Summer 2013
UNIVERSITY OF WEST FLORIDA
Online course

PHI 2603 ETHICS in Contemporary Society

Photo: Chunking Express, a film by Wong Kar-Wai
After viewing this wonderful example of cinema, you should see the companion film: Fallen Angels!

Like the girl in the photo… would you like to reflect upon ethical issues in our contemporary world?

If so, READ ON!
Yes, that's me, in my office... I'm the guy next to Gollum
My Interests include teaching courses in The Philosophy of Art, and the Philosophy of Film. Topics of special interest include: the Philosophy of Fantasy, Myth, Horror, and Science Fiction. In the world of cinema, I am drawn to the films of Ingmar Bergman, Akira Kurosawa, Stanley Kubrick and Orson Welles. Oh yes! I love to talk about all things related to Middle Earth and J.R.R. Tolkien!!!

Read ON! The Syllabus is below...

3-D glasses are not required
Instructor: Garrett N. Howard  
Office Bldg. 50, Room 231-A  
Office Hours: MW: TBA  
Email: gnhoward@uwf.edu  phone: 474-2066

**Text book:** THERE IS NO TEXT BOOK FOR THIS COURSE!!!! All required readings will be made available in the form of Adobe Acrobat documents on the course’s web page!!!  
**YAY!!! You have easily saved 100 bucks in text book costs!**

**Course Description:** Ethics in Contemporary Society is an introduction to Ethics in the Western philosophic tradition.

**Course Goals and Objectives:** (1) To provide a historical overview of classical and modern approaches to ethical theory, (2) To provide students with the opportunity to: examine, and evaluate basic ethical concepts, (3) Explore the philosophic theories and questions that are relevant to the discussion of contemporary social issues.

**Course Format:** This course is entirely via the internet. From the course home page you will access all links for: assignments, chat sessions, discussion boards; and links to additional course material content and resources. The instructional modules, discussion boards and Essay Exams are designed to allow students to devise a schedule and a pace of study that will fit their personal schedule.

**Discussion boards:** This feature allows students to interact and share thoughts, questions and ideas in regard to the assigned reading material.

**Essay Exams:** There are two essay exams, a midterm and a Final. The exams will be comprised of topics and questions taken directly from the assigned readings, lecture material and discussion boards. The minimum length requirement for each exam is 4 typed pages. The pace of work with regard to the essay assignments will be determined by the student. This course is designed to allow students the freedom and flexibility which will allow them to devise a pace of study that will fit their personal schedule.

**Student learning outcomes:**

1. Clearly identify and define the central theories, concepts and questions encountered in the field of Philosophy.
2. Compare, contrast, and critically evaluate concepts and arguments,
3. demonstrate the ability to derive cogent insights and conclusions,
4. Display an understanding of the material’s relevance in discussions on life, truth and existence.
Possible Topics for the discussion boards may include:

Plato, the Euthyphro.
Plato, The Republic.
Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics.
Thomas Hobbes, Leviathan.
Utilitarianism. John Stuart Mill
Deontological Ethics. Immanuel Kant, Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals.
Albert Camus, The Myth of Sisyphus
John Paul Sartre, Existentialism is a Humanism.
Thomas Nagel, Death
Richard Taylor, The Meaning of Life
Becoming a Moral Agent or six basic steps on how to avoid the life of a meat puppet.
Libertarianism—Are humans rationally self interested pleasure maximizers?
Existential Angst and Alienation and our quest for a life of meaning.
Environmental Ethics
Animal rights
Virtue Ethics and the pursuit of Happiness
Utilitarianism and the cost of pleasure.
Deontology and our Rights, duties and responsibilities in the contemporary world.
Faith versus Reason—The false dichotomy.
The ethical Ideals of diversity, autonomy and respect for human dignity…
Grades and Grading criteria

**Grades:** The grade in this course is based upon discussion board participation, and the essay exams.

**Discussion Boards:**
- Discussion Board 1: 200 points
- Discussion Board 2: 200 points
- Discussion Board 3: 200 points
- Discussion Board 4: 200 points
- Discussion Board 5: 200 points

**Essay Exams:**
- Essay Exam I: (3 page minimum length) 500 points
- Essay Exam II: (3 page minimum length) 500 points

**Course POINT TOTAL**

2000 points

Extra credit work- as a policy I do not allow for extra credit work.
Grade Scale:

- A 95-100
- A- 90-94
- B+ 88-89
- B 80-87
- B- 78-79
- C+ 76-77
- C 70-75
- C- 68-69
- D+ 66-67
- D 60-65
- F 00-59

Discussion Board Participation: (1,000 points)

Grading criteria—Students will be graded on their ability to:

A. Think and speak critically and reflectively utilizing material covered in the assigned readings and lecture material.

B. Use language in a clear, concise and logical manner.

C. Demonstrate Courtesy and attentiveness to the needs of your classmates.

D. Ground Rules for Discussion boards:

This course is designed as an online discussion course. There is a significant amount of material your instructor will want to get across each week by way of power point lectures and the assigned readings. The power point lectures, and assigned readings are designed to generate class discussions on the discussion boards. All questions and comments on the discussion boards are highly valued. However, I do have a couple of ground rules for the discussion boards. I ask that you please:

1. Be direct, concise, and stick to the issues at hand. I realize that, for all of us, it sometimes takes a bit of stumbling around to get across difficult ideas that have not quite “gelled”. However, please avoid rambling discursions on irrelevancies.

2. Be respectful in your comments. The topics discussed in this class can sometimes be controversial. It is incumbent upon each of us to treat those with whom we may disagree with courtesy and respect.

It is my great hope that there will be plenty of lively critical discussion in this class. These ground rules are not put in place to dampen your enthusiasm for such conversation, but to provide a structure within which such discussion can be most productive and valuable for all members of the class.

Your activity on the discussion boards is what determines your participation grade. There will be on-going discussion associated with every subject area. You are expected to read the appropriate material in the text, and answer each question on the discussion board associated with that material. The minimum expectations for any subject area are: (1) answer each question posed, (2) read the responses of other students, (3) post a response to at least one other student, engage in rational discourse. (4) create a discussion thread. The discussion boards are a tool for enhancing the knowledge of all by inviting every student to share their insights. Students should feel free to ask questions about concepts you may not understand. All postings should be respectful in tone and rational in content.
Essay Exams:
Grading Criteria for the essay Exams

Form:
(1) Unity of thought and Coherence of Expression.
(2) Sentence and paragraph variety, grammar and spelling.

Content:
(1) “Reporting” is a concise demonstration of your acquaintance with the material. (Minimum requirement for a “C”).
(2) “Analysis” is the ability to compare, contrast, or critically evaluate the material. (Minimum requirement for a “B”).
(3) “Synthesis” is a demonstration of your ability to adequately develop your thesis (or main idea), and to reach a sound conclusion. (Minimum requirement for an “A”).

EMAIL: I check my e-mail daily, Monday thru Friday, and will respond within 48 hours.

The Disability Resource Center
Students with a documented disability who require specific examination or course related academic accommodations should contact the Student Disability Resource Center (SDRC) by email at sdrc@uwf.edu or by phone at (850) 474-2387.

Late Exams.
Late exams will only be allowed in cases of legitimate need, and authentication of excuse will be required (e.g., doctor's note.) Arrangements should be made in advance except in cases of emergency, and as soon as possible in the case of emergency. You will find that I am much more understanding of your problems if you attempt to make arrangements with me in advance, rather than waiting until after the fact.

Plagiarism.
Plagiarism is an extremely serious issue to me. It strikes at the very heart of the intellectual enterprise in which we are mutually engaged, and undermines all of our collective efforts. As a result, I take all suspected cases of plagiarism seriously, and will punish them to the extent that the University of West Florida policies allow, which include failure for the assignment, failure for the course, and recommendation of further action by university administration. Briefly, plagiarism is the failure to accurately and openly provide citations for the ideas and words used in your written assignments. This includes lifting quotations without credit from books, magazines, and newspapers or other printed material as well as “borrowing” from the Internet. It also includes presenting ideas as your own when they have in fact been derived from another source. The University’s plagiarism policy can be found in the Student Handbook under “Expectations for Academic Conduct” (available online at http://www.uwf.edu/uwfmain/stuHandbk/).