Ethics and Critical Thinking PHI-2600

**Instructor:** David Benjamin

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**Text and Required Supplies:** Barbara Mackinnon, Ethics: Theory and Contemporary Issues, 8th Edition (or most recent). ISBN: 978-0-538-45283-0

**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 OBJECTIVES**

Students who successfully complete this course should be able to:

1. Demonstrate mastery of the basic principles of logical (critical) thinking so that you can

examine ethical issues, your opinions and prejudices.

2. Understand the several classical philosophical theories of ethics and be able to apply them,

critique them, compare and contrast them and use them to evaluate ethical issues.

3. Examine a number of contemporary ethical issues and scholarly articles about those issues,

test those issues using the ethical theories and present reasoned, potentially meaningful and

effective responses/solutions.

4. In the course of the study, examine and test your own life and the ethical issues you face

and, perhaps, revise and update your thinking and feelings about ethics and you.

5. Examine a couple of examples of ethical situations/dilemmas in modern cinema, critically

evaluating and responding to the issues tackled there.

**Core Competencies:**

Valencia faculty have defined four interrelated competencies (Think, Value, Communicate, ACT) that prepare students to succeed in the world community. These competencies are outlined in the College Catalog. In this course, through Lecture, discussion, individual research, and other learning activities, you will further develop your mastery of those competencies.

**ATTENDANCE POLICY:**

Because there is no regular class schedule with this online course, attendance will be checked each week by participation in the discussion board questions and assignment activity. Attendance checks are required for all students, so the students must complete all assignments in a timely fashion. Students will be withdrawn for non-attendance. Due dates will be enforced for all discussion forums, quizzes, exams, and projects, and 10 points will be deducted for each week late.

**Method of Instruction:** This course will be taught through a combination of lecture, films, discussions, homework assignments, and individual research.

**Evaluation Methodology:**

90 – 100% = A, 80 – 89% = B, 70 – 79% = C, 60 – 69% = D, Below 60% = F

20% = Participation

10% = Weekly Quizzes

10% = Discussion Forum

40% = Exams

20% = Papers

**Participation:**

20% of final grade. I reserve the right to deduct a full letter grade from your final grade due to foul language and poor behavior in the discussion forums. Inappropriate language and behavior in the online classroom as well as face to face classroom will not be tolerated. Show respect to both your fellow classmates and your instructors in all of your courses at whatever college you attend. For participation grades, a score of 100 is only given if all work is completed on time rather than late, and perfect scores of 100 are received on ALL graded assignments throughout the entire semester, otherwise an A = 90 for participation is most common. (For Participation A=90, B=80, C=70, D=60, F=0-50).

**Weekly Quizzes:**

10% of final grade (approx. 1% each). Students will take chapter quizzes online each week. The quizzes will have multiple choice and true/false questions. You have a maximum of 2 attempts per quiz. Both attempt grades will be averaged together, you will not receive the higher grade of the two.

**Discussions:**

10% of final grade (approx. 1% each). Students will receive points each week depending upon constructive and productive interaction in discussion forums. You are expected to post twice to EVERY discussion. Post #1 is your original comment of 150 words that answers the discussion question due each Wednesday night by midnight. Post #2 is your 50-word reply to a classmate’s post that is due each Sunday night by midnight. Those who do not post any comments receive a grade of 0, only 1 comment will receive a grade of 5, and both comments will receive a grade of 6 to 10 depending upon the quality of the posts. Late discussion posts will not be graded but will be considered at the end of the semester when I calculate the participation grade. I reserve the right to re-grade all discussions at the end of the semester in case there are errors such as missing posts or only one rather than 2 posts. For example, if you only post one comment in the discussion and you get a grade of 10 points, that is an error on my part that will be corrected so don’t think you are getting away with anything.

**Exams:**

40% of final grade. There are 2 open-book exams (20% each) which consist primarily of multiple choice and true/false questions. The exams are not cumulative, they only cover material covered since the previous exam. You may re-take an exam a 2nd time but your total grade will be the average of both attempts, not the higher of the two.

**Papers:**

20% of your final grade. There will be two, 2–4 page papers, due by midnight on the last day of class before final exam week, as stated in the syllabus schedule and weekly module instructions. Papers will be completed using a word processor, such as Microsoft Word, double spaced, with one-inch margins, and Times New Roman font size 12. Proper MLA style citations are required. Further details will be provided online with the paper assignments in the module instructions.

**IMPORTANT:**

If you retake a quiz or exam, your grade will be an average of both attempts, not the higher of the two. Final grades will not be rounded up in this course. Whatever grade you end up with at the end of the course is your final grade regardless of how close it may be to the next grade. For example, a final grade of 89.9 is a B not an A. Also, grades are calculated by percentage NOT points. To calculate your final grade you will need to multiply the avg per grade category by the percentage listed above for that category. Since each category is weighted differently, simply adding up all of your points and dividing by the total possible will **not** produce your grade for this course. I deliberately set up the grading criteria to require you to do well on exams in order to get an A. For example, if you have a 90 = A for participation but do not have an A at the end of the course, it likely means your exam grade was the problem, not your participation grade since that was already an A.

**EXAMINATION MAKE-UP POLICY**

Students are encouraged to take exams on time. With the discretion of the instructor, a student will be permitted to make up no more than one exam. Exams not taken will be given a failing grade.

**Student Conduct and Academic Honesty:**

• Exams and homework are considered individual effort; any submissions that are too similar for coincidence will receive no credit.

• Students are responsible for preparing for class by reading pre-assigned readings and completing assignments.

• The instructor’s email is provided for emergency situations and brief questions about specific assignments. Messages should consist of your name, your class and class time, and a brief message. Emails with specific questions will be answered as soon as possible, usually within 48 hours.

**Expected Student Conduct:**

Valencia College is dedicated not only to the advancement of knowledge and learning but is concerned with the development of responsible personal and social conduct. By enrolling at Valencia College, a student assumes the responsibility for becoming familiar with and abiding by the general rules of conduct. The primary responsibility for managing the classroom environment rests with the faculty. Students who engage in any prohibited or unlawful acts that result in disruption of a class may be directed by the faculty to leave the class. Violation of any classroom or Valencia’s rules may lead to disciplinary action up to and including expulsion from Valencia. Disciplinary action could include being withdrawn from class, disciplinary warning, probation, suspension, expulsion, or other appropriate and authorized actions. You will find the Student Code of Conduct in the current Valencia Student Handbook.

**Students with Disabilities**

Students with disabilities who qualify for academic accommodations must provide a notification from the Office for Students with Disabilities (OSD) and discuss specific needs with the instructor, preferably during the first two weeks of class. The Office for Students with Disabilities determines accommodations based on appropriate documentation of disabilities. The East Campus Office is located in Building 5, Room 216.

**Disclaimer Statement:**

As many factors may affect the development and progress of a class, the instructor reserves the right to alter the schedule as may be required to assure attainment of course objectives. If such a decision is made, the announcement will be made in class or, if lacking for time, via e-mail. CHECK YOUR E-MAIL.

**Withdrawal Date =** **March 15, 2024**

Outline/calendar of work:

Tentative Schedule: Subject to change at instructor’s discretion.

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| Date | Activity/Assignment |
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| Week 1  Jan 8 - 14 | Orientation/introductions |
| Week 2  Jan 15 - 21 | Ethics & Ethical Reasoning |
| Week 3  Jan 22 - 28 | Ethical Relativism |
| Week 4  Jan 29 – Feb 4 | Egoism |
| Week 5  Feb 5 – 11 | Utilitarianism |
| Week 6  Feb 12 – 18 | Kant’s Moral Theory |
| Week 7  Feb 19 – 25 | Morality & Human nature |
| Week 8  Feb 26 – Mar 3 | Virtue Ethics |
| Week 9  Mar 4 – 10 | Feminist Thought & Ethics of Care |
| Week 10  Mar 11 – 17 | Midterm, Euthanasia & Physician Assisted Suicide |
| Week 11  Mar 18 – 24 | Spring Break |
| Week 12  Mar 25 - 31 | Abortion |
| Week 13  Apr 1 - 7 | Sexual Morality |
| Week 14  Apr 8 - 14 | Legal Punishment |
| Week 15  Apr 15 - 21 | Environmental Ethics |
| Week 16  Apr 22 – 28 | Animal Rights, Essays Due |
| Week 17  Apr 29 – May 5 | Final Exam due by midnight Sunday night 5/5 |