Lingnan University
Department of Philosophy

Course Title	:	Understanding Morality
Course Code	:	CCC8003
Recommended Study Year	:	1st year
No. of Credits/Term	:	3
Mode of Tuition	:	Sectional
Class Contact Hours	:	3 hours per week
Category in Major Programme	:	Common Core
Prerequisite(s)	:	N/A
Co-requisite(s)	:	N/A
Exclusion(s)	:	N/A
Exemption Requirement(s)	:	N/A

Brief Course Description

Ethics is a field of study that concerns the question of how one should act in a given situation: what is right and wrong, what is morally good or evil? In a wider sense, ethics seeks to answer the question first posed by Socrates, how may we live the good life? This first-year introductory level course will provide a comprehensive and balanced introduction to the field of normative ethics. In this course, students are called upon to examine and reflect upon some of the most central questions in moral philosophy, such as the following: What are the major ethical theories, and how can they relate to the varied kinds of moral problems that confront us all? What does it mean to live a moral life? Is there one universal moral theory or are morals specific to particular groups, historical periods, or individuals? What makes an action right or wrong? Is that question answered in terms of pleasure or some other consequences actions have? In this course, much attention will be paid to finding a critical and rational approach to a wider understanding of human values, as well as a tolerance for different viewpoints. As such this course also tackles a range of specific moral problems, for example, questions of political equality, biomedical controversies, war, environmental concerns, sexual morality and a range of topics relating to business ethics.

Aims

The first part of the course provides a comprehensive introduction to some of the major ethical theories in order that the student may be properly equipped to analyze and address specific moral problems. These general ideas will be made clear through reference to specific cases and problems. The second part of the course will further ground the theoretical ideas in specific topics likely to engage students directly and personally, so as to promote individual understanding and make possible productive debates and reflection.

Learning Outcomes

On completion of this course, students who successfully engage with the course material will be able to:

1. possess a critical outlook regarding his/her approach to moral issues;
2. attain a basic understanding of a range of moral theories;
3. be able to employ ethical concepts and analyze the moral implications of real life issues;
4. gain a greater appreciation for the cultivation of basic human values such as personal responsibility, tolerance and integrity.

Indicative Content

Part I

The basic moral theories to be introduced include:

Virtue Theory (in Eastern and Western traditions)
Consequentialism
Kantian Moral Theory

each theory will be illustrated and explained with reference to real-world, readily comprehensible
examples

Part II

Topics in applied ethics to be chosen from amongst such topics as the following (which are listed
here in no particular order):

1. Euthanasia
2. Abortion
3. Stem Cell Research
4. Animal Rights
5. Equality and Discrimination
6. The Death Penalty
7. Pornography
8. Terrorism and War
9. Torture
10. Environmental Ethics
11. Consumer protection
12. Corporate Responsibility
13. Employers, Employees and Ethics
14. Accountancy and ethical norms
15. Poverty and Hunger
16. Ethics and the Law

Teaching Method
This course (which employs a sectional approach) integrates both lectures and small group
discussion. While primarily designed to discuss theoretical matters, lectures are also presented so
as to encourage class participation. Apart from lectures, classes will also make use of regularly held
group discussions. In these group discussions, students will attempt to identify and address specific
moral issues and possible solutions. The instructor will listen to students, respond to their questions,
and provide relevant assistance and feedback.

This course includes an optional service learning component. Students who register for service
learning can replace the research project with a Service Learning project. Further information on
the Service Learning Practicum can be found on the "Information Sheet" to be distributed in class.
Available service learning projects will be presented in the first course session. Enrollment will be
done in the second course session.

The service learning option consists in doing training and practical outside work for a total of 30
hours. There will be about nine sessions of practicum; each consisting of three hours. Three hours
of training will be given by the Office of Service Learning and/or the service agency. During the
service practicum, students will engage in a particular project (different for each class. Please refer

to the information sheet for details) and present the results of that project in class and write a reflective essay about the service. The service practicum will be closely aligned with the course content. In addition the course instructor will provide consultation sessions during the course of the semester to assist students and track their progress and facilitate the linkage between the course learning outcomes and the service practicum. The presentation or essay will be counted as equivalent to the "research project" grade.

Measurement of Learning Outcomes
1. Students will be required to take both a mid-term and a final examination. Students who successfully engage with the course material will be able to demonstrate a general understanding of all of the moral theories that are covered. As such, they must first be able to identify and briefly restate these ethical theories. In addition, they should be able to identify and analyze particular moral items\issues. Finally, students who have mastered the course material should be able to discuss arguments in favour of and against the theories and positions under consideration. Refers to Learning Outcomes 1-4.
2. The research project should reflect the students' ability to explain the nature of ethical theory as well as the ability to construct a credible argument which supports its thesis. In addition, term papers should demonstrate individual engagement with the materials as well as an ability to do basic research. Refers to Learning Outcomes 1-3.
3. The optional Service Learning practicum, presentation and/or reflective essay will reflect the students' ability to apply the theories learned in class to real-life social and moral issues. Students are expected to be able to use the theories, supplemented with basic research about their service area, in order to discuss the moral issues they encountered during their service. Refers to Learning outcomes 1, 2 and 4.
4. Students will be assessed not only on regular class attendance, but also on their active participation in class. Refers to Learning Outcomes 1-4.

Assessment

Attendance and Participation	10%
In-Class Assignments (Quizzes, Written Responses)	10%
Research Project: Presentation and Term Paper or Service Learning Practicum: Presentation and reflective essay	30%
Mid-term Examination	10%
Final Examination	40%

Required Readings
Selections from:

MacKinnon, Barbara. Ethics: Theory and Contemporary Issues, 6th edition. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 2008.

Rachels, James. The Elements of Moral Philosophy. 7th edition. Boston: McGraw-Hill, 2012.

Supplementary Readings
Baron, Marcia, Pettit, Philip, and Michael Slote. *Three Methods of Ethics: A Debate.* Oxford: Blackwell 1997.

Singer, Peter, ed. *A Companion to Ethics*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1991.

Sommers, Christina and Fred Sommers. *Vice and Virtue in Everyday Life: Introductory Readings in Ethics*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 2007.

Van Norden, Bryan W. *Introduction to Classical Chinese Philosophy*. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 2011.

<u>Important Notes</u>

(1) Students are expected to spend a total of 9 hours (i.e. 3 hours of class contact and 6 hours of personal study) per week to achieve the course learning outcomes.
(2) Students shall be aware of the University regulations about dishonest practice in course work, tests and examinations, and the possible consequences as stipulated in the Regulations Governing University Examinations. In particular, plagiarism, being a kind of dishonest practice, is "the presentation of another person's work without proper acknowledgement of the source, including exact phrases, or summarised ideas, or even footnotes/citations, whether protected by copyright or not, as the student's own work". Students are required to strictly follow university regulations governing academic integrity and honesty.
(3) Students are required to submit writing assignment(s) using Turnitin.
(4) To enhance students' understanding of plagiarism, a mini-course "Online Tutorial on Plagiarism Awareness" is available on https://pla.ln.edu.hk/