Advanced Independent Studies in Philosophy: Ethics and Religion  
(PHIL 475:001—Independent Study)

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Meeting times in my office:  
TBD

SYLLABUS

I. Text


II. Course Description

This class explores the intersection between philosophical ethics (i.e., ethical theory) and varying religious traditions. Philosophy is the activity of finding reasonable beliefs. Ethics, as a branch of philosophy, is the activity of finding reasonable beliefs regarding both the rightness and wrongness of actions and what makes persons morally good and bad. Ethical theory, then, is the attempt to provide a rational framework that both explains the nature of what is good and bad, right and wrong, and also provides a means to negotiate moral conflict. This independent study will thus investigate some of what has been proposed by major religious traditions as satisfying the traditional goals of philosophical ethics.

III. General Education Core Curriculum Objectives/Outcomes

Students will demonstrate awareness of the scope and variety of texts dealing with various philosophical issues. Students will demonstrate an understanding of the historical and social contexts of philosophical movements. Students will demonstrate an ability to respond critically to works in philosophy. Students will have participated in assignments requiring them to formulate, express, and support their opinions on the philosophical issues covered in the course. Students will have acquired knowledge of the cross-cultural influence of philosophy.

IV. Program Learning Outcomes

The student should be able to analyze an ethical theory assigned by the instructor, identifying its fundamental principles and explaining how they should be applied to obtain a recommended course of action.
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**

1. Arguments for: moral considerability, differing kinds of value, and decision procedures.
   a. Students will acquire knowledge of theories regarding moral considerability, differing kinds of value and how ethicists otherwise go about problem-solving moral conflicts.
   b. Students will acquire familiarity with critiques of these theories.
   c. Students will acquire facility in the practical application of these theories.
2. Students will recognize the importance of basic ethical principles and distinctions in their own lives and will analyze and evaluate the choices they make regarding ethical issues.

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 (A-9.1)**

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
XII. **Grading Policy: Papers**

There will be 3 take-home essays (5-7 pages in length and each worth 1/3 of your grade).

XIII. **Tentative Course Calendar**

Week 1: January 22-25  
A. Schweiker, “On Religious Ethics”

Week 2: Jan. 28-February 1  
A. Lovin, “Moral Theories”

Week 3: Feb. 4-8  
A. Antonaccio, “Moral Truth”

Week 4: Feb. 11-15  
A. Lee Yearley, “Ideas of Ethical Excellence”

Week 5: Feb. 18-February 22 (First Paper Assigned)  
A. Twiss, “Comparison in Religious Ethics”

Week 6: Feb. 25-March 1  
A. Green, “Foundations of Jewish Ethics”

Week 7: March 4-8 (First Paper Due on the 8th)  

Week 8: Mar. 11-15  
A. Moosa, “Muslim Ethics”

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

Week 10: Mar. 25-29  
A. Keown, “Origins of Buddhist Ethics”

Week 11: April 1-April 5 (Second Paper Assigned on the 1st)  
A. Ilesanmi, “Human Rights”

Week 12: April 8-12  
A. Ammicht-Quinn, “Body Culture”
Week 13: April 15-17 (Second Paper Due on the 17th) Easter Break is April 18-21
A. Levine, “From Law to Ethics…and Back”

Week 14: April 22-April 26 (Third Paper Assigned on the 22nd)
A. Guroian, “Differentiation in Christian Ethics”

Week 15: April 29-May 3
A. Outka, “Christian Ethics?”

Week 16: May 6-10

Your third paper is to be handed in during our Final Exam meeting.