

Scholar of Global Distinction Program

Course

Philosophy PHI 215 & 240

Author


Lainie Erwin (Central Piedmont Community College)

Course Description

PHI 215 8-Week, Nontraditional/blended/hybrid

PHI 215 Course Description: This course introduces fundamental issues in philosophy considering the views of classical and contemporary philosophers. Emphasis is placed on knowledge and belief, appearance and reality, determinism and free will, faith and reason, and justice and inequality.

PHI 240 Course Description: Ethics is a field of study within philosophy that examines the nature of value claims regarding what is considered good and the difference between right and wrong action. While we often use the terms "right" and "wrong" to describe things we do and actions others do, there is a special sense in which we use them as moral terms. When an auto-mechanic puts the "right" piece in the "right" place to make the car move, the meaning of the term "right" is different than if we say that "telling the truth was the right thing to do." Thus, in this class we will be exploring that different meaning of the terms "right" and "wrong" as they are used in their moral sense.



As an introduction to the study of ethics or morality in philosophy we will concentrate on four specific topics within ethical theory: 1) questions regarding the foundations for morality 2) normative ethical theories that try to provide such foundations 3) applied ethical questions that apply concepts such as human rights or autonomy to specific moral issues 4) answers to the question “why be moral?” This course is intended as a primer and, perhaps, a motivation to continue to pursue questions of ethics beyond the classroom. Upon completion, students should be able to identify, analyze, and critically evaluate the philosophical components of an issue. This course has been approved to satisfy the Comprehensive Articulation general education core requirement in humanities/fine arts.

Number of Students Enrolled in Course:

10-30 (minimum & cap)

Module Description

Cultural Theme Connection and Reflection Module

Students will engage with different cultural traditions, beliefs, religions, and practices by applying selected philosophies to media and film clips from around the world. This module will consist of a globalized project where students will choose between different philosophical topics from the past semester and will apply those philosophies to Asian news and/or film clips of their choice.

Student Global Learning Outcomes:

1. Students will demonstrate a broad understanding of philosophical concepts in relation to cultures other than their own.
2. Students will apply previously acquired theoretical knowledge of philosophy to Asian experiences and events as portrayed in media and film clips.

Global Learning Activities:

Activity 1

In-Class Activity beginning with the Spring Semester 2022 (this activity can be modified for an online/nontraditional course to account for no face-to-face interaction)

1. Students will watch Asian film clips that that depict customs/beliefs/religions and will come to class having already read Asian news articles.

2. We will discuss as a group which philosophical topics they find to be relevant to these clips and news articles.
3. We will discuss how cultural differences may have contributed to the way the Asian film or news article was portrayed and whether these customs have a shared universal value. To support this discussion, we will think through the problems of moral relativism and James Rachels' theory of moral objectivity that distinguishes between customs and values. We will discuss how students' interpretations of the Asian film and analyses of the Asian news articles may have been influenced by cultural differences (perceived or real). Students will then consider whether the customs presented are rooted in universal values.
4. Modification for online/nontraditional: Students will utilize a forum to discuss the philosophical content of the Asian film clips and news articles.
5. Assessment: Students will be assessed exclusively on participation for this component. I will be looking for students to demonstrate a broad understanding of philosophical concepts in relation to Asian Cultures
6. Since this activity will be held in the final weeks of the semester, students will have already developed strong critical thinking skills and will have the tools necessary to meaningfully engage with this activity.
7. Follow-up: Students will follow up on this work through the Global Learning Activity 2 (listed below).

Activity 2

Online Brightspace Activity beginning with the Fall Semester 2022

1. Students will select one of the Asian film clips or news articles discussed in class (or in the discussion boards) and will then think more critically about the film clip/news article as it relates to a chosen philosophical concept.
2. Students will select a philosopher who argues for their chosen theory. Students will then further research that philosophical theory in an essay where they will provide historical background on the reasoning behind the positions the philosopher takes, explain the philosopher's arguments, and identify one problem with those arguments (developing at least one counterargument).
3. Students will explain how their chosen philosopher's arguments can be applied to the Asian film clip or news article that they have selected.
4. Students will compile their findings will be compiled into a PowerPoint or Google Slides presentation. If the student is a hybrid/traditional/blended student, they will present the material in the final week of the course.
5. Assessment: I will assess their research on their philosophical topic and their engagement with their chosen Asian media using a rubric. The rubric will assess, among other things, the student's ability to go beyond summarization and to critically analyze media content from an Asian country.
6. Follow-up: Students will be given feedback based on the rubric scoring of their analysis and arguments along with comments that note the areas where they

did particularly well, as well as the areas that would have benefitted from more source reference, further analysis, etc.

Activity 3

Online Brightspace Activity beginning with the Fall Semester 2022 (extra credit opportunity)

1. Students will select an Asian culture or philosophy they would like to learn more about.
2. Next, they will expand their knowledge of the Asian philosophical tradition of that culture through provided readings.
3. Upon completing the readings for this assignment, students will take a virtual tour of something significant in Asia associated with their chosen philosophy. Links to these virtual tours will be provided.
4. After taking their selected tours, students will reflect upon their "visits" and write a 750-1000 word paper that details the philosophical tradition of that culture, their expectations of the culture before the tour, and their thoughts after the tour. They will tie this analysis and reflection into a discussion of Cultural Relativism and Moral Objectivism. They will address the questions of how customs and values differ and if there are any customs shown in the virtual tour or represented in the Asian culture that we should consider adopting in the West and why.

Cultural Theme Connection and Reflection Project! (Global Learning Activity 2)

Presentations will begin in Week 8

Your task is to create a presentation using PowerPoint or Google Slides that takes one of the following videos or news articles, along with the learned philosophy, and does the following:

Step 1: You will choose one theme from the philosophical concepts we have learned during the semester:

Theme 1: Moral Reasoning

Theme 2: Consequentialism


Theme 3: Deontological Ethics

Theme 4: Virtue Ethics

Step 2: Say that you have chosen the theme of Consequentialism. Now you need to determine if you will be watching film clips or reading news articles.

Bring on the News!

Clips! Clips! Clips!



My recommendation is that you read/skim all of the news stories if that is your preference. Or, if you would rather watch clips, then I recommend that you watch every clip available. Under each film clip, there will be written suggestions for which philosophical topics they might fit within, but you can use any clip to fit any theme if you can find the connection.

Step 3: Choose the topics within your theme that you would like to discuss. Below are some examples of topics you could choose from for your theme. However, these topics must come from the required texts and lecture videos. However, you may also use credible outside resources for supplemental information. Please utilize the following Media Bias Chart when selecting credible, outside resources. The campus libraries also offer assistance in seeking credible, outside resources.

[https://adfontesmedia.com/static-
mbc/?utm_source=HomePage_StaticMBC_Button&utm_medium=OnWebSite_Button](https://adfontesmedia.com/static-
mbc/?utm_source=HomePage_StaticMBC_Button&utm_medium=OnWebSite_Button)

Some Recommended Topics for:

Theme 1 Moral Reasoning: Euthyphro's Dilemma, Divine Command Theory, Conventional/Critical Morality, validity/soundness, necessary and sufficient conditions, valid/invalid arguments, fallacies, Cultural Relativism

Theme 2 Consequentialism: Utilitarianism, Robert Nozick's *The Experience Machine*, Consequentialism, supererogation

Theme 3 Deontology: principle of universalizability, maxims, categorical and hypothetical imperatives, absolute moral duties, principle of humanity, paternalism

Theme 4 Virtue Ethics: standard of right action, moral rules, moral understanding, what is virtuous, who is a virtuous person, Aristotle and his *Nicomachean Ethics*, Moral guidance, conflicts, problems, and contradictions for virtue ethics, extremes and means

Step 4: After determining which thematic topics you would like to use and after having watched the clips or read the news stories, you should begin making your presentation. Your presentation must include the following seven kinds of slides:

- Cover Slide: Title of Presentation & Your Name
- Theme Slide: Slide indicating which theme you have chosen and which clip or news article you will be using. Remember, only use one clip or one news article. Not multiple.
- History Slide(s): Include slide(s) with the definitions of your theme's concept (e.g. defining utilitarianism). These slides should also give a brief history of your theme and of the philosopher you will be using. All presentations must use at least one philosopher for their theme. For Utilitarianism, you might choose, for instance, John Stuart Mill. Give me a brief background on John Stuart Mill. Why did he argue for utilitarianism?
- Argument Slide(s): Include slide(s) that give the arguments for your theme. For example, create slides that coherently describe Mill's arguments for utilitarianism. You must give textual support for these arguments and you must cite these claims correctly.

- Counterargument Slide(s): Include slide(s) that present arguments against your chosen theme. For example, give arguments that counter Mill's claims about utilitarianism. You must be precise and refer to specific arguments and people who have given them. You must cite these claims and provide textual support for them.
- Theme Connection Slide(s): Include slide(s) that connect the theme that you have described to the clip or news article that you have chosen. Explain the clip or news article and how it relates to this philosophical concept. Be specific. Do not forget to cite this source, as well.
- Bibliography Slide: Create an MLA style slide that contains all the sources used for this presentation.

Virtual Culture Tour (Global Learning Activity 3)

This Extra Credit Assignment is Due Alongside the Final Exam

For 5 points of extra credit, your task is to write a 750-1000 word essay on Cultural Relativism/Moral Objectivism and the difference between customs and values by doing the following:

Step 1: You will select an Asian culture or philosophy that you would like to use for your extra credit writing assignment. (Some suggestions are Taoism, Buddhism, or Hinduism)

Step 2: Next, you will read through provided materials associated with your chosen Asian philosophy.

Step 3: Upon completing the readings, you will take a virtual tour of something significant that is associated with your chosen Asian philosophy.

Step 4: Finally, you will write a 750-1000 word reflection on this experience. In the reflection you will address the following:

- What is the Asian philosophy you have chosen? What are its beliefs and view about the world and related religious practices?"
- What were your expectations of how this philosophical tradition would be portrayed after completing the readings and before you did the virtual tour?
- How did those expectations align with or differ from what you observed?
- How does this relate to James Rachels' beliefs about cultural relativism? Recall that he argues that Cultural Relativism is often chosen as a moral theory because of its tolerance. However, he suggests that tolerance has its limits and that tolerance is less needed than we imagine it is. This claim is rooted in his belief that cultures largely share the same values and that it is only the way these values are represented (via customs) that differ from place to place.
- Finally, did you observe or encounter any cultural customs in the tour or in your readings that you think our western culture might want to consider adopting? If so, why?

Resources and references used in the creation of the module (e.g., books, articles, etc.)

The Vedas

What's Wrong? Applied Ethicists and their Critics 2nd edition– David Boonin (978-0195337808)

East Asia: A Cultural, Social, and Political History – 3rd edition – Patricia Buckley (978-1133606475)

The Analects – Confucius

Classic Asian Philosophy – Joel J. Kupperman, 2nd edition (9780195189810)

The Moral Life 6th Edition – Louis Pojman (ISBN: 9780190607845)

Archetypes of Wisdom: An Introduction to Philosophy, 9e – Douglas J. Soccio (978-1285874319)

Introducing Philosophy 12th edition – Solomon (ISBN: 987-0190939663)

Tao Te Ching - Lao Tzu

Asian Film Clips from:

- Youtube
- Cornell University's Library: Asian-American Studies: A Research Guide: Film Sources <https://guides.library.cornell.edu/c.php?g=896195&p=6446239>
- University of Toronto Mississauga's Library: Asian Cinema and Short Film Collection <https://guides.library.utoronto.ca/c.php?g=715068&p=5098229>
- University of California Berkeley's Library: Ancient Asia Film Collection: <https://www.lib.berkeley.edu/mrcvault/videographies/theme/ancient-asia>

Asian News Articles from:

- Global Issues (India)
- South China Morning Post (China)
- Channel NewsAsia (Singapore)
- The Korea Herald (South Korea)