

# PHIL-126: CONTEMPORARY AMERICAN ETHICS

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## Effective Term

Fall 2025

## CC Approval

02/07/2025

## AS Approval

02/13/2025

## BOT Approval

02/20/2025

## COCI Approval

N/A

## SECTION A - Course Data Elements

### CB04 Credit Status

Credit - Degree Applicable

### Discipline

Minimum Qualifications	And/Or
Philosophy (Master's Degree)	

### Subject Code

PHIL - Philosophy

### Course Number

126

### Department

Philosophy (PHIL)

### Division

Arts and Humanities (ARAH)

### Full Course Title

Contemporary American Ethics

### Short Title

Contemporary American Ethics

### CB03 TOP Code

1509.00 - Philosophy

### CB08 Basic Skills Status

NBS - Not Basic Skills

### CB09 SAM Code

E - Non-Occupational

### Rationale

Updating common course numbering course change.

## SECTION B - Course Description

### Catalog Course Description

The critical examination of personal beliefs related to contemporary American moral issues such as abortion, drugs, capital punishment, euthanasia, privacy, etc. Attention is given to weighing issues, making judgments and understanding diverse positions on any moral issue.

**SECTION C - Conditions on Enrollment****Open Entry/Open Exit**

No

**Repeatability**

Not Repeatable

**Grading Options**

Letter Grade or Pass/No Pass

**Allow Audit**

Yes

**Requisites****Advisory Prerequisite(s)**

Completion of ENGL-C1000 or ENGL-120B with a minimum grade of C or appropriate placement.

**SECTION D - Course Standards****Is this course variable unit?**

No

**Units**

3.00

**Lecture Hours**

54.00

**Outside of Class Hours**

108

**Total Contact Hours**

54

**Total Student Hours**

162

**Distance Education Approval****Is this course offered through Distance Education?**

Yes

**Online Delivery Methods**

DE Modalities	Permanent or Emergency Only?
Entirely Online	Permanent
Hybrid	Permanent

**SECTION E - Course Content****Student Learning Outcomes**

Upon satisfactory completion of the course, students will be able to:

1. Examine and evaluate major contemporary ethical issues.
2. Critically analyze opposing views on ethical issues.

**Course Objectives**

Upon satisfactory completion of the course, students will be able to:

1. Define, identify and give examples of deductive and inductive reasoning; syllogisms; logical relatedness; analytic a priori and synthetic a posteriori propositions.

2. Demonstrate an understanding of the major ethical theories by defining each theory and identifying appropriate examples of each theory.
3. List and identify the major contemporary moral issues in America.
4. Develop his/her own judgments on each contemporary issue based on a critical-thinking approach by employing the various logical tools to ethical problems and evaluating their efficacy through comparing and contrasting each outcome.
5. Identify and critique rationally each contemporary issue covered in class using the theoretical frameworks presented in class.

### Course Content

1. Introduction to Critical Thinking: Deductive and inductive reasoning, syllogisms, logical relatedness, analytic a priori and synthetic a posteriori proposition.
2. Developing critical-thinking skills and applying the above-mentioned logical tools to various ethical issues that follow for critical analysis
3. Setting Up a Moral System.
4. SØREN KIERKEGAARD (1813-1855) "The Leap of Faith"
5. KARL MARX (1818-1883) "Morality as Ideology"
6. FRIEDRICH NIETZSCHE (1844-1900) "The Transvaluation of Values"
7. G.E. MOORE (1873-1958) "The Indefinability of Good"
8. A.J. AYER (1910-1989) and C.L. STEVENSON (1908-1979) "Ethics as Emotive Expression"
9. JEAN-PAUL SARTRE (1905-1980) "Radical Freedom"
10. JOHN RAWLS (1921-2002) "Ethics and Social Justice"
11. PHILIPPA FOOT (b. 1920) "Moral Virtue and Human Interest"
12. ANNETTE BAIER (b. 1929) "Ethics as Trusting in Trust"
13. J.L. MACKIE (1917-1981) "Inventive Right and Wrong"
14. BERNARD WILLIAMS (1929-2003) "Ethical Skepticism"
15. Applying the above-mentioned theoretical frameworks to contemporary moral issues as they arise in prominence in our social and political discourse during the particular semester the course is being taught. Examples include, but are not limited to the following issues:
  - a. The Taking of Human Life
  - b. Capital Punishment
  - c. Euthanasia
  - d. Abortion
  - e. Lying, Cheating, Breaking Promises and Stealing
  - f. Human Sexuality
  - g. Bioethics
  - h. Business Ethics
  - i. Environmental Ethics
  - j. Stem Cell Research
  - k. Internet Fraud
  - l. Defamation and Personal Attacks
  - m. Madoff et.al.
  - n. AIG Scandals, etc.
  - o. Cloning
  - p. Health Care in the US compared to European nations.
  - q. Wars in Iraq and Afghanistan

### Methods of Instruction

#### Methods of Instruction

Types	Examples of learning activities
Lecture	Socratic method and class discussion.
Other	Lecture/discussion/films/podcasts. Lectures provide course content outlined from textbook and then image and video enhanced presentations augment or further clarify course content. Class and/or group discussion will follow for 10 - 15 minutes.

**Instructor-Initiated Online Contact Types**

Announcements/Bulletin Boards  
 Chat Rooms  
 Discussion Boards  
 E-mail Communication  
 Telephone Conversations  
 Video or Teleconferencing

**Student-Initiated Online Contact Types**

Chat Rooms  
 Discussions  
 Group Work

**Course design is accessible**

Yes

**Methods of Evaluation****Methods of Evaluation**

Types	Examples of classroom assessments
Exams/Tests	Multiple choice and essay. Final Exam - Combination multiple choice and essay. 3 Midterms (Objective and/or Essay) SAMPLE OBJECTIVE TEST QUESTIONS: 1.) Which philosopher speaks of the unconscionable conduct of those of "Christendom"? 2.) Who wrote "Thus Spoke Zarathustra"? SAMPLE ESSAY QUESTIONS: 1.) Summarize John Rawls' idea of "ethics and social justice" and relate his ideas to Martin Luther King's "Letter from Birmingham". 2.) What does G. E. Moore mean by "the indefinability of Good"? Do you agree or disagree, and why or why not? 1 Final Exam SAMPLE FINAL EXAM QUESTIONS: 1.) Choose one value of the Christian Right at variance with Nietzsche's transvaluation of all values and discuss what Nietzsche's resolution would be for the Christian right. 2.) Discuss Annette Baier's idea of "trusting in trust" and apply this to a specific situation such as marriage, business ethics, friendship, parenting, etc.
Homework	Read and master 1/3 of the text every 4 - 5 weeks.

**Assignments****Reading Assignments**

Read chapters of the entire textbook pacing chapters based on the length of the semester.

Read and/or use all available media (TV, radio, internet, podcasts, etc.) to keep abreast of current moral issues being discussed publicly in America.

**Writing Assignments**

Write at least two papers, each one being no more than 15 pages, on (1) a critique of one ethical theory and (2) an application of one theory to a contemporary moral issue.

**SECTION F - Textbooks and Instructional Materials****Material Type**

Textbook

**Author**

Shafer-Landau, R

**Title**

The Fundamentals of Ethics

**Edition/Version**

3rd

**Publisher**

Oxford University Press

**Year**

2015

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**Material Type**

Other required materials/supplies

**Description**

Access to TV, radio, internet and current periodicals (found in library).

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**Course Codes (Admin Only)****ASSIST Update**

No

**CB00 State ID**

CCC000156347

**CB10 Cooperative Work Experience Status**

N - Is Not Part of a Cooperative Work Experience Education Program

**CB11 Course Classification Status**

Y - Credit Course

**CB13 Special Class Status**

N - The Course is Not an Approved Special Class

**CB23 Funding Agency Category**

Y - Not Applicable (Funding Not Used)

**CB24 Program Course Status**

Program Applicable

**Allow Pass/No Pass**

Yes

**Only Pass/No Pass**

No