COURSE SYLLABUS

Spring 2021

Office: DeMille 108
Email: cpeters@chapman.edu

Office Hours: TTH 2:30 P.M. – 4:30 P.M. and by appointment

Course Number: HON 202-01
Course Title: On Being Ethical in the World
Credits: 3

Prerequisites: Formal acceptance in the University Honors Program

Course Description

This course surveys the history of ethics, with particular attention to the history of philosophical approaches to ethics as well as to the process of moral decision-making in two major religious traditions – Buddhism and Christianity. These philosophical and religious approaches are then critically applied to four contemporary moral problems, namely, euthanasia, gay rights and same-sex marriage, drugs and addiction, the moral status of animals, and global warming and consumption. 3 credits

Restrictions: Students formally admitted into the University Honors Program or permission of course instructor and Director of Honors

Learning Outcomes

1. GE Learning Outcomes
   a. GE 7VI Learning Outcome: Articulates how values and ethics inform human understanding, structures, and behavior.
   b. GE 7GC Learning Outcome: Connects contemporary social and/or environmental topics to their origins and analyzes their effects on our increasingly globalized world.
   c. GE 7SI Learning Outcome: Identifies, frames, and analyzes the processes by which human beings develop social and/or historical perspectives.

2. Program and Course Learning Outcomes: Upon completion of this course students will be able to:
   a. Critically understand general philosophical and religious approaches to ethical theory, ancient and modern, through the study of primary texts;
   b. Know the foundations for ethics in two major world religious traditions, Christianity and Buddhism;
   c. Appreciate the complexity of the ethical life and the need for theoretical nuance as they critically apply philosophical and religious approaches, which they have learned, to some challenging contemporary moral problems (euthanasia, gay rights and same-sex marriage, drugs and addiction, the moral status of animals, and global warming and consumption);
   d. Think critically, and with an open mind, about contemporary moral issues;
   e. Develop effective communication skills, specifically in the areas of oral and written exposition, by judiciously analyzing and synthesizing a broad range of knowledge through
engagement in active learning with fellow students, faculty, texts, and the world as well as through written information.

**Course Content**

We will study reflections on ethics in the history of Western philosophy. We will also study how two major religious traditions (Buddhism and Christianity) understand human nature, the human predicament, and human destiny and the impact of these understandings on ethical decision making. Finally, these ethical approaches, philosophical and religious, will be applied to some contemporary moral problems (euthanasia, gay rights and same-sex marriage, drugs and addiction, the moral status of animals, global warming and consumption).

**Required Texts**

1. John Stuart Mill, “Ideas on Free Speech” (on Canvas)

**Instructional Strategies**

1. The class will be structured as a seminar. Sometimes mini-lectures will be used to introduce the historical context and theoretical framework of our readings so as to enhance seminar conversations – intended to achieve Program and Course Learning Outcomes (a) and (b).
2. Students are expected to arrive at their own conclusions about issues discussed, to be able to give reasons for their conclusions, and to sympathetically understand why others may disagree – intended to achieve Program and Course Learning Outcome (c).
3. Students are expected to develop further the art of conversation. Conversation requires active listening – that is, openness to what others have to say, asking questions, risking opinions, and the willingness to engage in the back-and-forth of open-ended dialogue. Such conversations are essential for global citizenship in a pluralistic world – intended to achieve Program and Course Learning Outcome (d).
4. The above three strategies are together intended to meet GE Learning Outcomes for 7VI, 7GC, and 7SI.

**Course Requirements**

1. *Class Attendance*: Class attendance is required. You are expected to attend all class meetings and to have Information prepared when they are due. More than three absences will result in zero points for ‘Class Participation’. For each absence, excused or unexcused, beyond two there will be a 5% deduction from your possible semester grade.
2. *Class Participation*: Participation does not mean mere presence in the classroom. Instead, it means active listening – that is, the willingness to engage in the back-and-forth of open-ended and reasoned conversations by being open to what others have to say, risking our opinions, asking questions, and surfacing disagreements. Such “active listening” is essential to being a community of scholars.
3. *Reading Information*: You are asked to study carefully all required readings by the day on which they appear on the projected course schedule. It is important to note that you are asked not merely to read all assigned materials but to study them. Such study may require several readings of the material.
4. **Class Time:** Class meetings will be, for the most part, seminar conversations.

5. **Group Presentations:** In groups of two or three, you are to select one of the five moral topics to be discussed at the end of the semester (euthanasia, gay rights and same-sex marriage, drugs and addiction, the moral status of animals, global warming and consumption), debate different sides of the topic among yourselves in class, and then conduct a conversation on it for the rest of the class period.

6. **Exams:** There will be two in-class exams during the semester plus a final exam.

7. **Final Paper:** After having spent most of the semester reading five theoretical foundations for morals, as well as criticisms of them, in James White’s *Contemporary Moral Problems,* and reading about the foundations for ethics in some major religious traditions, you are to write a theoretical piece entitled “A Foundation for Morals.” In your “A Foundations for Morals,” you are to construct your own theoretical foundations for morals either by developing one of the ten theoretical approaches we have studied, including a well thought out response to its critics, or by synthesizing some of the theoretical foundations studied into a coherent whole, including a defense of possible criticisms.

   ▪ Please note the following:
     - First, you are to fashion this theoretical piece as a general, and not just a personal, foundation for morals defensible before the seat of reason.
     - Second, in your formulation of this theoretical foundation, you may think it through using one, or a combination, of any of the theoretical approaches we have studied; the result must be a coherent ethical theory.
     - Third, you are to apply your ethical theory to one of the five issues studied in class.
     - Fourth, a digital copy of this paper is to be placed in the “Turnitin Assignment” folder on Blackboard by 11:59 p.m. on May 15, 2018.

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**Chapman University Academic Integrity Policy**

Chapman University is a community of scholars which emphasizes the mutual responsibility of all members to seek knowledge honestly and in good faith. Students are responsible for doing their own work, and academic dishonesty of any kind will not be tolerated anywhere in the university.

**Chapman University Students with Disabilities Policy**

In compliance with ADA guidelines, students who have any condition, either permanent or temporary, that might affect their ability to perform in this class are encouraged to contact the Office of Disability Services. If you will need to utilize your approved accommodations in this class, please follow the proper notification procedure for informing your professor(s). This notification process must occur more than a week before any accommodation can be utilized. Please contact Disability Services at (714) 516-4520 or [www.chapman.edu/students/student-health-services/disability-services](http://www.chapman.edu/students/student-health-services/disability-services) if you have questions regarding this procedure, or for information and to make an appointment to discuss and/or request potential accommodations based on documentation of your disability. Once formal approval of your need for an accommodation has been granted, you are encouraged to talk with your professor(s) about your accommodation options. The granting of any accommodation will not be retroactive and cannot jeopardize the academic standards or integrity of the course.

**Chapman University Diversity Policy**

Chapman University is committed to fostering learning and working environments that encourage and embrace diversity, multiple perspectives, and the free exchange of ideas as important measures to advance educational and social benefits. Our commitment and affirmation are rooted in our traditions of peace and social justice and our mission of producing ethical and responsible global citizens. The term diversity implies a respect for all and an understanding of individual differences in age, class,
disability, ethnicity, gender, language, national origin, race, religion, sexual orientation, and socioeconomic status.

Methods of Evaluation
1. Evaluation and grading will be based on the following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Requirements</th>
<th>Percentage of Grade</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First Exam:</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<td>Second Exam:</td>
<td>25</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Exam:</td>
<td>35%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Presentation of Moral Issue</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Paper:</td>
<td>10%</td>
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2. Grades will be assigned as follows:
   A = 100-96; A- = 95-91; B+ = 90-88; B = 87-85; B- = 84-81;
   C+ = 80-78; C = 77-75; C- = 74-71; D+ = 70-68; D = 67-65; D- = 64-61; F = below 60

Projected Schedule of Topics and Information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic and Assignment</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>February 2</td>
<td>Introductions</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Class members introduce themselves</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Review syllabus: objectives/expectations of the course</td>
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<td></td>
<td>General introduction to the course</td>
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<tr>
<td>February 4</td>
<td>What Is Ethics?</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Read: Gregory &amp; Giancola, World Ethics</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Pages xiii-xx: Introduction</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Read: James E. White, Contemporary Moral Problems</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Pages 1-10: Introduction</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Read: John Stuart Mill, “Ideas on Free Speech”</td>
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<td>February 9</td>
<td>Egoism and Moral Skepticism</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Read: James E. White, Contemporary Moral Problems</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pages 10-18: Egoism and Moral Skepticism</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Read: Gregory &amp; Giancola, World Ethics</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Pages 12-26: Plato’s Republic – The “Ring of Gyges”</td>
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<td>February 11</td>
<td>Religion, Morality, and Conscience</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Read: James E. White, Contemporary Moral Problems</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pages 19-27: Religion, Morality, and Conscience</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Read: Damien Keown, Buddhism: A Very Short Introduction</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Pages 97-109: “Ethics” – this reading is on Blackboard</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Read: Gregory &amp; Giancola, World Ethics</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pages 3-12: Socrates’ Critique of Religion</td>
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<td>Pages 112-119: Nietzsche’s Critique of Religion</td>
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<td>February 16</td>
<td>Religions and Ethics</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Read: Gregory &amp; Giancola, World Ethics</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Pages 45-51: Augustine</td>
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<td>Pages 127-132: Martin Buber</td>
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<td>Pages 220-225: Mohandas Gandhi</td>
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- Pages 93-103: Soren Kierkegaard

February 18  Natural Law
Read: James E. White, *Contemporary Moral Problems*
- Pages 27-30: The Natural Law
Read: Gregory & Giancola, *World Ethics*
- Pages 57-67: Thomas Aquinas

February 23  Morality and Sentiment
Read: James E. White, *Contemporary Moral Problems*
- Pages 30-33: Morality Is Based on Sentiment
Read: Gregory & Giancola, *World Ethics*
- Pages 68-76: David Hume
- Pages 136-141: A. J. Ayer
- Pages 132-136: Ruth Benedict

February 25  Ethical Relativism
Read: James E. White, *Contemporary Moral Problems*
- Pages 34-37: Ethical Relativism

March 2  Review

March 4  First Exam

March 9  Utilitarianism
Read: James E. White, *Contemporary Moral Problems*
- Pages 38-44: Utilitarianism
Theories of Happiness
Read: Gregory & Giancola, *World Ethics*
- Pages 36-40: Epicurus
- Pages 87-92: John Stuart Mill

March 11  The Categorical Imperative
Read: James E. White, *Contemporary Moral Problems*
- Pages 44-50: The Categorical Imperative
Theories of Moral Duty
Read: Gregory & Giancola, *World Ethics*
- Pages 41-45: Epictetus
- Pages 77-87: Immanuel Kant

March 16  Happiness and Virtue
Read: James E. White, *Contemporary Moral Problems*
- Pages 50-59: Happiness and Virtue
Read: Gregory & Giancola, *World Ethics*
- Pages 27-36: Aristotle
- Pages 161-166: Alasdair McIntyre

March 18  Theories of Virtue
Read: Gregory & Giancola, *World Ethics*
- Pages 187-: Confucius
- Pages 192-: Mencius
  Read: Gregory & Giancola, World Ethics
- Pages 225-229: Thich Nhat Hanh, “The Sun in My Heart”
  Read: Damien Keown, Buddhism: A Very Short Introduction
- Chapter 8

March 23  Spring Break
March 25  Spring Break
March 30  A Theory of Justice
  Read: James E. White, Contemporary Moral Problems
  - Pages 60-66: A Theory of Justice
Theories of Justice
  Read: Gregory & Giancola, World Ethics
  - Pages 12-26: Plato
  - Pages 104-112: Karl Marx
  - Pages 148-155: John Rawls

April 1  The Idea of a Female Ethic
  Read: James E. White, Contemporary Moral Problems
  - Pages 66-74: The Idea of a Female Ethics
Ethics of Care
  Read: Gregory & Giancola, World Ethics
  - Pages 309-318: Carol Gilligan
  - Pages 338-343: Nel Noddings
  - Pages 343-349: Annette Baier

April 6  Review
April 8   Second Exam
April 13  Euthanasia
  Read: James E. White, Contemporary Moral Problems
April 15  Euthanasia
  Read: James E. White, Contemporary Moral Problems
April 20  Gay Rights and Same-sex Marriage
  Read: James E. White, Contemporary Moral Problems
April 22  Gay Rights and Same-sex Marriage
  Read: James E. White, Contemporary Moral Problems
April 27  Drugs and Addiction
  Read: James E. White, Contemporary Moral Problems
April 29  Drugs and Addiction
  Read: James E. White, Contemporary Moral Problems
May 4  The Moral Status of Animals
       Read: James E. White, *Contemporary Moral Problems*

May 6  The Moral Status of Animals
       Read: James E. White, *Contemporary Moral Problems*

May 11 Global Warming and Consumption
       Read: James E. White, *Contemporary Moral Problems*

May 13 Global Warming and Consumption
       Read: James E. White, *Contemporary Moral Problems*

May 21 Final Exam (10:45 p.m. to 1:15 p.m.)

May 24 Final paper due
       Final paper is to be placed in its Turnitin folder by 11:59 p.m.

Prepared by: Carmichael Peters, February 2009
Last Revised: Carmichael Peters, February 2021