Introduction to Ethics  
(PHIL 2306:002)  

Professor: Ben Dixon  
Department of Languages, Cultures & Philosophy  
Office: Liberal Arts North (LAN) Rm. 412  
Office Ph.: 936-468-1053  

Fall 2023  
MWF 2-2:50pm  
Ferguson 375  
Office Hrs: MWF: 1-2pm & TR: 12:30-2pm.  

SYLLABUS  

I. Text  
James Rachels, Elements of Moral Philosophy 10th 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, gay marriage, 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. Indeed, this is why we examine those beliefs in light of philosophical moral theory. Moral theory just is an attempt at providing a rational framework within which to view these important beliefs.  

III. Student Wellness and Well-Being  
SFASU values students’ mental health and the role it plays in academic and overall student success. SFA provides a variety of resources to support student’s mental health and wellness. Many of these resources are free, and all of them are confidential.  

On-campus Resources:  
SFASU Counseling Services • www.sfasu.edu/counselingservices  
Health and Wellness Hub (corner of E. College and Raguet) • 936-468-2401  

SFASU Human Services Counseling Clinic • www.sfasu.edu/humanservices/139.asp  
Human Services Room 202 • 936-468-1041  

Crisis Resources:
IV. **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.

V. **Program Learning Outcomes**

Program 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.

VI. **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.

VII. **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:

- Think critically, which includes the ability to analyze, evaluate, and synthesize information about specific philosophical concepts.
- Communicate effectively by developing and expressing ideas through written and visual communication.
- 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.

- Understand the role that personal responsibility has played throughout history and gain the ability to connect choices, actions, and consequences to making ethical decisions.

A. The core objectives will be assessed via embedded questions on your Final Exam.

VIII. Credit Hour Justification

Typically meets twice each week (Tuesday/Thursday) in 75-minute segments for 15 weeks, and also meets for a 2-hour final examination. Students have significant weekly reading assignments, and typically complete two exams, a final exam, homework, an essay and quizzes. These activities average a minimum of 6 hours of work per week to prepare outside of classroom hours.

IX. 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.

X. 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 three unexcused absences during the semester without having your grade affected. Beginning with your fourth 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!
XI. **Academic Integrity**

*The Code of Student Conduct and Academic Integrity* outlines the prohibited conduct by any student enrolled in a course at SFA. It is the responsibility of all members of all faculty, staff, and students to adhere to and uphold this policy.

Articles IV, VI, and VII of the new Code of Student Conduct and Academic Integrity outline the violations and procedures concerning academic conduct, including cheating, plagiarism, collusion, and misrepresentation. Cheating includes, but is not limited to: (1) Copying from the test paper (or other assignment) of another student, (2) Possession and/or use during a test of materials that are not authorized by the person giving the test, (3) Using, obtaining, or attempting to obtain by any means the whole or any part of a non-administered test, test key, homework solution, or computer program, or using a test that has been administered in prior classes or semesters without permission of the Faculty member, (4) Substituting for another person, or permitting another person to substitute for one’s self, to take a test, (5) Falsifying research data, laboratory reports, and/or other records or academic work offered for credit, (6) Using any sort of unauthorized resources or technology in completion of educational activities.

Plagiarism is the appropriation of material that is attributable in whole or in part to another source or the use of one’s own previous work in another context without citing that it was used previously, without any indication of the original source, including words, ideas, illustrations, structure, computer code, and other expression or media, and presenting that material as one’s own academic work being offered for credit or in conjunction with a program course or degree requirements.

Collusion is the unauthorized collaboration with another person in preparing academic assignments offered for credit or collaboration with another person to commit a violation of any provision of the rules on academic dishonesty, including disclosing and/or distributing the contents of an exam.

Misrepresentation is providing false grades or résumés; providing false or misleading information in an effort to receive a postponement or an extension on a test, quiz, or other assignment for the purpose of obtaining an academic or financial benefit for oneself or another individual or to injure another student academically or financially.

XII. **Withheld Grades (Semester Grades Policy 5.5)**

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 coursework 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 to compute the grade point average. For additional information, go to https://www.sfasu.edu/policies/course-grades-5.5.pdf.

XIII. 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 promptly may delay your accommodations. For additional information, go to http://www.sfasu.edu/disabilityservices/.

XIV. Grading Policy: Exams

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

XV. Tentative Course Calendar

Week 1: Aug. 28-September 1
   Course Introduction
      A. “What is Morality?” (Elements, pp. 1-13)

Week 2: Sept. 4-8
   A. “What is Morality?” cont. (Elements, pp. 1-13)

Week 3: Sept. 11-15
   A. “The Challenge of Cultural Relativism” (Elements, pp. 14-32)

Week 4: Sept. 18-22
   A. “Subjectivism in Ethics,” (Elements, pp. 33-49)

Week 5: Sept. 25-29 (First Exam is on Friday, September 29th)
   A. Leiser, “Is Homosexuality Unnatural?” (Posted on D2L)
   B. Sullivan, “A Few Words About Gay Marriage (Right Thing, Reading #28)

Week 6: Oct. 2-6
A. “Does Morality Depend on Religion?” (Elements, pp. 50-65)

Week 7: Oct. 9-13
A. Marquis, “Why Abortion is Immoral” (Right Thing, Reading #11)
B. Thomson, “A Defense of Abortion” (Right Thing, Reading #12)

Week 8: Oct. 16-20
A. “Ethical Egoism” (Elements, pp. 66-83)

Week 9: Oct. 23-27 **Midterm is Friday, October 27th.**

Week 10: Oct. 30-Nov. 3
A. “Are There Absolute Moral Rules?” (Elements, pp. 133-144)
B. “Kant and Respect for Persons” (Elements, pp. 145-155)

Week 11: Nov. 6-10
A. Singer, “All Animals are Equal” (Right Thing, Reading #14)
B. Machan, “Do Animals Have Rights?” (Right Thing, Reading #16)

Week 12: Nov. 13-17
A. “The Debate Over Utilitarianism” (Elements, pp. 118-132)

Week 13: Nov. 20-24 **No classes, Thanksgiving holiday runs from Nov. 18-26**

Week 14: Nov. 27-December 1st
A. Nozick, “The Experience Machine” (Right Thing, Reading #5)
B. Nietzsche, “Master Morality and Slave Morality” (Right Thing, Reading #9)

Week 15: Dec. 5-9 **Open**

Week 16: Dec. 11-15

**Our University Scheduled Final Exam is Friday, December 15th, 2023 from 8-10am.**