

Miyazaki International College

Course Syllabus

Spring 2018

Course Title (Credits)	Phi 303-1: Ethical Theory (3 credits)
Course Designation for TC	N/A
Instructor	Dr. Christopher Johnson
E-mail address	cjohnson@sky.miyazaki-mic.ac.jp
Office/Ext	1-332 / Ext. 3766
Office hours	Tuesday, Thursday 14.30-16.00
Course Description	
Introduces the central problems of philosophical ethics, including the nature of value, the justification of moral principles, and the psychology of moral choice.	
Course Goals/Objectives	
<u>Course Content</u> The study of ethics broadly divides into two central questions: questions of the good, and questions of the right. Questions of the good investigate well-being, or what makes for a good life for the individual living that life. Questions of the right investigate what moral obligations we have to other people and ourselves. This course is an introductory study of both questions. Students will be introduced to central theories of well-being including hedonism, desire-satisfaction theory and perfectionism. Students will also be introduced to two central theories of the right, namely utilitarianism and deontology, and will study how these theories connect to well-being and provide frameworks for understanding moral and political issues.	
<u>Content Objectives</u> Upon completion of this course, successful students will have an understanding of some of the central theories of philosophical ethics. Students should be familiar with and be able to discuss: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The main conceptions of human well-being;• Some central theories of moral action and obligation;• The connection between theories of the good and theories of the right;• The application of these theories to personal, social, and political questions.	
<u>Critical Thinking Objectives</u> Upon completion of this course, successful students will have developed their critical thinking abilities. They will have improved their ability to: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Read texts analytically and understand different lines of argument;• Analyze and assess the consistency and plausibility of ideas;• Compare, contrast and evaluate diverse philosophical positions;• Assess existing social and political practices and institutions;• Reflect upon and critique personal choices and individual obligations.	
Diploma Policy Standards Satisfied by Course Objectives	
1. Advanced thinking skills (comparison, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation) based on critical thinking (critical and analytic thought) 3. The ability to identify and solve problems	

Teaching Methodology	
Course objectives will be achieved through a variety of active learning teaching strategies, including but not limited to:	
<u>Active Learning Teaching Strategy</u>	<u>Course Schedule</u>
1. Interactive Lectures	<i>Most classes</i>
2. Facilitated group and class discussions	<i>Most classes</i>
3. Close reading	<i>Expected for each reading</i>
4. Case Studies	<i>Most classes</i>
5. Essays and Research Papers	<i>For each unit of study and the final exam</i>
Textbook & Readings	
Readings will be provided online.	
Required Materials	
Students must self-enroll to the course Moodle page. Students should check the Moodle page regularly for required course materials and assignments.	
Class Preparation and Review	
For every hour of class time, students are expected to spend a minimum of two hours in preparation and review. There will be a new reading each class meeting. Students must complete the reading and be prepared to discuss its contents at the class meeting. In order not to lose sight of the whole picture of the course, students are encouraged to review previous readings and notes in order to make stronger connections to the new readings.	
Grades and Grading	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reflection Papers: 50% • Review Quizzes: 20% • Engagement: 10% • Final Exam: 20% 	
<p><u>Reflection Papers:</u> Reflection papers will be assigned throughout the term. The best four will count towards the final grade. The papers are designed to provide regular feedback on students' understanding of class material and to help them develop their writing skills and argumentation. Questions and assignment details will be provided in class.</p> <p><u>Review Quizzes:</u> Quizzes will be held regularly at the beginning of classes to review course material, help students reflect on their understanding of course content and encourage students to keep pace with the course schedule.</p> <p><u>Engagement:</u> The engagement grade is based upon a number of factors. It includes but is not limited to: participation in class discussions; improvement of papers through drafts or through speaking with the instructor (i.e., taking revision seriously); incorporating ideas from readings into written work and class discussions; discussion of course content and related ideas during office hours; and general preparation for class.</p> <p><u>Final Exam:</u> The final exam will be held during the exam period and will cover all material studied in the class. Details of the format of the final exam will be provided in class.</p>	
Methods of Student Feedback	
In principle, graded work will be returned within two weeks of submission with feedback as appropriate (including grades for all assignments, and comments on all written work except the final exam).	

Course Schedule (subject to change with notice)		
Day	Topic	Content
1 April 10	Course Overview	Discussion of the syllabus
2 April 12		Explanation of the goals and structure of the class.
3 April 17	The Concept of Well-Being	Intrinsic & Instrumental Value
4 April 19		Introduction to Well-Being
5 April 24	Hedonism	Introduction to Hedonism
6 April 26		Critique of Hedonism 1: Base & Malicious Pleasures
7 May 2		Critique of Hedonism 2: The Experience Machine
9 May 10	Desire Theory	Introduction to Desire Theory
10 May 15		Critique of Desire Theory 1: Relevant, Self-Destructive & Mistaken Desires
11 May 17		Critique of Desire Theory 2: Adaptive Preferences
12 May 22		Developing Desire Theory: Informed Desires
13 May 24		Critique of Desire Theory 3: Informed Desires
14 May 29	Perfectionism	Introduction to Perfectionism
15 May 31		Developing Perfectionism
16 June 5		Critique of Perfectionism
17 June 7	Overflow Day	Day reserved for delays in covering course material
18 June 12	Review Day	Review of theories of the good
19 June 14	The Concept of Right	Contrasting theories of the good with theories of the right
20 June 19	Utilitarianism	Introduction to Utilitarianism
21 June 21		Developing Utilitarianism
22 June 26		Critique of Utilitarianism
23 June 28		Critique of Utilitarianism
24 July 3		Applying Utilitarianism: Case Study
25 July 5	Deontology	Introduction to Deontology

26 July 10		Developing Deontology
27 July 12		Critique of Deontology
28 July 17		Critique of Deontology
29 July 19		Applying Deontology: Case Study
30 July 24	Overflow Day	Day reserved for delays in covering course material
Week 16	Finals	

Course Policies (Attendance, Missed Tests, Late Penalties, Plagiarism, Course Etiquette)

Attendance: Regular class attendance and participation are essential to success in this class. Students are expected to come to each class session on time and prepared to engage in discussion and activities on the course topics. Please note that you will be tested on material discussed in class as well as on material from course readings. If you miss a class you will be expected to get notes from another student. I am willing to discuss borrowed notes to help you understand them, but I am not prepared to give a second lecture to those who do not attend class.

Students with 5 unexcused absences will be recommended to withdraw from the course. For excused absences due to illness, injury, bereavement, etc. students must submit an Excused Absence Form to Student Affairs in order to have their absences cleared as an excused absence.

Missed Tests: Except for unusual circumstances, a student will not be permitted to write a test or exam at a different time than that scheduled. If a student misses a term test or exam, you must notify me of the reason as soon as possible so that I can make a judgement as to whether a make-up is warranted.

Late Penalties: Papers will be considered late if they are submitted after the end of class on their due dates unless specific arrangements have been made with me beforehand. Late work will be penalized by 5% per day. Weekends count as two days. No paper will be accepted after the start of the final exam. Papers submitted late may receive fewer comments as feedback.

Plagiarism: Any student work that is found to be plagiarized will not be accepted. Consult the student bulletin for more information regarding Academic Honest at MIC. Students who are unsure as to what constitutes plagiarism should consult with me prior to submission deadlines.

Digital Devices: Electronic devices are to be turned off during lectures, apart from those used for the purposes of taking notes or accessing class materials. Audio or video recording of lectures and discussions is allowed only with prior consent. Any recorded material permitted is to be used solely for personal study, and is not to be used or distributed for any other purpose without prior written consent from the instructor.

Course Etiquette: Students are expected to be respectful of each other in class. In philosophical discussion, people respect one another by asking whether their positions and judgements are justified, or whether they should change their ideas because better ideas are available. This means that to respect one another in this class, you are expected not only to listen to each other's ideas, but also to challenge and critique them. The goal should be to determine which positions and judgements are supported by the best available arguments and evidence.

If students are late or have to leave early they should be as quiet as possible in entering or exiting the room. If you arrive late, you should speak with me afterwards to explain the disruption. If you have to leave early, please tell me before class begins.

Disclaimer

The information in this Syllabus is subject to change. Any changes will be announced in class.

Philosophy Rubric		Advanced 	Proficient 	Developing 	Emerging 	No Attempt 
Critical Thinking	Ability to Identify & Solve Problems	Gives insightful comments in class discussions. Shows ability to analyze data, gather and assess resources, and express opinions in a cogent manner.	Able to contribute to class discussions, perform basic content analysis, gather and assess resources, and express opinions in an adequate manner.	Beginning to visualize content in a holistic manner but struggles with complex concepts and relationships.	Shows motivation but lacks the skills needed to think critically, such as information gathering, assessment, and synthesis.	Underwhelming or completely lacking student performance
	Information Gathering					
	Assessment of Credibility					
Global Perspectives	Awareness of Philosophical Concepts	Engages in the study of philosophical issues, shows comparative understanding of philosophical ideas, and can apply course material to contemporary issues.	Shows awareness of philosophical concepts and environmental issues, but is unable to undertake macro-level analysis.	Exhibits interest in philosophical concepts and issues, but has difficulty understanding central ideas and relevance to broader social concerns.	Lacks basic understanding of philosophical concepts and issues. Engages with materials from limited perspectives.	
	Comparative Analysis					
English Language Ability	Reading	Exhibits an impressive degree of fluency in speaking and writing. Grammar and reading ability do not impede communication. Is able to use context clues when faced with unfamiliar vocabulary.	Exhibits a sufficient degree of fluency in speaking and writing to convey message. Relies mainly on familiar vocabulary and is not able to use context clues when faced with unfamiliar vocabulary.	Exhibits a satisfactory degree of fluency in speaking and writing but occasionally struggles to convey message. Frequently references dictionary or other sources of help.	Lacks comprehension and/or confidence in English language usage. Has limited vocabulary knowledge, struggles with grammar and pronunciation, unable to formulate questions.	
	Writing					
	Oral Communication					
Advanced Communication Proficiency	Public Speaking	Speaks clearly, engages dynamically in discussions and presentations, uses a broad range of vocabulary and relevant jargon. Uses appropriate social cues and nuance. Clearly expresses opinions that are well supported.	Engages in relevant discussions and presentations. Is able to express opinions, but pronunciation and grammar can obscure intended meaning.	Is able to answer simple questions and convey basic information, but pronunciation, intonation, and stress can make responses difficult to understand or interpret.	Is unsuccessful or struggles to explain and express ideas. Does not offer adequate support for opinions and speech is limited to single sentence or simple utterances.	
	Social Skills					

Marking Rubric: Dr. Christopher Johnson

(As adapted from Elizabeth Anderson)

A	Excellent	90-100	4
B	Above Average	80-89	3
C	Average	70-79	2
D	Below Average	60-69	1
F	Fail	0-59	0

As per the 2015 Bulletin and Handbook of Student Information,
Miyazaki International College, School of International Liberal Arts (Section I, p. 58)

C: Average (70-79 – 2 Quality Points)

The baseline grade of competent but not exceptional work. The grade of ‘C’ functions as a baseline grade, signifying competent but not exceptional work. Papers are graded up or down relative to these baseline ‘C’ criteria:

- the paper addresses all parts of the paper topic
- offers consistent, coherent arguments for a clearly articulated position that makes sense
- considers significant objections to that position
- replies to those objections
- makes relevant use of course readings and lectures, displaying a grasp of, without merely repeating, their content
- is generally well-written and well-organized, with few or no grammatical, punctuation and spelling errors
- does not contain significant misunderstandings

B: Above Average (80-89 – 3 Quality Points)

The beginnings of distinction. A ‘B’ paper meets all of the standards for a ‘C’, but in addition:

- offers the germs of an original, striking, or powerful idea, argument, or illustration/application - something beyond the ordinary or what one would expect an undergraduate to come up with on a first pass at the topic. An unusually apt analogy that illuminates a previously obscure aspect of a problem; a clever counterexample to a seemingly persuasive claim; a sharp distinction that does real philosophical work; a subtle point drawn from a close reading of a text; a compelling illustration or application of a principle - all of these can count as an idea that rises the paper above the ordinary
- alternatively, the paper might just work out ordinary ideas to a greater depth (more iterations of significant objections and replies, which help deepen the idea) than usual, or develop relevant arguments that demonstrate genuine mastery of the course readings

A: Excellent (90-100 – 4 Quality Points)

Outstanding work. An 'A' paper meets all of the standards for a 'B', but in addition:

- works out the original, striking, or powerful idea, argument, or illustration/application fully and deeply, with outstanding execution that demonstrates a firm grasp of the underlying concepts, principles, facts, and argumentative strategy
- alternatively, the paper might offer an unusually comprehensive survey of possible moves by both sides, and clearly and systematically evaluate them, coming to a closely reasoned conclusion. The survey must be systematic, not scattershot: it must develop the alternatives logically and to substantial depth, not just assess a random mix of ad hoc considerations. And it must consistently display an understanding of the underlying point of different arguments, what they are really getting at (not just a superficial swipe at them).
- alternatively, for a paper based on a text, the paper might offer an unusually sophisticated, close and systematic reading of a philosopher's texts, paying attention to tensions and contradictions in the author's work, alternative interpretations of passages (offering persuasive arguments for preferring one interpretation to another), and interpretations that bring out philosophically significant points, especially if they offer fresh, unconventional readings

D: Below Average (60-69 – 1 Quality Point)

The paper contains errors, omissions, or misunderstandings, falling short of 'C' standards by, for example (this list is not exhaustive):

- failing to answer one of the parts of the paper topic
- misunderstanding a substantial philosophical point, or confusing different positions
- failing to articulate a consistent position
- offering fallacious arguments, or arguments that don't really address the core issue
- failing to consider objections to one's position
- wasting space on issues that are not pertinent to the paper topic
- offering a confused, sloppy, superficial, or erroneous interpretation of course readings or other cited texts
- containing numerous grammatical, spelling, or punctuation errors
- lacking a clear organization, failing to logically order and signpost important points

F: Fail (0-59 – 0 Quality Points – may not be removed by repeating the course)

This grade is reserved for moral failings, such as:

- Not bothering to make a serious effort
- Plagiarism