

Incorporating sustainability into PHIL 210 – Ethics

PHIL 210 is required of every undergraduate student at the University of Scranton. The course is "*an examination of moral issues through close readings of important historical texts... Themes include happiness, virtue, justice, free choice, conscience, natural law and obligation, God and morality.*" I used the concept of sustainability as one of three contemporary issues to illuminate several of the ethical theories we discussed.

Sustainability was used to apply and to critique theory. Students were required to consider how each theory applies to issues of sustainability, and how sustainability might constitute an objection to theory in the class discussions, assignments, and essays.

University of Scranton

Spring 2009

ETHICS

Phil 210

Professor: Dr. Daniel Haggerty

Office: 571 St. Thomas Hall

Phone: x 7485

Email: haggertyd2@scranton.edu

Hours: MWF 2-3:00

Required Texts

The Elements of Moral Philosophy 5th Edition, by James Rachels. McGraw-Hill, 2007.

The Right Thing to Do 4th Edition, by James Rachels. McGraw-Hill, 2007.

Photocopied chapter on the ethics of natural law from C. E. Harris, Jr.'s *Applying Moral Theories* (Wadsworth, 2002), and other photocopied articles will be assigned and distributed.

Course Description and Objectives

This course is a general introduction to philosophical ethics surveying contending ideas, theories and arguments concerning the nature of right and wrong, duty, obligation, freedom, virtue, happiness, and the good. We will discuss theories that are important both to the tradition of Western philosophy and to current thinking about ethics. We will also consider contemporary issues, arguments, debates and case studies to help illustrate various theoretical points, and improve critical reasoning and ethical decision-making.

Although many people recognize that ethics is enormously important, they nevertheless find it difficult to think clearly about ethical issues. Our first priority is making sure we understand precisely the theories and arguments presented in the readings. This will help us get clearer about different ways of thinking about ethics, and the reasons in support of such thinking. Our second priority is to think critically about the ideas, theories, and arguments we encounter, and make them relevant to our own lives. This will help us get clearer about where we stand concerning ethics, and certain ethical issues.

Course Methodology

The course will involve both lecture and discussion. I encourage an interactive approach to the material and invite you to raise questions and counter-considerations. In this course, all of us are free to say what we think and to have our thoughts taken seriously and with respect by the group. Students will not be evaluated on the positions they take on issues, but on how well they support their positions with reasons and other relevant considerations.

Course Requirements

1. Reading Quizzes (20%): I will regularly quiz on assigned readings before we discuss them in class. The purpose of this is to encourage careful reading of the texts before class

discussion, so as to enrich the quality of such discussion. Quiz grades will be averaged and worth 20% of the final grade. There will be no “make up” quizzes. Students who miss class or arrive late when a quiz has been issued will receive a zero on the quiz. Your two lowest quiz scores (including zeros for absence, etc.) will be dropped.

2. Three Tests (60%): Tests will cover assigned readings, lectures, *and class discussions*. While most of the material on the exam will be objective, you should also prepare to present some of your *own thoughts*. Each of the three tests is worth 20% of the final grade. No “make up” tests are given, except with prior permission or in case of serious documented illness.
3. Final Exam (20%): A comprehensive final exam will be issued during finals week.

4. Grade Scale:

95-100	A
90-94	A-
87-89	B+
84-86	B
80-83	B-
77-79	C+
74-76	C
70-73	C-
67-69	D+
60-66	D
Below 60	F

Tentative Schedule of Topics with Readings

1. Introduction

- a. *What is Ethics?* Ch. 1 of C.E. Harris, Jr.'s, *Applying Moral Theories* photocopied and distributed in class
- b. Rachels, *The Elements of Moral Philosophy* (hereafter EMP), Ch. 1

2. Ethical Relativism

- a. William Graham Sumner, "Cultural Relativism" photocopied and distributed in class
- b. EMP, Ch. 2, "The Challenge of Cultural Relativism"
- c. *Terrorism and the Doctrine of Preemption*, speech by George Will, photocopy distributed in class
- d. *Remarks to the U.N. 4th World Conference on Women Plenary Session*, speech by Hillary Rodham Clinton, distributed in class.

FIRST TEST

3. Ethics, Morality and Religion: The Divine Command Theory of Ethics

- a. Genesis 22:1-10 (Abraham and Isaac)
- b. Plato's *Euthyphro*, photocopied and distributed in class
- c. Rachels, EMP Ch. 4, SS 4.1 and 4.2, pp. 52-58.

4. Natural Law Theory

- a. Rachels, EMP Ch. 4, SS 4.3 – 4.4, pp. 58-67
- b. *The Ethics of Natural Law*, Ch. 6 of C.E. Harris, Jr., *Applying Moral Theories* photocopied and distributed in class
- c. Thomas Hill, Jr., *Preserving the Environment* RTD 204-220

SECOND TEST

5. Ethical Egoism

- a. Mylan Engel, Jr. "9/11 and Starvation" in *The Right Thing to Do* (hereafter RTD) 135-137.
- b. EMP Ch. 5, "Ethical Egoism"

- c. Douglas Husak, *The Immorality of SUVs and Trucks* RTD, 190-203

6. Utilitarianism

- a. John Stuart Mill, "Utilitarianism" RTD, 70-80
- b. EMP Ch. 6, "The Utilitarian Approach"
- c. EMP Ch. 7, "The Debate over Utilitarianism"
- d. Peter Singer, *The Singer Solution to World Poverty*

7. Kant's Categorical Imperative

- a. Immanuel Kant, "The Categorical Imperative" RTD, 81-88
- b. EMP Ch. 8, "Are There Absolute Moral Rules?"
- c. EMP Ch. 9, "Kant and Respect for Persons"
- d. W. F. Baxter, *People or Penguins: The Case for Optimal Pollution*
- e. *For Free Market Environmentalism* (J. Naverson)

THIRD TEST

8. Feminism and the Ethics of Care

- a. EMP Ch. 11, "Feminism and the Ethics of Care"
- b. Christina Hoff Sommers, "The Feminist Revelation" RTD, 265-78

9. The Ethics of Virtue

- a. Aristotle, "The Virtues" RTD, 43-49
- b. EMP Ch. 12, "The Ethics of Virtue"
- c. A. Leopold, *The Land Ethics*

FINAL EXAM

