Introduction to Ethics  
(PHIL 223:002)

Professor: Ben Dixon  
Philosophy Program, Division of  
Multidisciplinary Programs  
Office: Boynton Bldg. 208 E  
Office Ph.: 936-468-1053  
Email: dixonb@sfasu.edu

Syllabus

I. Text

James Rachels, Elements of Moral Philosophy 7th Ed. (abr: Elements)  
James Rachels, The Right Thing to Do 6th Ed. (abr: Right Thing)  
* There are a number of articles we will read that will be electronically accessible.

II. Course Description

This course focuses on moral theories and issues, drawing on ideas from a variety of disciplines. During this semester we will examine moral theories regarding what is right and wrong, good and bad. In sharpening our understanding of these theories, we will apply them to contemporary moral issues, issues such as abortion, euthanasia, homosexuality, and the appropriate role of religion in ethical deliberation. Most of us undoubtedly have beliefs regarding such matters already, even very strong ones. Thinking philosophically about contemporary moral issues, however, allows us to see how well-supported our beliefs are by reasoned argumentation, and this is why we examine those beliefs in light of philosophical moral theory, because moral theory just is an attempt at providing a rational framework within which to view these important beliefs.

III. General Education Core Curriculum Objectives/Outcomes

The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board has identified six core learning objectives: Critical Thinking Skills, Communication Skills, Empirical and Quantitative Skills, Teamwork, Personal Responsibility, and Social Responsibility. SFA is committed to the improvement of its general education core curriculum by regular assessment of student performance on these six objectives.

By enrolling in Philosophy 223, Introduction to Ethics, you are also enrolling in a Core Curriculum Course that fulfills the Personal Responsibility requirement. You will see this course on your D2L list.

At one point during the semester, you will receive an assignment that fulfills both the requirements of this course and the needs of Stephen F. Austin State University’s Core
Curriculum Assessment Plan with the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board. When you complete this one assignment, you need to hand in the assignment in class and upload the assignment into the D2L “Core Curriculum” dropbox. The Core Curriculum dropbox will be identified by the Objective for which work is being collected (i.e., Personal Responsibility). Please note that this only applies to the approved assignment. All other assignments should be submitted according to regular class operations. If you have any questions, please see your Instructor or the Office of Student Learning and Institutional Assessment.

Again, when you complete the assignment mentioned above, you will hand in your assignment in class and the Personal Responsibility dropbox.

If you have any questions, please see your instructor or contact the Institutional Effectiveness Office at (936) 468-1130.

The chart below indicates the core objectives addressed by this course, the assignment that will be used to assess the objectives in this course and uploaded to the D2L Personal Responsibility dropbox this semester, and the date the assignment should be uploaded to the D2L Personal Responsibility dropbox. Not every assignment will be submitted for core assessment every semester. Your instructor will notify you which assignment must be submitted for assessment in the D2L Personal Responsibility dropbox.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Core Objective</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Course Assignment Title</th>
<th>Date Due in D2L</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Personal Responsibility</td>
<td>To include the ability to connect choices, actions and consequences to ethical decision-making.</td>
<td>“Assessment Assignment”</td>
<td>April 25th</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**IV. Program Learning Outcomes**

This is a general education core curriculum course and no specific program learning outcomes for this major are addressed in this course.

**V. Exemplary Educational Objectives**

1. Awareness of the scope and variety of texts dealing with ethical issues.
2. Understanding of the historical and social contexts of philosophical movements in ethics.
3. Ability to respond critically to works in philosophy.
4. Ability to formulate, express, and support arguments on ethical issues.
5. Knowledge of the cross-cultural influence of philosophy.
VI. **Student Learning Outcomes**

**Student Learning Outcomes and Assessment Assignment:**
PHI 223 is part of the university’s Core Curriculum. As such, the work assigned in this course recognizes the general goals of the core and the specific objectives attached to those classes designated for inclusion in the Language, Philosophy, and Culture Foundational Component Area as defined by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board.

Specifically, students enrolled in this course will demonstrate the general ability to:
· Understand the role that personal responsibility has played throughout history and gain the ability to connect choices, actions, and consequences to making ethical decisions.

**Assessment Assignment**
To measure the success of student acquisition of these mandated skills, during the course of the semester, students will be assigned an Ethical Theory Essay. Generally speaking, the project will consist of students completing a written assignment that will compare and contrast two competing ethical theories introduced by the professor. Specifically, the instructor will provide the students with an ethical scenario that will allow for differing responses to flow from the use of each theory. Specific instructions of this assignment can be found in this syllabus. Completion of this assignment is required by the university and is an integral component in the successful completion of this course.

VII. **Acceptable Student Behavior**
Classroom behavior should not interfere with the instructor’s ability to conduct the class or the ability of other students to learn from the instructional program (see the Student Conduct Code, policy D-34.1). Unacceptable or disruptive behavior will not be tolerated. Students who disrupt the learning environment may be asked to leave class and may be subject to judicial, academic or other penalties. This prohibition applies to all instructional forums, including electronic, classroom, labs, discussion groups, field trips, etc. The instructor shall have full discretion over what behavior is appropriate/inappropriate in the classroom. Students who do not attend class regularly or who perform poorly on class projects/exams may be referred to the Early Alert Program. This program provides students with recommendations for resources or other assistance that is available to help SFA students succeed.

VIII. **Attendance/Participation**
An important part of doing philosophy is participating in an exchange of ideas. Several things follow from this: (1) In order to participate in class discussion, **you must do the readings assigned** (you will find a tentative course calendar on the pages that follow)—your responsibility is to make sure you have already read the material we will discuss in class for each of our particular meetings. (2) In order to participate in class, you obviously have to be present in class. Thus, you will only be allowed two unexcused absences during the semester without having your grade affected. **Beginning with your third such absence, you will**
have four points taken away from your overall point total each time you are absent. So please, don’t miss class!

IX. Academic Integrity

Academic integrity is a responsibility of all university faculty and students. Faculty members promote academic integrity in multiple ways including instruction on the components of academic honesty, as well as abiding by university policy on penalties for cheating and plagiarism.

Definition of Academic Dishonesty

Academic dishonesty includes both cheating and plagiarism. Cheating includes but is not limited to (1) using or attempting to use unauthorized materials to aid in achieving a better grade on a component of a class; (2) the falsification or invention of any information, including citations, on an assigned exercise; and/or (3) helping or attempting to help another in an act of cheating or plagiarism. Plagiarism is presenting the words or ideas of another person as if they were your own. Examples of plagiarism are (1) submitting an assignment as if it were one's own work when, in fact, it is at least partly the work of another; (2) submitting a work that has been purchased or otherwise obtained from an Internet source or another source; and (3) incorporating the words or ideas of an author into one's paper without giving the author due credit.

Please read the complete policy at [http://www.sfasu.edu/policies/academic_integrity.asp](http://www.sfasu.edu/policies/academic_integrity.asp)

X. Withheld Grades Semester Grades Policy (A-54)

Ordinarily, at the discretion of the instructor of record and with the approval of the academic chair/director, a grade of WH will be assigned only if the student cannot complete the course work because of unavoidable circumstances. Students must complete the work within one calendar year from the end of the semester in which they receive a WH, or the grade automatically becomes an F. If students register for the same course in future terms the WH will automatically become an F and will be counted as a repeated course for the purpose of computing the grade point average.

XI. Students with Disabilities

To obtain disability related accommodations, alternate formats and/or auxiliary aids, students with disabilities must contact the Office of Disability Services (ODS), Human Services Building, and Room 325, 468-3004 / 468-1004 (TDD) as early as possible in the semester. Once verified, ODS will notify the course instructor and outline the accommodation and/or auxiliary aids to be provided. Failure to request services in a timely manner may delay your accommodations. For additional information, go to [http://www.sfasu.edu/disabilityservices/](http://www.sfasu.edu/disabilityservices/).
XII. Grading Policy: Exams

Your course grade will be determined by how well you do on the following:
Assessment Assignment (5% of your grade)
First Exam (30% of grade)
Mid-term (30% of grade)
Final (35% of grade)

*If at the end of the term your point total puts you on the borderline between two grades, your frequent class participation will give you the higher grade.

The questions on each exam will be a combination of multiple choice and matching.

PHI 223 Assessment Instrument
Instrument: Ethical Theory Essay

This project consists of developing a written assignment that will compare and contrast two competing theories introduced by the professor. Specifically, the instructor will provide the students with an ethical scenario that will allow for differing responses to flow from the use of each theory.

Student Directions:

At this point in the semester, you have been introduced to a number of different ethical theories. Now, it is time to demonstrate your critical engagement with these theories through a written document. Attached to these directions is an ethical scenario that I have devised*, and you will need to read this scenario in order to complete the assignment. Overall, the assignment will be a four to five page essay that is stylistically clean, displays correct internal citation of information, and include a works cited page. In terms of purpose, your essay will accomplish the following:

1) After reading the scenario, you are to provide a critical discussion in which you identify and explain each of the ethical theories you have been assigned to apply to this scenario, recognize how each of these theories would require you to act in this context, and what the result would be from such actions.
2) Then, you are to decide FIRST which of the two theories you find to be more personally reasonable (thus highlighting such issues as ethical self awareness) and SECOND which of the theories do you find more interculturally reasonable (thus highlighting cultural self awareness as it may or may not be tied to civic responsibility). (This will tie to the Personal Responsibility rubric).
3) Finally, as the conclusion to the essay, you are required to provide a photograph that depicts someone acting in accordance with each of the specific ethical theories. Under each picture, you will provide a written paragraph in which you analyze the image and explain how the action in the photo is an embodiment of the theory.
As you can see from the description, this assignment interconnects with Core Curriculum Objectives and will be used as part of the core assessment process. Therefore, you need to make yourself familiar with and work towards accomplishing those goals found in the rubric for Personal Responsibility; this rubric can be found at: http://www.sfasu.edu/acadaffairs/114.asp. This rubric will be used to assess your essay.

*Ethical scenarios that are used as part of this instrument will be developed by individual instructors and thus no single scenario exists. In fact, scenarios may shift from semester to semester to help deter plagiarism.

### XIII. Tentative Course Calendar

**Week 1: January 22-25**
- Course Introduction
  - “What is Morality?” ([Elements](#), pp. 1-13)

**Week 2: Jan. 28-February 1**
- “What is Morality?” cont. ([Elements](#), pp. 1-13)

**Week 3: Feb. 4-8**
- “The Challenge of Cultural Relativism” ([Elements](#), pp. 14-31)

**Week 4: Feb. 11-15**
- “Subjectivism in Ethics,” ([Elements](#), pp. 32-48)

**Week 5: Feb. 18-22** *(First Exam is on Thursday, Feb. 21st)*
- Leiser, “Is Homosexuality Unnatural?” ([Reserve Material](#))
- Sullivan, “A Few Words About Gay Marriage” ([Right Thing](#), Reading #28)

**Week 6: Feb. 25-March 1**
- “Does Morality Depend on Religion?” ([Elements](#), pp. 49-63)

**Week 7: March 4-8**
- Marquis, “Why Abortion is Immoral” ([Right Thing](#), Reading #11)
- Thomson, “A Defense of Abortion” ([Right Thing](#), Reading #12)

**Week 8: Mar. 11-15**
- “Ethical Egoism” ([Elements](#), pp. 64-81)

**Week 9: Mar. 18-22** *No Class, Spring Break*

**Week 10: Mar. 25-29** *(Midterm is on Thursday, March 28th)*
Week 11: April 1-5
   A. “Are There Absolute Moral Rules?” (Elements, pp. 125-135)
   B. “Kant and Respect for Persons” (Elements, pp. 136-145)

Week 12: Apr. 8-12  **We will discuss the Assessment Assignment on April 11th**
   A. Singer, “All Animals are Equal” (Right Thing, Reading #14)
   B. Machan, “Do Animals Have Rights?” (Right Thing, Reading #16)

Week 13: Apr. 15-17  **Easter Break: No class on April 18-19**
   A. “The Debate Over Utilitarianism” (Elements, pp. 110-124)

Week 14: Apr. 22-26  **Assessment Assignment Handed in and Uploaded by April 25th**
   A. Nozick, “The Experience Machine” (Right Thing, Reading #5)
   B. Nietzsche, “Master Morality and Slave Morality” (Right Thing, Reading #9)

Week 15: April 29-May 3
   A. Open

Week 16: May 6-10
   A. Open

**Our University Scheduled Final Exam is Tuesday, May 14: 1-3pm.**