sartre’s notion of free will.
18. Pages 244-252 (Freedom and Responsibility)
19. Is “free will” a necessary assumption for moral responsibility?
20. If “determinism” is true, could we praise or blame anyone?
21. Are “rewards” and “punishments” based on the assumption of “free will”?

UNIT II REVIEW

1. Examine the following ethical theories:
2. Theological voluntarism
3. Kantianism
4. Humean sentimentalism
5. Intuitionism
6. hedonism
7. utilitarianism
8. social contract
9. egoism
10. pragmatism
11. ) cultural relativism
12. ) virtue ethics
13. ) Care ethics
14. ) Darwinian ethics
15. Which theories include the widest range of forms of life? Why?
16. Which theories are the most restricted in scope? Why? Who or what is excluded?
17. Explain two arguments for the view that there are no objective truths in ethics? What are the counter arguments?
18. Explain the argument for ethical nonobjectivism based on the impossibility of argument about ethics.
19. Explain the ways in which moral realism is implied by Kantian, utilitarian and theological approaches to morality.
20. Explain the basis for adopting the paradigm of moral realism.
21. Explain two arguments for determinism. Give a counter argument.
22. Explain two arguments for free will. Give a counter argument.
23. Explain the idea or moral responsibility.
24. Is the existence of a free will a necessary assumptions for moral responsibility?

**UNIT 3**

This unit focuses on the development of writing skills linked to critical thinking. Competence in argument construction, as it relates to hotly debated topics in ethics, is emphasized. Accordingly, the class format will involve a series of guided group discussions, practices and presentations. The following schedule of events and final evaluation are designed in order to reach this lofty goal.

1. Unit Intro (Topics and Arguments)

The professor will introduce hot moral topics along with procedures for argument construction.

2. STANDARD THEORETICAL APPLICATIONS (Pros)

Students will articulate the reasons for five pro arguments, in their groups, based on their chosen ethical theories.

3. STANDARD THEORETICAL APPLICATIONS (Cons)

Students will articulate the premises for five con arguments, based on their chosen ethical theories, in their groups.

4. REPRESENTATIVE POSITIONS (Pros and Cons)

Students will reconstruct the premises for the pro and con positions, in their groups, by showing their analysis of the textual sources.

5. WORK IN PROGRESS (Presentations and Feedback)

Two groups will present the pros and cons based on their chosen theories and the representative textual sources. The rest of the class will give instant feedback in writing.

6. WORK IN PROGRESS (Presentations and Feedback)

Two other groups will present. The rest of the class will give instant feedback in writing.

7. FINAL EXAM (Papers and Presentations)

Students will turn in their final papers and present the pros and cons based on a summary of their applications of standard theories and reconstructions of contemporary representative viewpoints. Hot debates might follow.

**ETHICS**

**TEST 3**

**Part I: This part is worth 70 points.**

Write an essay on a controversial moral topic by fulfilling the following criteria:

1. Clarifying the basic question

2. Using three standard ethical theories as the bases for pro arguments

3. Employing three standard ethical theories as the bases for con arguments

4. Summarizing the argument for a representative pro position, with a specific

 textual reference

5. Reconstructing the argument for a representative con position, with a specific

 textual reference

6. Articulating your reasons for a pro or con position

**Part II: This part is worth 30 points.**

Write a paragraph specifying the following:

1. The theory and argument you presented

2. The helpful criticisms of other groups you set forth

3. The representative position, based on a textual source, you summarized and shared

Grading Policy

The course consists of three units:

Ethical Theories, Ethical Assumptions and Moral Issues. A unit test comes at the end of each unit and a group project comes at mid-term. The grading system is as follows.

1. Two Regular Unit Tests = 40% (20% each)
2. Mid-term Group Project = 20%
3. Final Project & Presentation = 20%
4. Class Participation = 10%
5. Attendance = 10%

The final exam is at 10am, 12/9/14 (W03) or 12/11/14 (W05) in our classroom. Missing the final exam will result in a grade of F, until the student takes a make-up final.

Make-Up Policy

Tests that are not completed on time must be done in the testing center. Make-up tests are more difficult than regular in-class tests. All tests in the testing center must be completed before the week of final exams.

Extra Credit Policy

Extra credit is not given. To improve your grade, focus on maximizing your score on the final project.

Attendance and Tardy Policy

Attendance counts for 10% of the grade. It will be based on the following scale:

 0 absence = A

 1 absence = B

 2 absences = C

 3 absences = D etc.

**Note that coming late to class, or leaving early, counts as half an absence.**

Withdrawal Deadline and Policy

A student who withdraws from class before the withdrawal deadline of 11/7/2014 will receive a grade of W. If you remain in the class after the withdrawal deadline, you can receive a grade of A, B, C, D, F or I. An I (incomplete) grade is only given due to very unusual circumstances. If you receive an I, the work missed must be made up during the following semester, at which time you will receive a grade of A, B, C, D or F. Failing to make up the work during the following semester will result in a grade of F for the course. A student who withdraws from this class during a third or subsequent attempt in this course will be assigned a grade of F. Please note that students on financial aid should always consult an advisor or counselor before withdrawing from a course, in order to avoid negative financial consequences. Students with some scholarships, who withdraw or are withdrawn, might be required to pay for the class.

Valencia Business Office Policy

Valencia has a clear policy concerning Withdrawal Actions because of non-payment. If you are currently enrolled and have a returned check, delinquent loan, delinquent VA deferment or other financial obligation, you will be notified. If you do not respond within the allowed time, the college reserves the right to financially withdraw you from all classes. Please be advised that you will not be allowed in class, if your name is deleted from the official roll.

If you are dropped during the semester from non-payment, you may not be able to get back into class and it is your responsibility to keep your professors informed when you get letters for non-payment. Be advised that the College Business Office will notify all students before any action will be taken. However, once an account is submitted, a 25% fee will be assessed to the outstanding balance of your Valencia account and payment must be rendered to the collections agency directly after submission.

Faculty/Student Communication

Students should keep in touch with their professors by e-mail or in person, during office hours. During weekdays, e-mail is answered within 24 hours. Valencia is committed to providing a high quality educational experience. If you have a problem in a class, your first step is to talk with your instructor. If you are still dissatisfied, you may talk to the academic dean of the department. We will work together to resolve any issues that arise.

Academic Honesty Statement

Cheating, including plagiarism, will not be tolerated and will be cause for a failing grade for the assignment.

No Food or Drink in the Classroom

Students with Disabilities

Students with disabilities must provide a Notification to Instructor from the Office for Students with Disabilities and discuss specific needs with the professor, preferably during the first two weeks of class. Appropriate documentation is necessary.

Support Services

Tutoring services are available in 7-240. The phone extension is 1633. The Writing Center is also a valuable resource. It may be found in 5-155, or phone 407-582-1812.

Security Statement

Valencia’s security officers are here around the clock to ensure our safety. Report any suspicious persons to West Campus Security at 407-582-1000 or by using the yellow emergency call boxes on the light poles in the parking lots and along walkways.

Study Tips

To do well in this course, students should read, take good notes, review the practice questions, and practice the art of defining concepts and constructing arguments. Listen and talk to your professor and peers in class. Keep in touch with your professor and friends in your “home group” by phone or e-mail.

Disclaimer

The course outline is subject to change as needed. Every effort will be made to announce any change in class, in a timely manner.