

Bergen Community College  
Division of Arts & Humanities  
Department of Philosophy & Religion

**Course Syllabus**

**PHR-102 Contemporary Moral Issues**

**Basic Information about Course and Instructor**

Semester and year:  
Course and Section Number:  
Meeting Times and Locations:  
  
Instructor:  
Office Location:  
Phone:  
Departmental Secretary: [optional]  
Office Hours:  
Email Address:

**Course Description**

**PHR-102 Contemporary Moral Issues** is an introduction to applied or practical ethics. This involves discussions of specific moral problems, issues, controversies, and questions. Topics may include abortion; euthanasia; the death penalty and other punishments; sexual morality; pornography and censorship; discrimination on the basis of race, gender, or sexual orientation; drugs; environmental ethics; the moral status of animals; and the meaning of virtue and vice.

3 lectures, 3 credits

General Education Course – Humanities Elective

**Student Learning Objectives:** As a result of meeting the requirements in this course, students will be able to

1. identify the basic problems of ethics;
2. identify and analyze the philosophical issues that pertain to the ethical questions addressed in the course;
3. interpret, summarize, and paraphrase the views of philosophers whose essays/books are studied in the course;
4. use logical and critical thinking skills to analyze and evaluate the ways in which philosophers approach ethical issues; and
5. locate, evaluate, and use effectively information from a variety of relevant sources;
6. state and support in clear, logical, and concise writing their own views on the ethical questions addressed in the course; and
7. participate actively in discussions of philosophical ideas and issues relating to the ethical questions addressed in the course (re: SLOs 1-4).

In pursuit of the foregoing objectives, the course is based on the reading and discussion of primary source materials by philosophers and other writers on ethical and moral issues; the basic principles and methods of logical reasoning are introduced; the techniques of philosophical research and writing are reviewed; students are given the opportunity and are encouraged to participate actively in class discussions; and students are required to do a substantial amount of expository and critical writing in response to the material presented in the course.

### Learning Assessment

The Student Learning Objectives (SLOs) in this course are intended to be aligned with as many of the college's General Education Goals as possible. They are also correlated with the overall Learning Goals of the Philosophy Program. In addition, student progress in reaching the course's SLOs is to be assessed through various means of assessment, such as the "Suggested Means of Assessment" listed below.

Student Learning Objective	Suggested Means of Assessment
1. identify the basic problems of ethics;	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Essay examinations</li> <li>• Quizzes and objective tests</li> <li>• Writing assignments</li> </ul>
2. identify and analyze the philosophical issues that pertain to the ethical questions addressed in the course;	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Essay examinations</li> <li>• Quizzes and objective tests</li> <li>• Writing assignments</li> <li>• Graded class presentations</li> </ul>
3. interpret, summarize, and paraphrase the views of philosophers whose essays/books are studied in the course;	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Essay examinations</li> <li>• Quizzes and objective tests</li> <li>• Writing assignments</li> <li>• Graded class presentations</li> </ul>
4. use logical and critical thinking skills to analyze and evaluate the ways in which philosophers approach ethical issues; and	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Essay examinations</li> <li>• Quizzes and objective tests</li> <li>• Writing assignments</li> <li>• Graded class presentations</li> </ul>
5. locate, evaluate, and use effectively information from a variety of relevant sources;	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Writing assignments*</li> <li>• Graded class presentations</li> </ul>
6. state and support in clear, logical, and concise writing their own views on the ethical questions addressed in the course; and	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Essay examinations</li> <li>• Writing assignments</li> </ul>
7. participate actively in discussions of philosophical ideas and issues relating to the ethical questions addressed in the course (re: SLOs 1-4).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Graded class discussions</li> </ul>

\*Writing assignments for the purpose of assessing student success on SLO 6 will include research and writing projects, possibly including term papers, in which a student identifies an information need, accesses and evaluates appropriate resources, and uses the information effectively and ethically for a specific purpose.

### Course Content

PHR-102 is designed to introduce students to contemporary issues of social and ethical importance. Its concern, therefore, is primarily with applied ethics as opposed to moral theory. Although the topics chosen for discussion are left to the discretion of the instructor, a typical course will cover such issues as abortion, euthanasia, genetic engineering, surrogate motherhood, the death penalty, animal rights, sexual morality, racial and sexual discrimination, terrorism, social and economic justice, etc., that is, the issues typically found in many relevant texts available on the market (e.g., Olen, Van Camp, and Barry's *Applying Ethics* or Vaughn's

*Applying Ethics*). The use of relevant films (e.g., *Whose Life is it Anyway?*, *A Clockwork Orange*, etc.) is recommended as an adjunct to the assigned readings.

**Special Features of the Course** (if any) [to be designated by the instructor]

E.g., the use of learning technologies in the course (Internet, PowerPoint, web enhancement via a parallel course website, etc.); the inclusion of technological literacy learning in the course; etc.

**Writing and Critical Thinking Requirement(s)**

Because PHR-102 is a General Education course, it requires students to complete a variety of critical thinking and writing assignments. These assignments may include class discussions and debates requiring the application of critical thinking skills, short in-class essays, out-of-class writing projects (journals, research papers, argument-analysis papers, book reviews, etc.), tests and examinations containing essay components, and so forth. Instructors will respond to and comment on students' writing in detail.

**Grading Policy**

A student's final grade for the course is based primarily on his or her performance on the required work for the course (writing assignments, examinations, class presentations, etc.) and on his or her overall mastery of the material covered in the course. A student's class participation may also be evaluated, and the grade thereon may be used as a factor in determining the student's final grade for the course; but a class participation grade will count for no more than twenty percent (20%) of the final grade. A student's research and writing work will count at least fifty percent (50%) of the final grade.

**Attendance Policy**

**BCC Attendance Policy:**

All students are expected to attend punctually every scheduled meeting of each course in which they are registered. Attendance and lateness policies and sanctions are to be determined by the instructor for each section of each course. These will be established in writing on the individual course outline. Attendance will be kept by the instructor for administrative and counseling purposes.

**Philosophy and Religion Departmental Attendance Policy:**

Students are expected to attend class regularly and punctually. Attendance will be taken at each class session. It is expected that class will be conducted such that students will benefit in their written work by the lectures and class discussion. If students occasionally arrive late, they should be encouraged to enter quietly, not disturbing the class. If students miss class, they should be encouraged to use the course calendar to stay abreast of material. It is probably a good idea for students to find study partners and to exchange telephone numbers. Make-ups for examinations should be allowed by the instructor if, in the instructor's judgment, the student has presented a good excuse for missing the work. Instructors may penalize work which is late; however, the instructor's policies for make-ups and late work must be clearly specified on the student guide.

**Attendance Policy in this Course:**

[To be designated by the instructor]

**Course Texts and/or Other Study Materials**

**Recommended Texts:** The current editions of any of the following texts are appropriate for use in PHR-102.

- Abelson, Raziell, & Marie-Louise Friquegnon (eds.), *Ethics for Modern Life*, St. Martin's Press.
- Beauchamp, Tom L., & Terry P. Pinkard (eds.), *Ethics and Public Policy*, Prentice-Hall.
- Bender, David, & Bruno Leone (general eds.), *The Greenhaven Press Opposing Viewpoints Series*, Greenhaven Press. The following individual volumes cover topics explored in PHR102: *Abortion, Animal Rights, Biomedical Ethics, Censorship, The Death Penalty, Euthanasia, Genetic Engineering, The Health Crisis, The Homeless, Homosexuality, Male/Female Roles, Poverty, Racism in America, Sexual Values, Social Justice, and Suicide*.
- Grcic, Joseph (ed.), *Moral Choices*, West Publishing Co.
- Mappes, Thomas A., & Jane S. Zembaty (eds.), *Biomedical Ethics*, McGraw-Hill.
- Thomas A. Mappes & Jane S. Zembaty (eds.), *Social Ethics: Morality and Social Policy*, McGraw-Hill.
- Olen, Jeffrey, Julie C. Van Camp, and Vincent Barry (eds.), *Applying Ethics: A Text with Readings*.
- Pojman, Louis P. (ed.), *Life and Death: A Reader in Moral Problems*, Jones & Bartlett.
- Rachels, James (ed.), *Moral Problems*, Harper & Row.
- Regan, Tom (ed.), *Matters of Life and Death: New Introductory Essays in Moral Philosophy*, Random House.
- Singer, Peter (ed.), *Applied Ethics*, Oxford University Press.
- Sterba, James P. (ed.), *Morality in Practice*, Wadsworth.
- Wasserstrom, Richard A., (ed.), *Today's Moral Problems*, Macmillan.
- Vaughn, Lewis, (ed.), *Doing Ethics*, Norton. Current departmentally-approved text.

**Recommended Supplements**

- Bayles, Michael D., & Kenneth Henley (eds.), *Right Conduct: Theories and Applications*, Random House.
- Beauchamp, Tom L., *Philosophical Ethics: An Introduction to Moral Philosophy*, McGraw-Hill.
- Harris, Jr., C.E., *Applying Moral Theories*, Wadsworth.
- MacIntyre, Alisdair, *A Short History of Ethics*, Macmillan.
- Runkle, Gerald, *Ethics: An Examination of Contemporary Moral Problems*, Holt, Rinehart & Winston.
- Solomon, Robert C., *Ethics: A Brief Introduction*, McGraw-Hill.
- Van Wyk, Robert N., *Introduction to Ethics*, St. Martin's Press.

**Other College, Divisional, and/or Departmental Policy Statements** [optional but recommended]

<p><u>Examples:</u>                  Statement on plagiarism and/or academic dishonesty.                  ADA statement.                  Sexual Harassment statement.                  Statement on acceptable use of BCC technology.                  Statement on the purpose and value of faculty office hours.</p>
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**Student and Faculty Support Services** [optional but recommended]

List support services, e.g., the Writing Center, the Math Lab, the Tutorial Center, Online Writing Lab (OWL), Office of Specialized Services, etc. Include information on the BCC Library.

Example:

**Student and Faculty Support Services**

The Distance Learning Office – for any problems you may have accessing your online courses	Room C-334	201-612-5581 <a href="mailto:psimms@bergen.edu">psimms@bergen.edu</a>
Smarthinking Tutorial Service	On Line at:	<a href="http://www.bergen.edu/pages1/Pages/4787.aspx">http://www.bergen.edu/pages1/Pages/4787.aspx</a>
The Tutoring Center	Room L-125	201-447-7908 <a href="http://www.bergen.edu/pages1/pages/2192.aspx">http://www.bergen.edu/pages1/pages/2192.aspx</a>
The Writing Center	Room L-125	201-447-7908 <a href="http://www.bergen.edu/pages1/Pages/1795.aspx">http://www.bergen.edu/pages1/Pages/1795.aspx</a>
The Office of Specialized Services (for Students with Disabilities)	Room S-131	201-612-5270 <a href="http://www.bergen.edu/oss">http://www.bergen.edu/oss</a>
BCC Library – Reference Desk	Room L-226	201-447-7436

**Special Note on the Tutoring Center**

The Henry and Edith Cerullo Learning Assistance Center encompasses the Tutoring Center, the English Language Resource Center, and the Writing Center. The website of the Learning Assistance Center is located at [www.bergen.edu/pages/2192.asp](http://www.bergen.edu/pages/2192.asp). Tutoring services are available for this course in the Tutoring Center. I strongly recommend that you make use of those services as we progress through the course. As listed above, the Tutoring Center is located in Room L-125, and its phone number is 201-447-7908.

**Include the following statement on Logos – The BCC Philosophy & Religion Club**

**Logos – The BCC Philosophy & Religion Club**

Logos usually meets on Tuesdays during the Activities Period, 12:30-1:25 PM, but sometimes also on different days and at different times. I encourage you to join the club. Since you are interested in the study of philosophy, you should find the meetings and other activities of the Philosophy & Religion club very interesting. For further information, check the Philosophy & Religion bulletin board adjacent to Room L-325A or contact LOGOS Advisor, Professor Jennifer Lyden (L-326, 201-493-3540, [jlyden@bergen.edu](mailto:jlyden@bergen.edu)). (LOGOS does not hold regular meetings during the summer.)

**Include a Course Outline and Calendar** [can be combined in a single syllabus section]

The Course Outline and Calendar must include all of the following elements:

- A daily or (at least) weekly schedule of topics to be covered.
- Dates for exams, quizzes, or other means of assessment. (This does not mean that all evaluation of students must be in groups and at the same time. Exams and other means of assessment can be listed as "to be scheduled individually.")
- Due dates for major assignments – e.g., when is a paper due; if the topic has to be approved, when; if an outline or draft is an interim step, when it is due.
- Any required special events must be included in the outline/calendar, e.g., a lecture by a visiting speaker, a dramatic or musical performance, a field trip.
- Designation of Student Learning Objectives – by number – for each topic (see sample below).
- A note to students stating that the course outline and calendar is tentative and subject to change, depending upon the progress of the class.

**Sample Format for Course Outline and Calendar**

**Note to Students:** The following Course Outline and Calendar is tentative and subject to change, depending upon the progress of the class.

Week(s)	Date(s)	Topics & Assignments	Learning Objectives
1			
2			
3			
4			
5			
6			
7			
8			
9			
10			
11			
12			
13			
14			
15			

**See the Sample Course Outline and Calendar below.**

**SAMPLE COURSE OUTLINE AND CALENDAR**

[with designation of Student Learning Objectives – by number – for each topic]

**Note to Students:** The following Course Outline and Calendar is tentative and subject to change, depending upon the progress of the class.

<b>Week(s)</b>	<b>Date(s)</b>	<b>Topic/Activity/Assignments</b>	<b>Student Learning Objectives</b>
1-2	Sep 6, 8, 13, 15	<b>Introduction: The Nature of Ethics and Moral Theories</b> Readings: John Stuart Mill, Immanuel Kant, Aristotle  <b>Quiz</b> on major moral theories	1, 2, 7
<b>Life and Death</b>			
3-4	Sep 20, 22, 27, 29 Sep 20 Sep 29	<b>Life and Death I: Euthanasia and Assisted Suicide</b> Readings: J. Gay-Williams, James Rachels, Philippa Foot, Richard Brandt  <b>Group Work on NJ Statutes (Title 26) assigned</b> (due by 10/10)	2-7
5-6	Oct 4, 6, 11, 13 Oct 6 Oct 13	<b>Life and Death II: Abortion</b> Readings: John T. Noonan, Judith Jarvis Thomason, Mary Ann Warren, Don Marquis, Rosalind Hursthouse  Listen to Real Audio file of Don Marquis (on WWW) <b>Study questions on abortion due (10/13)</b>	2-7
7-8	Oct 18, 20, 25, 27 Oct 18 Oct 20	<b>Life and Death III: The Moral Status of Animals</b> Readings: Peter Singer, Tom Regan, Tibor R. Machan, Bonnie Steinbock <b>Argument Analysis Paper assigned</b> (due by 11/17)  <b>Midterm Examination</b>	2-7  1-4, 6
<b>The Personal Life</b>			
9-10	Nov 1, 3, 8, 10	<b>Sexual Ethics I</b>  <b>The Three Ps: Perversion, Promiscuity, Prostitution</b> Readings: Colin McGinn, Alan Goldman, Thomas Nagel  <b>Sexual Ethics II</b>  <b>Masturbation, Casual/Plain Sex, Rape, Homosexuality</b> Readings: Michael Levin, Timothy F. Murphy, John Corvino, Roger Scruton  Short essay on the implicit casual sex contract due	2-7

Note: All readings are from Olen, Van Camp, and Barry's *Applying Ethics: A Text with Readings*, 7th Edition.

		<b>Justice</b>	
11-12	Nov 15, 17, 22, 24 Nov 15 Nov 22  Nov 25-28	<b>Distributive/Economic Justice, Social Justice, Welfare</b>  Readings: John Rawls, Robert Nozick  <b>Argument Analysis Paper due</b>  <b>Thanksgiving Weekend</b>	2-7
13-14	Nov 29, Dec 1, 6, 8 Nov 29 Dec 8	<b>Environmental Ethics</b> Readings: Aldo Leopold, Paul W. Taylor, William F. Baxter, J. Baird Callicott  Short (5-10 minutes) class presentation due  Final Examination Study Guide distributed	2-7
15	Dec 13, 15	<b>Final Examination Review</b>  <b>Final Examination</b> will occur on the last class session	1-4, 6