

UGED 2854: Everyday Ethics

Course Outline

Time: W 3:30pm-5:15pm

Location: NAH 213

Course overview

The course focuses on practical moral problems in our ordinary life, such as animal rights, abortion, euthanasia, discrimination, legal punishment, wealth distribution, and civil disobedience. The aim of this course is to introduce students to the main arguments for the opposing views on some hotly contested issues in everyday context. It is expected that the student will learn to analyze and evaluate the relevant arguments. This will also help them to develop their own views in an informed and critical manner.

Philosophy Majors and students who have taken UGEC2841 or PHIL3253 cannot take this course to fulfil General Education requirements. Prerequisite (for S6 entrants admitted in 2010-11 and thereafter)—For MB ChB: UGFH1000; for other programmes: UGFH1000 or UGFNI000.

Learning outcomes

On successful completion of the course, students will have learnt to:

1. Describe the basic features of some major moral theories.
2. Identify the rationale or assumptions behind some everyday ethical issues.
3. Identify the rationale or assumptions behind some everyday ethical issues.
4. Clearly articulate analyses and arguments of their own.
5. Conduct debate in a rational and reflective manner.
6. Be more tolerant of opinions different from their own.

Topics

1. Relativism vs. objectivism
2. Egoism vs. altruism
3. Utilitarianism
4. Deontology
5. Animal rights
6. Abortion
7. Euthanasia
8. Environment
9. Civil disobedience
10. Legal punishment
11. Distributive justice
12. Discrimination

Assessment scheme

Task nature	Description	Weight
Debate	<ul style="list-style-type: none">In-class debate and discussion	30%
Midterm exam	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Midterm exam on the content of the first four classes	30%
Term Paper	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Essay questions will be announced four weeks in advance1,500 words in English or 3,000 words in Chinese	40%

Classroom policy

- Attendance is *mandatory* in my course.
- Everyone has the obligation to *actively participate* in the class. Class participation includes paying close attention, raising relevant questions, discussing philosophical issues, and making responses.
- Behavior that interferes with classroom activities is *strictly forbidden*. Such behavior includes: (a) constant late arrivals; (b) chatting with others (or more rarely, with yourself); and (c) doing things unrelated to the course, such as playing with your electronic devices.

Required resources

[Textbook] James Rachels, *The Elements of Moral Philosophy*, 4th Edition, McGraw-Hill Press, 2003

[Textbook] Peter Singer, *Practical Ethics*, 3rd Edition, Cambridge University Press, 2011

Other selected readings

Recommended resources

Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (<http://plato.stanford.edu/>)

Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy (<http://www.iep.utm.edu/>)

Course schedule

Week	Topics	Lecture	Debate	Required reading
1	Relativism vs. Objectivism	3 hours		Chapter 1 & 2, <i>The Elements of Moral Philosophy</i>
2	Egoism vs. altruism	3 hours		Chapter 5 & 6, <i>The Elements of Moral Philosophy</i>
3	Utilitarianism	3 hours		Chapter 7 & 8, <i>The Elements of Moral Philosophy</i>
4	Deontology	3 hours		Chapter 9 & 10, <i>The Elements of Moral Philosophy</i>
5	In-class midterm exam			

6	Do animals have rights?	1.5 hours	1.5 hours	Chapter 3: "Equality for Animals?", <i>Practical Ethics</i>
7	Should abortion be legally permitted?	1.5 hours	1.5 hours	Chapter 6: "Taking Life: The Embryo and Fetus", <i>Practical Ethics</i>
8	Should euthanasia be legally permitted?	1.5 hours	1.5 hours	Chapter 7: "Taking Life: Humans", <i>Practical Ethics</i>
9	Does the environment have intrinsic value?	1.5 hours	1.5 hours	Chapter 10: "The Environment", <i>Practical Ethics</i>
10	Can civil disobedience be justified?	1.5 hours	1.5 hours	Chapter 11: "Civil Disobedience", <i>Practical Ethics</i>
11	Is retributivism about punishment correct?	1.5 hours	1.5 hours	James Rachels, "Punishment and Desert"
12	Is the libertarian theory of justice correct?	1.5 hours	1.5 hours	Michael Sandel, "Libertarianism"
13	Is racial discrimination morally wrong?	1.5 hours	1.5 hours	Kwame Appiah, "Racisms"

Details of course website

Reading materials, assignments, and lecture notes will be put in a Dropbox folder (the link to this folder is posted on Blackboard).

Contact details for teacher(s)

Teacher	
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Academic honesty and plagiarism

Attention is drawn to University policy and regulations on honesty in academic work, and to the disciplinary guidelines and procedures applicable to breaches of such policy and regulations. Details may be found at <http://www.cuhk.edu.hk/policy/academichonesty/>

With each assignment, students will be required to submit a signed **declaration** that they are aware of these policies, regulations, guidelines and procedures. For group projects, all students of the same group should be asked to sign the declaration.

For assignments in the form of a computer-generated document that is principally text-based and submitted via VeriGuide, the statement, in the form of a receipt, will be issued by the system upon students' uploading of the soft copy of the assignment. Assignments without the receipt will not be graded by teachers. Only the final version of the assignment should be submitted via VeriGuide.