- COURSE SYLLABUS -

INTRODUCTION TO ETHICS  
DIVISION OF MULTIDISCIPLINARY STUDIES  
13968 - PHI 2306 - 642  
-Fall 2020-

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Location of class: D2L Zoom  
Live-stream/online  
Time of class: Live-stream Zoom  
6:45pm-9:15pm on Tuesdays  
24 August -11 December 2020  
Office: Ferguson # G76  
Office Hours: 12pm-6pm Mondays & & by personal appointment.

“Philosophy begins in wonder.  
And, at the end, when philosophic thought has done its best, the wonder remains.”

~ Alfred North Whitehead

I. 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 and apply them to contemporary moral issues. 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 important beliefs.

II. General Education Core Curriculum Objectives/Outcomes:

A. Students will demonstrate awareness of the scope and variety of texts dealing with various philosophical issues.

B. Students will demonstrate an understanding of the historical and social contexts of philosophical movements.

C. Students will demonstrate an ability to respond critically to works in philosophy.

D. 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.

III. Problem Learning Outcomes:

When presented with a specific example of a moral dilemma, a student will be able to identify and explain the moral course of action according to (a) utilitarian ethical principles and (b) deontological ethical principles. This outcome include the ability to connect choices, actions and consequences to ethical decision-making.

IV. Exemplary Educational Objectives:

A. Awareness of the scope and variety of texts dealing with ethical issues.

B. Understanding of the historical and social contexts of philosophical movements in ethics.

C. Ability to respond critically to works in philosophy.

D. Ability to formulate, express, and support arguments on ethical issues.

E. Knowledge of the cross-cultural influence of philosophy.

“It is the mark of an educated mind to be able to entertain a thought without accepting it.” ~ Aristotle

V. Student Learning Outcomes and Assessment Assignment:

A. 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.

B. Specifically, students enrolled in this course will demonstrate the general ability to:

1. Think critically, which includes the ability to analyze, evaluate, and synthesize information about specific philosophical concepts.

2. Communicate effectively by developing and expressing ideas through written and visual communication.

3. Gain intercultural competence, a knowledge of civic responsibility, and an awareness of how humans in the past have engaged effectively in regional, national, and global communities.

4. Understand the role that personal responsibility has played throughout history and gain the ability to connect choices, actions, and consequences to making ethical decisions.
“There is scarcely any passion without struggle.” ~ Albert Camus

C. Assessment Assignment

1. 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.

“The question isn’t who is going to let me; it’s who is going to stop me.” ~ Ayn Rand

VI. GRADE POLICIES, COURSE REQUIREMENTS, & TESTING INFORMATION:

A. Course Policies, Requirements, & Due Dates:

- 25% Participation/engagement of weekly content
- 25% short paper ethical essay: 3 December by 11:59 PM
- 25% short paper Primo Levi: ethical themes: 24 October by 11:59 PM
- 25% short paper video analysis: 7 November 2020 by 11:59 PM

“Theory can blind observation.” ~ Carol Gilligan

B. Attendance is expected. A complete attendance report may be filed with the student’s dean and the registrar with the final course grade. In fact, more than one absence, whether excused or unexcused, means you could receive a final grade of “F” for this course.

Please do not miss class! In view of your interests, too much is at stake.

C. All students are required to be present for announced exams. Any missed exam without a cogent documented excuse will be counted numerically as a zero (00). This is considerably lower than an average F.

D. Because of the nature of the assignments over assigned readings and lecture material, it is in your best interest to attend every class and proactively engage material, especially in view of participation grade.
E. If you are having difficulties understanding ethics or my directions, I encourage you to do the following:

1. Visit with me (early on; not last minute)
2. Ask questions in class
3. Study resources on D2L
4. Review your study habits
5. Form study groups with fellow students
5. Apply skills from *Thinking with Excellence*
6. Go to AARC in SFA Library;
7. Review exam material with me in my office.
I want to see each of you succeed in this class!

F. **Required Books:**

1. Louis P. Pojman, *How Should We Live? An Introduction to Ethics* (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing, 2004). ISBN-10: 0534556574. This book will be needed for both mid-term and final. It is available not only in SFA bookstore, but also used or for rent on Amazon. Also, free copy is available at SFA library in library reserves.

2. Primo Levi, *Survival in Auschwitz* (CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2012). ISBN-10: 1479125776. This book will be required to complete a paper assignment. It is available not only in SFA bookstore, but also on Amazon in both print and kindle (e-version). Also, free copy is available at SFA library in library reserves.


“There is nothing with which every man is so afraid as getting to know how enormously much he is capable of doing and becoming.” ~ Soren Kierkegaard

G. **Additional class Information:**

1. I may add additional required readings as deemed appropriate. I will inform you if the additional material will be added to quizzes or exams when I distribute the material in class.

2. Take good notes. Recordings are not allowed.

3. Any student who has to miss deadline must personally contact me with a cogent documented excuse within two class days. If you miss turning in final exam, contact immediately; otherwise, you receive no credit for the paper (00). Do not miss deadlines.

4. We will have a required roundtable discussion of Primo Levi's *Survival in Auschwitz*. This will be a student led roundtable discussion whereby you will interact with one another about the
ethical issues in this book, asking if the actions that took place at Auschwitz are morally wrong? How do we even evaluate such moral actions? Upon what basis?

5. Nearly every class we will have a contemporary ethical discussion about some type of moral problem or weighty issue. How well we navigate through those topics will largely be dependent on our ability to master the necessary skills from Thinking with Excellence, chapters 3-8, 11-13 and a mutual understanding of each other’s worldviews.

“Principles without traits are impotent but traits without principles are blind.” ~ William Frankena

H. Ethical Essay Assignment:

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.

I. Overall, the assignment will be a five-seven page essay (excluding cover sheet and bibliography) 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. (This will tie to the Written Communication and Critical Thinking rubrics)

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 inter-culturally reasonable (thus highlighting cultural self-awareness as it may or may not be tied to civic responsibility). (This will tie to the Written Communication, Social Responsibility, and Personal Responsibility rubrics).

4. 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. (This will tie to the Written Communication rubric and includes the visual element which has been integrated into the written communication submission)

5. As you can see from the description, this assignment interconnects with the 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 on the rubrics for Critical Thinking, Written Communication, Personal Responsibility, and Social Responsibility; these rubrics can be found at: http://www.sfasu.edu/acadaffairs/114.asp. These rubrics will be used to assess your essay.

6. *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.

7. Here you will need to demonstrate the ability to connect choices, actions, and consequences to ethical decision-making.

8. This work is to be done in your words. All sources must be properly cited. Plagiarism, which is your responsibility to know what it is and how to avoid it, is totally unacceptable. Strict plagiarism policy is upheld. No "cut-in-paste" from internet. This paper is to be uploaded to D2L. No extensions, exemptions, or exceptions.

9. By enrolling in 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. This paper will fulfill 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 upload the
assignment to both your standard course dropbox determined by your Instructor and the “Core Curriculum” dropbox. The Core Curriculum dropbox will be identified by the Objective for which work is being collected. (Examples: Critical Thinking, Teamwork, Social Responsibility Empirical & Quantitative Skills, Responsibility, Communication Skills-Written, Communication Skills-Written & Visual, and Communication Skills- Oral & Visual.) Please note that this only applies to the approved assignment. All other assignments should be submitted according to regular class operations.

When you complete the assignment mentioned above, you will upload the assignment to dropbox on D2L.

I. Ethical Themes Paper: In this 5-7 page paper (excluding cover sheet and bibliography/works cited) you will examine and explain the ethical issues Primo Levi experienced during his time in Auschwitz. Here you will study what those moral decisions were, how he and others faced them, and consider what ways they impact your own worldview. Paper is to be uploaded to D2L. No extensions, exemptions, or exceptions

Size font 12; cover sheet; works cited; one inch margins. Double space.

“People almost invariably arrive at their beliefs not on the basis of proof but on the basis of what they find attractive.” ~ Blaise Pascal

J. Video Analysis Paper:

In this 5 to 7 page paper (excluding cover sheet and bibliography-if needed) you will have one of three video debates to watch and critique (in your own words) using resources provided for you from Thinking with Excellence. These videos are posted on D2L with working links.

a. The first debate is between noted theist William Lane Craig vs. famed atheist Paul Kurtz: Is Goodness Without God Good Enough? This debate took place at Franklin & Marshall College. This debate is 1:39 long. This paper is to be uploaded to D2L. You will find link on D2L. This paper

b. The second debate is Oxford scholar and theist John Lennox vs. attorney and professor Michael Shermer: “The Nature of Evil and Suffering at Pepperdine University” (November 2013). The debate is 1:32 long. You will find this link on D2L. Paper is to be uploaded on D2L by class deadline.

c. The third debate is Does God Exist between William Lane Craig vs. late antitheist Christopher Hitchens. This 4 April 2009 debate took place at Biola University in California. This debate is 2.12 hours long.
You will find link on D2L. This paper is to be uploaded to D2L by class deadline.

d. Choose one of these three debates to critique; no need to critique more than one debate.

e. Do not plagiarize or zero will result in analysis paper.

f. If you have trouble with any of these links, you can search for the debates on youtube using names, titles, and time.

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VII. STUDENT SERVICES: WE ARE HERE FOR YOU!

A. **Student Support**

If you have experienced any of the following in the past, or are experiencing any of the following currently, then please know that you are not alone:

- Sexual assault
- Intimate partner violence
- Stalking
- Sexual harassment
- Other traumatic experience

B. We are a family here at SFA and it is my responsibility as your professor to do my best to get you connected with the services you might need. It doesn’t matter if it is something that occurred many years ago or is recent there are resources available to you at no cost or significantly reduced cost. Services can be provided in person and also through ZOOM.

C. **If you are having a crisis and need assistance, please call:**

1. 911 or local hospital
2. National Suicide Prevention Hotline: 800-273-8255; 800-273-TALK or 800-SUICIDE
3. Burke 24-hour Crisis Line (Local Mental Health Authority): 800-392-8343
4. The Trevor Project (LGBTQ+ sensitive) 24/7 Hotline: 1-866-488-7386 and/or TrevorText (text START) to 678678
5. Crisis Text Line by texting HELLO to 741-741
7. Trans-Hotline: 1-877-565-8860

D. **Human Services Counseling Clinic (HSCC)**

[http://www.sfasu.edu/humanservices/](http://www.sfasu.edu/humanservices/)

The SFASU Counseling Clinic is a service provided by the Department of Human Services Counselor Education Programs located on the SFASU Campus in Human Services Building, Room 202. If you have questions or concerns, the HSCC can be reached by phone between the hours of 8am and 6pm Monday-Thursday at 936-468-1041. In response to the COVID-19 viral pandemic, the HSCC has
temporarily waived all clinic fees.

E. Veterans Resource Center [http://www.sfasu.edu/vrc/](http://www.sfasu.edu/vrc/)
Located on the first floor of the Student Center cafeteria: 936-468-6494. They are open Monday through Friday, 8am to 5pm and provide a comprehensive list of services, which include counseling services. Email: SFAVeterans@sfasu.edu

The Family Crisis Center of East Texas has partnered with SFASU for an on-campus outreach office - Located on the third floor of the McKibben Education Building, Suite 304: 936-468-SAFE (7233). They provide confidential services and support for victims of domestic violence and sexual assault. Includes services for personal advocacy, safety planning, legal advocacy, sexual assault advocacy, counseling, child advocacy, self-sufficient advocacy.

G. Rusk Counseling [http://www.sfasu.edu/counselingservices/](http://www.sfasu.edu/counselingservices/)
Counseling services for all students – offers distance counseling. Located on the 3rd floor of the Rusk Building: 936-468-2401; email: counseling@sfasu.edu. Office hours are Monday through Friday from 8am to 5pm. Includes all counseling services (bilingual English-Spanish services also available).

H. As your professor, I am here for you and want you to get the help you need. If you would like to contact me and discuss anything, please do not hesitate to do so. If you tell me of an incident or situation whether past or present that falls under circumstances related to physical, sexual, emotional violence, I may be required (dependent on incident) to report it to Title IX office on campus. It does not go against you, it’s confidential, and your protection is of utmost importance. They simply reach out to you in an email to see if you need any support and you decide whether to take it from there.

I. Bottom line... Talk to someone. Get the help that you need! And, there is no shame in getting help!

J. The Problem of Perfectionism:

~“Perfectionism is self-destructive simply because there’s no such thing as perfect. Perfection is an unattainable goal.” ~ Brené Brown, The Gifts of Imperfection

For some of us we feel like we are failures because we didn’t achieve a perfect score, a perfect GPA, or be perfect ourselves. The problem of perfectionism is a painful vice, unattainable, and an empty promise.

Here are 10 alternative goals you could consider instead:

1. Bring yourself, exactly as you are, to everything you do as a philosopher. Start now as a student. No one will be able to be a philosopher the exact way that you are.

2. Ask questions when you don’t know something. We all know you’re here to learn and that the information is new, complex, and sometimes overwhelming. The best
philosophers ask questions and never stop. Being open to feedback will be a key to success here.

3. Fully invest in being a lifelong learner. View this academic journey as the beginning of your learning journey. Things will change, new research will emerge, new policies will be adopted, you will move, meet new people, be presented you with new challenges, new settings, and new experiences. Your life structure will change - and you will be much better prepared to handle these things if you are a life-long learner.

4. Be okay with not knowing. Everybody feels this way about certain ways and at certain times. No one is immune. See #2 and #3 above for strategies to deal with this.

5. Adopt a philosophy akin to Maya Angelou’s “do the best you can. Then when you know better, do better”.

6. Anticipate, meet, and exceed the needs of others in your spheres of influence.

7. Accept that your best work won’t always result in the outcome that you’re looking for. That doesn’t mean it wasn’t your best work and that doesn’t mean you should stop pushing to improve.

8. Work on becoming a really good listener; it pays dividends.


~ Adapted from Brené Brown, The Gifts of Imperfection

K. Caregivers Note:

1. Parents and caregivers deserve access to education. Especially now, in our virtual learning space, with many children learning from home and schools facing sudden closures, I expect children to be present in class from time to time (Adapted from Heather Olson Beal)

2. Breastfeeding babies and children of all ages are welcome and may be visible on screen during class sessions. Alternatively, parents and caregivers may turn the camera off when more privacy is required.

3. Stepping away momentarily for childcare reasons is completely understandable and expected. Simply mute and/or turn off your camera as necessary and rejoin us when you are able.

4. Do not take any photos, audio, or video of any children on screen. Students who do so are subject to censure.

5. All students are encouraged to support and respect caregivers as they mute and/or turn off their video and use the chat function as needed.

6. Please consider disclosing your student-caregiver status to me. This is the first step in my being able to accommodate any special needs that arise. While I maintain the same high expectations for all students in my classes, I am happy to
problem-solve with you in a way that makes you feel supported as you strive for school-caregiver balance.

D. **Virtual Educational Instructions:**

1. Please be present when zoom live stream begins according to email sent you and stay till lecture has ended. It counts towards participation grade.

1. Anticipate the zoom meeting; don’t wait till the last moment to sign in;

2. Let professor know if you are having poor internet connectivity.

3. Perhaps turning off the video feed will improve the stability of your connection if it weak.

4. **YOU ARE NOT ALLOWED TO RECORD ZOOM SESSIONS OR TAKE PHOTOS DURING THEM.**

5. You are not allowed to share passwords with people outside of this class. Protect passwords.

6. Zombombing or Zoom raiding will not be tolerated and I will comply with the university to the fullest extent in its investigation. University policies will strictly be followed.

7. Feel free to turn off camera if in need of restroom, drink, food, etc.

8. Feel free to close video feed for sake of privacy, we completely understand. But if given opportunity, it would be a joy to see eye contact made and be able to actively interact with you all.

9. Engage professor and others, ask questions, and allow this virtual teaching interaction be the best it can be. Be courteous, respectful, and caring.

10. No discrimination of any sort will be tolerated.

"*Life’s most persistent and urgent question is, ‘What are you doing for others?’*" ~ Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.
Here is the way I will evaluate your ethics papers, projects, essays, exams, etc.

**An excellent book report, essay, research paper, or any other paper (A) meets or exceeds all of these criteria for both content and writing:**

**Content**

- Demonstrates originality of thought, creativity, and particular insight into the material
- Demonstrates excellent and thorough understanding of the material
- Uses primary and secondary sources in a way that demonstrates high level of intellectual engagement with the text
- Uses primary and secondary sources in such a way that demonstrates the ability to independently research, read, and assimilate material relevant to the topic and to include it in the paper in a useful and insightful way
- Demonstrates the ability to read texts from different perspectives, traditions, cultures, and time periods with nuance and sensitivity, understanding how context affects interpretation.
- Logical fallacies are completely avoided.
- Truth claims are cogently justified (e.g., logical reasoning; empirical evidences; existential relevance; workability; livability; explanatory power; ethical/aesthetic excellence)

**Writing**

- Includes excellent writing that is interesting to read, clear, correct, polished, varied, and appropriate to the nature of the audience and goal; directions were explicitly followed
- Demonstrates completely correct handling of the mechanics of citation, attribution, and integration of quoted and paraphrased material
- Is well organized, with a choice of writing and paragraph structure that guides readers through the work in a way that is well suited to the particular aims, audience, and tone of the goals of assignment.
• Is copy-edited and polished at the sentence level to within an inch of its life

A good paper (B) meets or exceeds all of these criteria for both content and writing:

Content

• Demonstrates a good understanding of the material
• Uses primary and secondary sources in a way that demonstrates a high level of intellectual engagement with the text
• Demonstrates the ability to read texts from different perspectives, traditions, cultures, and time periods, with an understanding of how context affects interpretation
• Logical fallacies are avoided.
• Truth claims are justified with good argumentation.

Writing

• Includes good-quality paper that is interesting to read, clear, correct, and appropriate to the nature of the assignment’s goal; directions were followed in a commendable way.
• Demonstrates correct handling of the mechanics of citation, attribution, and integration of quoted and paraphrased material
• Is well organized at the outline and paragraph level
• Is carefully copy-edited and almost entirely error-free

An average quality paper (C) meets all of these criteria for both content and writing:

Content

• Demonstrates solid understanding of the material; may sometimes not show full understanding of how sources relate to other material in the course
• Uses primary and secondary sources in a way that demonstrates intellectual engagement with the text at a level appropriate to undergraduate students
• May not demonstrate initiative in research; may sometimes show a superficial understanding of the texts
• Demonstrates the ability to read texts from different perspectives, traditions, cultures, and time periods with comprehension, but may have difficulty in not reading the text from an exclusively modern- or culture-specific position
• Logical fallacies are slightly evidenced.
• Truth claims are insufficiently justified (not argued very well)

Writing
• Includes average-quality writing that is correct and appropriate to the nature of the assignment’s audience and goal; directions somewhat followed.
• Demonstrates an average handling of the mechanics of citation, attribution, and integration of quoted and paraphrased material; may be awkward in integration and attribution of sources
• Somewhat organized at the outline and paragraph level; may be unfocused or somewhat not organized in the most effective order.
• Is satisfactorily copy-edited, although some problems of language may remain

An average (D or below):

Includes any one of these problems to a noticeable extent:

Content

• Demonstrates a deficient understanding of the material
• Does not engage with primary and secondary sources, or does so in a superficial, proof-texting way
• Includes difficulty in comprehending or engaging with texts from different perspectives, traditions, cultures, and time periods
• Logical fallacies are discovered.
• Truth-claims are not justified or are poorly justified.

Writing

• Includes writing that is not appropriate to the nature of the assignment’s audience and goal (e.g., too casual or too jargonistic)
• Includes persistent problems with the mechanics of citation, attribution, and integration of quoted and paraphrased material
• Lacks organization at the outline and paragraph level
• Includes persistent and/or systemic problems at the sentence level (structure of sentences; appropriate word choice; spelling and punctuation; other grammar issues; general clarity)

K. Additional Hints for Success on Essays, Papers, & Reports:

1. Always be thinking about the leading proponents and critics on any particular idea or problem in philosophy. In other words, who embraced what particular philosophical idea and who argued against it? Where do these major ideas come out of (e.g., John Dewey’s Art as Experience)? What was the context for the emergence of those ideas?

2. Introduction: be sure to clearly state the thesis to your work, the problem you will work out, and how you will address that problem. Explain clearly what the central idea is.
3. What are the criticisms made to this idea? What are the responses to those criticisms?

4. Also, be able to critique philosophical, ethical ideas with your own worldview. Using the sevenfold criterion, 5 ways of knowing, etc. in *Thinking with Excellence*, you should be able to offer a critique of that philosophical idea from your worldview.

5. What are the specific lessons you learned? The more specific you are with the lessons, the better your conclusion will be.

6. What are you still missing? What have you left out? Think lateral thinking?

7. Have you committed the fallacy of reductionism?

8. Have you written your work using proper grammar and spelling? Remember: how you communicate is as important as what you communicate.

9. Bibliography/works cited page. Proper citation used?


11. Using the sevenfold criteria, avoiding logical fallacies, and using the fivefold view of evaluating what is true will be helpful to your success.

12. Regularly meet with me, especially if things are unclear to you. If you find yourself struggling with a topic we are discussing in class, my door is open to you; I want you to succeed. You will need to make sure you are doing the required reading and are attending class.

13. Once again, no plagiarism whatsoever. No late papers will be accepted. No extensions or exemptions granted. To be sure, all your work will be taken seriously as a philosophical critique. So, I can’t wait to see you apply all that you are learning in this course! Go forth Lumberjacks!

“*It is the mark of an educated mind to be able to entertain a thought without accepting it.*” ~ Aristotle

L. Asking Good Questions:

Asking questions in class can be very intimidating for some of us. We are fearful of being embarrassed or rejected. We don’t want to appear “dumb.” We push back from the idea of being singled out by the professor whereby we are called upon repeatedly in class; we
don’t like the spotlight. We don’t want to be known as the “teacher’s pet.”

The situation becomes even more difficult. We come across those who like to argue, who want to be the center of the class, or who redirect their questions in way that benefits them. Out of arrogance, *hubris* (which means excessive pride), and control, they want to claim “superiority” over fellow classmates.

Sadly, we have all encountered educators who don’t like questions. Some are hot-tempered, cynical, and not easy to talk to or even learn from, and deem themselves “god-like” given their background, degrees, and accomplishments. They can make us feel irrelevant, uncomfortable, and worthless.

To be sure, many of us don’t even know where to begin when it comes to asking good questions. We’ve never been trained on the science and art of asking good questions. Yet, we want to learn. We want to contribute to class. We want to seize our studies!

“Do one thing every day that scares you.” ~ Eleanor Roosevelt

What are we to do?

*Thinking with excellence* invites you to ask good questions. Success in life demands good questioning. Most professors we encounter love questions and long for rich classroom dialogue. They will also protect you from students who seek to disrupt you, try to take advantage of the classroom setting by showing off, or attempt to “put you down.” They want you to learn and will do all they can to facilitate those opportunities. If you can learn how to ask good questions, then you will have a dynamic skill set that will last a lifetime, no matter your career, context, or relationships.

Thus, I encourage you to think about books, conversations, truth-claims made, and worldviews like a detective by asking clarifying questions like “What do you mean by that?” and “How did you come to that conclusion.” Here are seven types of questions you should ask when it comes to truth-claims being made by authors, professors, and fellow students:

**Clarification Questions:**

1. “What do you mean by that?” How did you come to that conclusion? “When you make this truth-claim, are you saying
Here you repeat your understanding of the truth-claim.

Example Question:

2. "When you make this truth-claim, would this be an example of what you are trying to say?" Here you give an example of the truth-claim made. This is an example question.

Interpretation Questions:

3. "If I understand you correctly, your understanding of this truth-claim is [repeat interpretation]? Am I right? I wonder if the claim could be interpreted this way [give alternative interpretation]?" These are interpretation questions.

Implication Questions:

4. "What are the implications of this truth-claim?" Or would this be an implication of this truth-claim [repeat implication]? You can think about the implications of the truth-claim in how it affects or impacts one's life, community, context, faith, family, other ideas, history, policy, science, or other types of studies. These are implication questions.

Consistency Question:

5. "Can this truth-claim be true given what we know about [common sense; empirical data; historical facts; philosophical truths; scientific evidence; other realms of studies such as sociology or other inquiries]?" Here we are examining the consistency of the truth-claim with what we already know is true and trustworthy. This is a consistency question.

Agreement/Disagreement Question:

6. "I agree/ disagree with you. Here's why. I've had this experience [state experience; remember to summarize; don't be too wordy]... What do you think about this experience?" This is an agreement/disagreement question rooted in personal experience.

Lateral Questions:

7. "What other ways can we think about this truth-claim that may be foreign to our own particular shared assumptions?" "Would [e.g., different age; culture; gender; race;..."
religion; sexuality; time; place] interpret this truth-claim the same way?” Here we are using lateral type of questioning; we are attempting to think outside of the box; creativity is utilized as a thinking skill whereby we suspend our normal ways of looking at a particular issue, pattern, or problem.

These seven types of questions, namely, clarification, example, interpretation, implication, consistency, agreement/disagreement, and lateral questions, will benefit you in ways you can never imagine!

“Now if a man believes in the existence of beautiful things, but not of Beauty itself, and cannot follow a guide who would lead him to a knowledge of it, is he not living in a dream?” ~ Plato

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<th>IX. HOW TO DO WELL IN THIS COURSE:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. Carefully read assigned work. Proactively bombard your assigned readings with the following questions: why, where, what, when, who, and so what?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Consider making an outline of the major units of thought in your readings. As you formulate your outline from the reading, ask yourself the following question: “What do I see?” The more observations you make, the better your interpretation of the author’s position or claim may be. Afterwards ask, “What does it mean?”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. After you outline the author’s position/claim go back and see what arguments are being provided to support that position or claim. Keep asking yourself, “What is the issue?” Then consider what objections can be raised against that issue, position, or claim. Lastly, what replies can be given to defend the position or claim?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. You should consult with me as often as possible to make sure you are understanding the material. Do not wait until the day before a test to begin studying. This is not the kind of course for which you can cram and expect to do well. Take advantage of the office hours.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
e. Consider forming study groups to prepare for quizzes and exams.

f. Those who sit front and central statistically do better on their exams.

g. Try to read when you are at your best (e.g., if you are a “morning person”, then make a way to study philosophy in the morning and not late at night).

h. Make sure you are able to contact another student for lecture material in case you happen to miss a class(es).

i. Eight Strategies for First-Rate Studying:
   - Read Thoughtfully
   - Read Repeatedly
   - Read Patiently
   - Read Selectively
   - Read Imaginatively
   - Read Purposefully
   - Read Acquisitively
   - Read Telescopically

   If you want to improve your reading comprehension skills I would encourage you to purchase Mortimer J. Adler's informative work, *How to Read a Book*.

j. 10 maxims I encourage you to inculcate into your life in order to achieve academic success:

   i. Be focused! Your energy, time, and discipline need to be bent on becoming the very best. Focus on what really counts. Do not allow yourself to become diverted by the trivial and unimportant.

   ii. Be holistic! Pro-actively make decisions and pursue interests in your daily life that will assist you in obtaining success. Your resources must always be redirected to your goal.

   iii. Be undivided! Do not separate one are of your life from another. Pursuing opposing interests may marginalize your success because it divides up your energy, time, resources, and attention.

   iv. Be determined! Academic progress is rough, ever so time-consumming, and ever so demanding. Meet every demand with a determination for excellence. Learn from your mistakes. Pick yourself up when you fail and press on!

   v. Be resilient! Do not give up. You will perhaps fail some time or another during your program. You may even become depress from the critical feedback you receive from your professors and peers. When those times come, and they do for most if not all, you must
pick yourself up again-for accomplishing the goal is worth facing seemingly insurmountable obstacles.

vi. Be sacrificial! Purposefully let go of those things that will hinder your success. Willfully discard every hindrance and degenerative influence that will keep you from achieving your goal with a passion for excellence. Routinely examine your life and see what is encouraging or discouraging you from reaching excellence.

vii. Be healthy! Realize, as Aristotle states, that one area of your life impacts all other areas, whether intellectual, physical, or moral. Take very tender care of your mind, soul, and body. You need to strive to be holistically healthy-for if you are not mentally, physically, and spiritually healthy, then you may easily become fatigued, develop inner angst, regret, disappointment, and waiver in the completion of your goals. Remember, a good night sleep is one of the best things you can do for yourself.

viii. Be supported! Cultivate a network of people who will exhort you to succeed! Develop relationships with peers who are also bent on achieving success.

ix. Be excellent! Successful students realize the importance of cultivating a disposition, i.e., an inner character, which desires intellectual and moral excellence. Seek to desire excellence. Aristotle encourages us to do deeds of excellence until excellence becomes habitual in our personhood.

x. Be balanced! Learn how to balance “having fun” with “hard work.” Don’t ignore those opportunities to relax or play hard. In fact, pursue them! But do not allow those opportunities to displace your study opportunities. Remember, learning is pleasurable.

One of the dangers for those who do achieve success is the problem of malnourishment. Successful people may reach their long-term goals, but so many of them starve themselves in the process. Do not so focus on your goals that you miss out on dynamic opportunities that can nourish your person, inform your circumstance, grow your character, and enlarge your world. In other words, do not so focus on the future that you neglect the blessings that are right in front of you. Go forth and seize each and every day with a passion for excellence!

X. CLASS SCHEDULE, TOPICS, & ASSIGNED READING:

Depending upon class context, I may alter our readings and topics. Notwithstanding, follow this outline unless otherwise directed by professor. Sometimes I may ask you to re-read certain chapters or portions from required readings or articles.

“When you look into an abyss, the abyss also looks into you.”
~Friedrich Nietzsche
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class meeting</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>I will be introducing you to some important ideas from the following books and authors:</th>
<th>Reading Assignment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>25 August</td>
<td>Introduction to Course: What is a worldview?</td>
<td><strong>Introduction to</strong> Deontological Ethics; Virtue Ethics; Consequential Ethics</td>
<td>Pojman, chapter 1 Thinking with Excellence, chapters 1-3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 September</td>
<td>Virtue Ethics: Socrates Plato</td>
<td>Plato’s Meno Plato’s Republic</td>
<td>Thinking with Excellence, chapters 3-4 Please re-read chapter 3. Pojman, chapter 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 September</td>
<td>Aristotle’s Virtue Ethics Contemporary Virtue Ethics Critique: Advantages &amp; Disadvantages</td>
<td><strong>Nicomachean Ethics</strong> G.E.M. Anscombe</td>
<td>Thinking with Excellence, chapters 4-6 Please re-read chapter 4. Pojman, chapter 8.</td>
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<tr>
<td>15 September</td>
<td>Virtue Ethics Continues</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22 September</td>
<td>Deontological Ethics: Natural Law Kantian Ethics Intuitionism</td>
<td>St. Thomas Aquinas Immanuel Kant Sir David Ross, The Right and the Good</td>
<td>Thinking with Excellence, chapters 6-8 Please re-read chapter 6 Pojman, chapters 4, 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29 September</td>
<td>Ethics of Agapism Ethics of David Hume</td>
<td><strong>An Inquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals</strong></td>
<td>Review Pojman,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Topic</td>
<td>Notes</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>6 October</td>
<td>Stoicism and Epicureanism</td>
<td>Review Pojman, chapters 1, 2, 4, 7, &amp; 8.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unit 1</td>
<td>COMPLETED</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Unit 2:</td>
<td>Here we make a transition From normative theories in ethics into other views that are interesting, controversial, and different.</td>
<td>Moral Objectivism: Jeremy Bentham; John Stuart Mill</td>
<td>Read Pojman, chapters 3 &amp; 6. Read <em>Thinking With Excellence</em>, chapters 11-13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 October</td>
<td>Ethical Objectivism: Introduction to Ayn Rand</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>20 October</td>
<td>Relativism Nihilism Existentialism</td>
<td>Simone de Beauvoir’s <em>Ethics of Ambiguity</em></td>
<td>Re-read Pojman, chapters 3 &amp; 6. Re-read chapters 11-13 from <em>Thinking with Excellence</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27 October</td>
<td>Existentialism (part 2)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>10 November</td>
<td>Ethics of Care vs. Ethics of Justice Ethics of R. M. Hare Addressing the Problem of Evil and Suffering</td>
<td>Carol Gilligan <em>R. M. Hare</em></td>
<td>Read Pojman, chapter 9.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17 November</td>
<td>Application of Ethics</td>
<td>Gandhi vs. Frank Castle</td>
<td>Re-read Pojman, Chapters, 3, 5, 6, &amp; 9.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1 December

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Application of Ethics</th>
<th>Review Notes</th>
<th>Re-read chapter 11 of <em>Thinking with Excellence.</em></th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aesthetics and Ethics</td>
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</table>

8 December

| Exam Project | See course syllabus for paper due date. | |

XI. OTHER IMPORTANT MATTERS:

a. **Topics, Assignments, Tests, Reading Materials, and Office Hours are subject to change per professor’s discretion.**

b. I’m here for you. It is best to contact me by e.mail shockleypr@sfasu.edu to make an office appointment.

c. Earn a Certificate of Applied Ethics! After you complete this course with a C or above, all you need are three more courses and you can receive a “Certificate of Applied Ethics!” When you earn this certificate (9 more hours is all you need), this achievement will also be officially noted on your official transcript. Here are more details...

i. **The Certificate in Applied Ethics** is based on an interdisciplinary curriculum that both supports and extends a student’s major and offers students an enhanced ability to evaluate ethical issues related to their major filed or future profession. An examination of morality and ethical theory fused with disciplines such as public administration, sciences and more offers students a deeper understanding of how to pursue a career or conduct research in their primary field of study. Ethical decision-making and critical thinking are essential skills for students applying to graduate schools.

ii. Students will take six hours of required course in PHI 2306 Introduction to Ethics (this course) and Ethical Theory course, and six hours of approved electives. Our certificate includes a theoretical basis for understanding ethics, and students who pursue it will complete a project that integrates their study of ethics with their future career plans (e.g., business; education; forestry; human resources; medicine; military; speech-language therapy; social work).
iii. Sign up today! Contact the Division of Multidisciplinary Programs at 936-468-6537.

XII. STUDENT ETHICS AND OTHER POLICY INFORMATION:

A. **Attendance Policy:** Students should consider class attendance to be similar to attendance in a professional setting. It is mandatory. If, for some reason, you are unable to attend class, it is expected that you will notify the instructor PRIOR TO THE MISSED class session. Phone text, email, and voicemail are acceptable forms of communicating a missed class period.

B. **Class Attendance and Excused Absence: Policy 6.7**

Regular, punctual attendance, documented participation, and, if indicated in the syllabus, submission of completed assignments are expected at all classes, laboratories, and other activities for which the student is registered. Based on university policy, failure of students to adhere to these requirements shall influence the course grade, financial assistance, and/or enrollment status. The instructor shall maintain an accurate record of each student's attendance and participation as well as note this information in required reports (including the first 12-day attendance report) and in determining final grades. Students may be excused from attendance for reasons such as health, family emergencies, or student participation in approved university-sponsored events. However, students are responsible for notifying their instructors in advance, when possible, for excusable absences. Whether absences are excused or unexcused, a student is still responsible for all course content and assignments. Students with accepted excuses may be permitted to make up work for up to three weeks of absences during a semester or one week of a summer term, depending on the nature of the missed work. Make-up work must be completed as soon as possible after returning from an absence.

C. **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.

D. **Academic Accommodation for Students with Disabilities: Policy 6.1 and 6.6**

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, 936-468-3004 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/)

E. **Student Academic Dishonesty: Policy 4.1**

Abiding by university policy on academic integrity is a responsibility of all
university faculty and students. Faculty members promote the components of academic integrity in their instruction, and course syllabi are required to provide information about penalties for cheating and plagiarism, as well as the appeal process.

F. 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)

G. Penalties for Academic Dishonesty:

Penalties may include, but are not limited to, reprimand, no credit for the assignment or exam, re-submission of the work, make-up exam, failure of the course, or expulsion from the university.

H. Student Appeals:

A student who wishes to appeal decisions related to academic dishonesty should follow procedures outlined in Academic Appeals by Students (6.3).

I. Withheld Grades: Policy 5.5

At the discretion of the instructor of record and with the approval of the academic unit head, 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, except as allowed through policy [i.e., Active Military Service (6.14)]. If students register for the same course in future semesters, the WH will automatically become an F and will be counted as a repeated course for the purpose of computing the grade point average.

J. Student Code of Conduct: Policy 10.4

Disruptive Behavior--Interference or disruption of students, faculty, administration, staff, the educational mission, or routine operations of the university is prohibited. Such activity includes, but is not limited to, behavior in a classroom or instructional program that interferes with the instructor or presenter's ability to conduct the class or program, or the ability of others to profit from the class or program. To remain in the vicinity of activity that is disrupting normal university functions when requested to leave by a university official is prohibited. 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 at SFA.

K. Masks (cloth face coverings) must be worn over the nose and mouth at all times in face-
to-face classes and appropriate physical distancing must be observed. Students not
wearing a mask and/or not observing appropriate physical distancing will be asked to
leave the class. All incidents of not wearing a mask and/or not observing appropriate
physical distancing will be reported to the Office of Student Rights and
Responsibilities. Students who are reported for multiple infractions of not wearing a
mask and/or not observing appropriate physical distancing may be subject to
disciplinary actions.

https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/cloth-face-cover-
guidance.html

https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/social-
distancing.html

L. Respect for Diversity:

We serve all diverse backgrounds and perspectives; Diversity is a resource, strength and
benefit to us all. It is my intent to present materials and activities that are respectful of
diversity: gender, sexual orientation, disability, age, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, race,
religion, and culture. Your suggestions are encouraged and appreciated. Please let me
know ways to improve the effectiveness of the course for you personally or for other
students or student groups. In addition, if any of our class meetings conflict with religious
events, please let me know so that we can make arrangements for you.

M. Topics, assignments, tests, reading materials, and office hours are subject to change per
professor's discretion.

N. PHIL: 2306: Typically meets three times each week (Monday/Wednesday/Friday) in 50-
minute segments for 15 weeks, and also meets for a 2.5-hour final examination. Students
have significant weekly reading assignments, and typically complete multiple exams, a
final exam, and epistemology essay and discussion work. These activities average a
minimum of 6 hours of work per week to prepare outside of classroom hours. Online (and
hybrid) version of Introduction to Philosophy contains extensive reading and written
content which includes the same information students in a face-to-face lecture course
receive. Students engage in online modules for at least three hours per week. Students
typically complete four discussion posts, multiple quizzes, four essays in addition to
regular homework assignments. For every hour engaging with content, students spend at
least two hours completing associated activities and assessments.

“Sometimes the questions are complicated and the answers are simple.”

~ Dr. Seuss