Spring 2016 Introduction to Ethics  
(PHIL 223:002)

Professor: Ben Dixon  
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)

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**

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**

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.
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**

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.

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:
- using or attempting to use unauthorized materials on any class assignment or exam;
- falsifying or inventing of any information, including citations, on an assignment;
- and/or;
- 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 one’s own. Examples of plagiarism include, but are not limited to:
- submitting an assignment as one's own work when it is at least partly the work of another person;
- submitting a work that has been purchased or otherwise obtained from the Internet or another source; and/or,
- incorporating the words or ideas of an author into one's paper or presentation without giving the author credit.

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.

Student Appeals

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

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/.

XII. 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.

XIII. Tentative Course Calendar

Week 1: Jan. 19-22
   A. “What is Morality?” (Elements, pp. 1-13)

Week 2: Jan. 25-29
   A. “What is Morality?” (Elements, pp. 1-13)

Week 3: Feb. 1-5
   A. “The Challenge of Cultural Relativism” (Elements, pp. 14-31)
Week 4: Feb. 8-12  
A. “Subjectivism in Ethics,” (Elements, pp. 32-48)

Week 5: Feb. 15-19  **(First Exam is on Friday, Feb. 19th)**  
A. Leiser, “Is Homosexuality Unnatural?” (Reserve Material)  
B. Sullivan, “A Few Words About Gay Marriage (Right Thing, Reading #28)

Week 6: Feb. 22-26  
A. “Does Morality Depend on Religion?” (Elements, pp. 49-63)

Week 7: Feb. 29-Mar. 4  
A. Marquis, “Why Abortion is Immoral” (Right Thing, Reading #11)  
B. Thomson, “A Defense of Abortion” (Right Thing, Reading #12)

Week 8: Mar. 7-11  
A. “Ethical Egoism” (Elements, pp. 64-81)

Week 9: Mar. 14-18 **No classes—Spring Break**

Week 10: Mar. 21-23  **(Mid-term Exam is on Wednesday, Mar. 23rd & No classes March 24-28).**  

Week 11: Mar. 29-Apr. 1  
A. “Are There Absolute Moral Rules?” (Elements, pp. 125-135)  
B. “Kant and Respect for Persons” (Elements, pp. 136-145)

Week 12: Apr. 4-8  
A. Singer, “All Animals are Equal” (Right Thing, Reading #14)  
B. Machan, “Do Animals Have Rights?” (Right Thing, Reading #16)

Week 13: Apr. 11-15  
A. “The Debate Over Utilitarianism” (Elements, pp. 110-124)

Week 14: Apr. 18-22  
A. Nozick, “The Experience Machine” (Right Thing, Reading #5)  
B. Nietzsche, “Master Morality and Slave Morality” (Right Thing, Reading #9)

Week 15: Apr. 25-29  
Open

Week 16: May 2-6  
Open

**Our University Scheduled Final Exam is Wednesday, May 11 from 1:00-3:00PM**