Contemporary Ethics Course Descriptor

Course Title	Contemporary Ethics	Faculty	Philosophy
Course Code	NCHPH724	Course Leader	
Credit Points	20	Teaching Period	Any
FHEQ Level	Level 7	Date Approved	June 2020
Compulsory/ Optional	Optional		
Pre-requisites	None		
Co-requisites	None		

COURSE SUMMARY

This course investigates advanced topics in ethics, with a focus on 'second-order' questions about the nature and significance of our ethical practices: What do our ethical expressions mean? What, if anything, makes these expressions true? How do moral values motivate? Is it irrational to be amoral? What are the similarities and differences between the domains of ethics and of science? Key texts from the twentieth- and twenty-first centuries are explored and set in context with ethical thinkers of the more distant past. Relationships between 'second-order' and 'first-order' ethical questions are considered.

COURSE AIMS

The aim of this course is to:

- Develop students' skills in the interpretation, analysis, and evaluation of classic recent texts in advanced ethics, particularly meta-ethics.

- Promote students' ability to categorize, elaborate, and compare, the chief philosophical approaches to questions about the nature and significance of our ethical practices.

- Enable students to form and defend their own estimates of the merits of alternative positions in contemporary debates in ethics and meta-ethics.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

On successful completion of the course, students will be able to:

KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING

K1d   Demonstrate wide-ranging knowledge of, and recognition of systematic connections between key questions and debates in contemporary ethics, particularly in relation to the nature and significance of our ethical practices.

K2d   Engage synoptically and constructively with the texts and theories from a range of ethical theorists.

SUBJECT-SPECIFIC SKILLS

S1d   Employ advanced philosophical devices to support, challenge, or adapt, key positions in the recent ethics literature.

TRANSFERABLE AND PROFESSIONAL SKILLS

T1d   Show self-direction in working independently, creatively, and to deadlines.

T2d   Organize and synthesize information, question assumptions, and engage with competing arguments.

T3d   Construct and deliver clear, sophisticated, and persuasive written treatment on complex topics.

T3d   Consistently apply an excellent level of technical proficiency in written English, using an advanced application of scholarly terminology, that demonstrates the ability to deal with complex issues both systematically and with sophistication.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching and learning strategies for this course will include:

- 30 hours of lectures
- Two one-hour one-to-one tutorials

Course information and supplementary materials are available on the College's Virtual Learning Environment (VLE).

Students are required to attend and participate in all timetabled sessions for this course). Students are also expected to manage their directed learning and independent study in support of the course.

EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS

The study of philosophy cultivates skills that are employable across a range of sectors. These include the abilities to:

- Work independently, creatively, and to deadlines.
- Conduct research and explore relevant existing knowledge.
- Analyse, contextualise, and interpret complex ideas and materials.
- Synthesise and evaluate information against a backdrop of uncertainty.

- Solve problems through logical reasoning.
- Present findings and opinions in a clear, structured manner, whether orally or in writing.
- Engage in collaborative and constructive discussion.

ASSESSMENT

FORMATIVE

Students will be formatively assessed during the course by means of set assignments. These do not count towards the end of year results, but will provide students with developmental feedback, both written and oral.

SUMMATIVE

Assessment will be in one form:

AE:	Assessment Activity	Weighting (%)	Online submission	Duration	Length
1	Written assignment	100%	Yes	N/A	5000 words

The written assignment will be assessed in accordance with the assessment aims set out in the Programme Specification.

FEEDBACK

Students will receive feedback in a variety of ways, written and oral, within one-to-one tutorials, in discussion phases of lectures, and on formatively and summatively assessed assignments. Students will also attend the formal meeting, Collections, in which they will receive constructive and developmental feedback on their performance.

Feedback is provided on summative assessment and is made available to the student either via email, the VLE or another appropriate method.

INDICATIVE READING

Note: Comprehensive and current reading lists for courses are produced annually in the Course Syllabus or other documentation provided to students; the indicative reading list provided below is used as part of the approval/modification process only.

BOOKS

Brink, D. (1989), *Moral Realism and the Foundations of Ethics,* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Copp, D. (ed.) (2006), *The Oxford Handbook of Ethical Theory,* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Cullity, G. and Gaut, B. (eds) (1997), *Ethics & Practical Reason,* Oxford: Clarendon.

Darwall, S., Gibbard, A. and Railton, P. (eds) (1997), *Moral Discourse and Practice: Some Philosophical Approaches,* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Dreier, J. (ed.) (2006), *Contemporary Debates in Moral Theory*, Oxford: Blackwell.

Enoch, D. (2011), *Taking Morality Seriously: A Robust Defence of Moral Realism,* Oxford: University Press.

Harman, G. (1977), *The Nature of Morality: An Introduction to Ethics,* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Hursthouse, R., Lawrence G., and Quinn, W. (eds) (1998), *Virtues and Reasons: Philippa Foot and Moral Theory,* Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Mackie, J.L. (1990), *Ethics: Inventing Right and Wrong,* London: Penguin.

McNaughton, D. (2007), *Moral Vision: An Introduction to Ethics,* Oxford: Blackwell.

Miller, A. (2003), *An Introduction to Contemporary Metaethics*, Oxford: Polity Press.

Millgram, E. (ed.), (2001) *Varieties of Practical Reasoning,* Cambridge, MA: Bradford Books.

Parfit, D. (2011) *On What Matters* (2 Volumes), Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Sayre-McCord, G. (ed.) (1988), *Essays on Moral Realism,* Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

Smith, M. (1994), *The Moral Problem*, Oxford: Wiley Blackwell.

Williams, B. (2006), *Ethics and the Limits of Philosophy,* Abingdon: Routledge.

JOURNALS

See Course Syllabus.

ELECTRONIC RESOURCES

Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy

INDICATIVE TOPICS

- The Amoralist's Challenge

- Reasons, Desires, and Motivation

- Enlightened Self-Interest

- Freedom and Reason

- Realisms, Irrealisms, and Error Theory

- Comparisons Between Ethics and Other Domains

Title: NCHPH724 Contemporary Ethics Course Descriptor

Approved by: Academic Board

Location: Academic Handbook/Programme specifications and Handbooks/ Postgraduate Programme Specifications/MA Philosophy Programme Specification/Philosophy Course Descriptors

Version number	Date approved	Date published	Owner	Proposed next review date	Modification (As per AQF4) & category number
2.0	January 2022	April 2022	Brian Ball	April 2025	Category 3: Changes to Course Learning Outcomes
1.0	June 2020	June 2020	Brian Ball	April 2025	