

GE2138: INTRODUCTION TO ETHICS AND PUBLIC POLICY

Effective Term

Semester A 2025/26

Part I Course Overview

Course Title

Introduction to Ethics and Public Policy

Subject Code

GE - Gateway Education

Course Number

2138

Academic Unit

Public and International Affairs (PIA)

College/School

College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences (CH)

Course Duration

One Semester

Credit Units

3

Level

B1, B2, B3, B4 - Bachelor's Degree

GE Area (Primary)

Area 1 - Arts and Humanities

Medium of Instruction

English

Medium of Assessment

English

Prerequisites

Nil

Precursors

Nil

Equivalent Courses

POL2400 Introduction to Ethics and Public Policy,
PIA2400 Introduction to Ethics and Public Policy

Exclusive Courses

GE2134 Critical and Creative Thinking

This course is not for normative four-year students majored in Public Policy & Politics (PPP) or Public Affairs & Management (PAFM).

Part II Course Details

Abstract

This course aims (1) to help students critically examine the three major ethical approaches (utilitarianism, deontology, and virtue ethics) and discover their practical relevance in forming and evaluating various public policies, (2) to acquire and develop critical and analytical thinking skills for making normative judgements about major moral controversies in contemporary public policy, especially polices in relation to contemporary high-tech research and application, and (3) to discover the role of responsible citizens as moral agents in the collective reflection and resolution of moral controversies in public policy by critically applying key ethical concepts, such as utility, pleasure, interests, liberty, rights, virtue) and relevant normative theories in their ethical deliberations

Course Intended Learning Outcomes (CILOs)

| CILOs | Weighting (if app.) | DEC-A1 | DEC-A2 | DEC-A3 |
|-------|---|--------|--------|--------|
| 1 | Critically examine the three major ethical approaches (utilitarianism, deontology, and virtue ethics) and discover their practical relevance in forming and evaluating various public policies. | x | x | x |
| 2 | Acquire and develop critical and analytical thinking skills for making normative judgements about major moral controversies in contemporary public policy, especially polices in relation to contemporary high-tech research and application | x | x | x |
| 3 | Discover the role of responsible citizens as moral agents in the collective reflection and resolution of moral controversies in public policy by critically applying key ethical concepts (such as utility, pleasure, interests, liberty, rights, virtue) and relevant normative theories in their ethical deliberations. | x | x | x |
| 4 | Develop and master communicative skills to constructively and critically engage with other students who may hold different cultural or moral viewpoints regarding the ethical issues of public policy formulation, implementation and evaluation. | x | x | x |

A1: Attitude

Develop an attitude of discovery/innovation/creativity, as demonstrated by students possessing a strong sense of curiosity, asking questions actively, challenging assumptions or engaging in inquiry together with teachers.

A2: Ability

Develop the ability/skill needed to discover/innovate/create, as demonstrated by students possessing critical thinking skills to assess ideas, acquiring research skills, synthesizing knowledge across disciplines or applying academic knowledge to real-life problems.

A3: Accomplishments

| | ATs | CILO No. | Weighting (%) | Remarks ("- for nil entry) | Allow Use of GenAI? |
|---|------------------|------------|---------------|----------------------------|---------------------|
| 1 | Presentation | 1, 2, 3, 4 | 30 | - | No |
| 2 | Individual essay | 1, 2, 3, 4 | 50 | - | No |
| 3 | Quiz | 1, 2, 3, 4 | 20 | - | No |

Continuous Assessment (%)

100

Examination (%)

0

Assessment Rubrics (AR)**Assessment Task**

1. Presentation

Criterion

Participation and presentation skills in the discussion. Ability to explain and evaluate key concepts and theories. Ability to present organized ideas and structured arguments to support conclusions.

Excellent (A+, A, A-)

Very active participation and very good presentation skills. Very good explanation and evaluation of key concepts and theories. Outstanding ability to present organized ideas and structured arguments to support conclusions.

Good (B+, B, B-)

Active participation and good presentation skills. Good explanation and evaluation of key concepts and theories. Strong ability to present organized ideas and structured arguments to support conclusions.

Fair (C+, C, C-)

Limited participation and limited presentation skills. Limited explanation and evaluation of key concepts and theories. Some ability to present organized ideas and structured arguments to support conclusions.

Marginal (D)

Very limited participation and very limited presentation skills. Very limited explanation and evaluation of key concepts and theories. Very limited ability to present organized ideas and structured arguments to support conclusions.

Failure (F)

No participation. Little evidence of being able to explain and evaluate key concepts and theories. Weak ability to present organized ideas and structured arguments to support conclusions.

Assessment Task

2. Individual Essay

Criterion

Mastery of the reading. Ability to explain and evaluate key concepts and theories. Ability to present organized ideas and structured arguments to support conclusions.

Excellent (A+, A, A-)

Excellent mastery of the reading. Very good explanation and evaluation of key concepts and theories. Outstanding ability to present organized ideas and structured arguments to support conclusions.

Good (B+, B, B-)

Satisfactory mastery of the reading. Good explanation and evaluation of key concepts and theories. Strong ability to present organized ideas and structured arguments to support conclusions.

Fair (C+, C, C-)

Limited mastery of the reading. Adequate explanation and evaluation of key concepts and theories. Some ability to present organized ideas and structured arguments to support conclusions

Marginal (D)

Very limited mastery of the reading. Very limited explanation and evaluation of key concepts and theories. Very limited ability to present organized ideas and structured arguments to support conclusions.

Failure (F)

Little or no mastery of the reading. Little evidence of being able to explain and evaluate key concepts and theories. Weak ability to present organized ideas and structured arguments to support conclusions.

Assessment Task

3. Quiz

Criterion

Independent critical thinking. Ability to explain and evaluate key concepts and theories. Ability to present organized ideas and structured arguments to support conclusions.

Excellent (A+, A, A-)

Outstanding independent critical thinking. Very good explanation and evaluation of key concepts and theories. Outstanding ability to present organized ideas and structured arguments to support conclusions.

Good (B+, B, B-)

Good independent critical thinking. Good explanation and evaluation of key concepts and theories. Strong ability to present organized ideas and structured arguments to support conclusions.

Fair (C+, C, C-)

Limited independent critical thinking. Adequate explanation and evaluation of key concepts and theories. Some ability to present organized ideas and structured arguments to support conclusions

Marginal (D)

Very limited independent critical thinking. Very limited explanation and evaluation of key concepts and theories. Very limited ability to present organized ideas and structured arguments to support conclusions.

Failure (F)

Serious lack of independent critical thinking. Little evidence of being able to explain and evaluate key concepts and theories. Weak ability to present organized ideas and structured arguments to support conclusions.

Part III Other Information

Keyword Syllabus

Three major approaches to ethics: utilitarianism, deontology, and virtue ethics. Concepts in ethics: utility, pleasure, interests, liberty, rights, virtue, equality, etc. Ethical problems and issues in public policy in relation to high-tech development and application: artificial intelligence, autonomous vehicles, sex robots, male pregnancy, abortion, animal welfare, environmental protection, human relations, sexual morality, and social order.

Reading List

Compulsory Readings

| Title | |
|-------|---|
| 1 | John Hospers, Human Conduct: Problems of Ethics (New York: Harcourt Brace College Publishers, 3rd edition, 1996). |
| 2 | Norman. E. Bowie and Robert L. Simon, The Individual and Political Order, 4th edition (Rowman & Littlefield, 2008). |
| 3 | Fiala, Andrew G. & MacKinnon, Barbara. Ethics Theory and Contemporary Issues 9th ed (NY: Cengage Learning, 2017). |

Additional Readings

| Title | |
|-------|--|
| 1 | Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy. |
| 2 | Ruiping, Fan. Reconstructionist Confucianism (NY: Springer, 2010), |
| 3 | Mark Cherry and Ruiping Fan (2021). Sex Robots: Social Impact and the Future of Human Relations, Springer. |

Annex (for GE courses only)

A. Please specify the Gateway Education Programme Intended Learning Outcomes (PILOs) that the course is aligned to and relate them to the CILOs stated in Part II, Section 2 of this form:

Please indicate which CILO(s) is/are related to this PILO, if any (can be more than one CILOs in each PILO)

PILO 1: Demonstrate the capacity for self-directed learning

1, 2, 3, 4

PILO 2: Explain the basic methodologies and techniques of inquiry of the arts and humanities, social sciences, business, and science and technology

1, 2, 3, 4

PILO 3: Demonstrate critical thinking skills

1, 2, 3, 4

PILO 6: Demonstrate effective oral communication skills

1, 2, 3, 4

PILO 7: Demonstrate an ability to work effectively in a team

1, 2, 3, 4

PILO 8: Recognise important characteristics of their own culture(s) and at least one other culture, and their impact on global issues

1, 2, 3, 4

PILO 9: Value ethical and socially responsible actions

1, 2, 3, 4

B. Please select an assessment task for collecting evidence of student achievement for quality assurance purposes. Please retain at least one sample of student achievement across a period of three years.

Selected Assessment Task

Individual essay