



CIEE Prague, Czech Republic

Course Name:	Applied Contemporary Ethics
Course Number:	PHIL 3002 PRAG
Programs offering course:	CES/CNMJ
Language of instruction:	English
U.S. Semester Credits:	3
Contact Hours:	45
Term:	Spring 2020

Course Description

This course takes the most influential ethical theories and insights of the last 250 years (and particularly the last 50 years) and applies them to the current challenges that face contemporary societies in Europe and America (with added emphasis on the region of Central and Eastern Europe.) Starting from the groundwork of modern ethical inquiry laid by Kant, we will proceed through the Continental philosophical tradition, working our way through some challenges to Kant's theories—such as those posed by Nietzsche and Freud—to more contemporary articulations of Kantian ethics, such as those proposed by Arendt, Havel, Adorno, Marcuse, Habermas, Singer and MacIntyre, formulations of freedom by Berlin and Taylor, formulations of justice by Rawls and Nozick, and the post-structuralist theories of Lacan, Althusser, Foucault, Derrida, Nancy and Butler (among others).

The second half of the course will be spent applying these concepts to the most urgent ethical issues of our day in Europe, the US and beyond. A “laboratory” (group-work) environment will be encouraged, in which students will have the opportunity to hone their logical and argumentative skills by learning to dissect specific ethical arguments in order to evaluate their relative strengths and weaknesses. Some of the topical ethical themes we will explore include those emerging from the tension between liberalism and socialism (tax policies, health care, public/private education and media, etc.), those emerging from the tension between religious and secular society (abortion, animal rights, gender issues, environmentalism and climate change, cloning, etc.) and those posed by the recently ascendant movements of nationalism and authoritarianism (including racism, xenophobia, delegitimization of journalism and parliamentary debate, etc.). Ultimately, the course will seek to reaffirm a core pillar of the Western philosophical tradition reaching all the way back to Plato and Aristotle: The notion that a society is capable of *being good and just* only to the extent that it is invested in *practicing truth*.

Learning Objectives



Students will:

- explain and assess key ethical concepts of the 19th, 20th and 21st centuries;
- illustrate the relevance of these concepts for contemporary (and future) society;
- relate these concepts to the wider disciplines of political science, economics, sociology, psychology, history and philosophy;
- demonstrate skills in critical reasoning such as the construction of logical arguments and become more proficient in the communication of abstract ideas;
- construct a working philosophical framework of critical analysis with “real life” application.

Course Prerequisites

Previous courses in one or more of the following fields are required: Philosophy, Psychology, Sociology, Political Science, Economics, History, or the other humanities (6 hours, minimum; or instructor’s permission).

Methods of Instruction

A combination of lecture, seminar-style open discussion and smaller group discussion. One or two class meetings will be at historical points of interest in Prague.

Assessment and Final Grade

- Midterm exam: 20%
- Final exam (Written or Oral): 25%
- Term paper: 25%
- Class participation: 20%
- Quizzes: 10%

Course Requirements

Midterm Exam

Written: Short essay style: the student will answer 4 essay questions

Final Exam

Written: Short essay style: the student will answer 4 essay questions

Or

Oral: 20 minute (or more) interview with the professor

Term Paper

The final paper on a chosen topic should be between 2,000- and 3,500-word long, double-spaced, and has to demonstrate students’ use of the course materials. Online research resources should be discussed and approved prior to the paper topic registration into the CIEE essay database.



Quizzes

Short in-class quizzes will be administered throughout the course to assess students' understanding of required readings.

Class Participation

Students are expected to contribute to class discussions regularly. To that end, students are also expected to have finished the readings by the day on which they are listed. There will be periodic pop quizzes over the readings, as part of the class participation grade.

CIEE Prague Class Participation Policy

Assessment of students' participation in class is an inherent component of the course grade. Participation is valued as **meaningful contribution in the digital and tangible classroom**, utilizing the resources and materials presented to students as part of the course. Students are required to actively, meaningfully and thoughtfully contribute to class discussions and all types of in-class activities throughout the duration of the class. Meaningful contribution requires students to be prepared, as directed, in advance of each class session. This includes valued or informed engagement in, for example, small group discussions, online discussion boards, peer-to-peer feedback (after presentations), interaction with guest speakers, and attentiveness on co-curricular and outside-of-classroom activities.

Students are responsible for following the course content and are expected to ask clarification questions if they cannot follow the instructor's or other students' line of thought or argumentation.

The use of electronic devices is only allowed for computer-based in-class tests, assignments and other tasks specifically assigned by the course instructor. Students are expected to take notes by hand unless the student is entitled to the use of computer due to his/her academic accommodations. In such cases the student is required to submit an official letter issued by his/her home institution specifying the extent of academic accommodations.

Class participation also includes students' active participation in Canvas discussions and other additional tasks related to the course content as specified by the instructor.

Students will receive a partial participation grade every three weeks.

CIEE Prague Attendance Policy

Regular class attendance is required throughout the program, and **all absences are treated equally regardless of reason** for any affected CIEE course. Attendance policies also apply to any required co-curricular class excursions or events, as well as Internship.

Students who transfer from one CIEE class to another during the add/drop period will not be considered absent from the first session(s) of their new class, provided they were marked



present for the first session(s) of their original class. Otherwise, the absence(s) from the original class carry over to the new class and count against the grade in that class.

Missing classes will lead to the following penalties:

90-minute semester classes:

<i>Number of 90-minute classes</i>	<i>Equivalent percentage of the total course hours missed</i>	<i>Minimum penalty</i>
one to two 90-minute classes	up to 10%	no penalty
three 90-minute classes	10.1–15%	reduction of the final grade by 3%
four 90-minute classes	15.1–17%	reduction of the final grade by 5%; written warning
five 90-minute classes	17.1–20%	reduction of the final grade by 7%; written warning
six and more 90-minute classes	more than 20%	automatic course failure and possible expulsion

180-minute semester classes:

<i>Number of 180-minute classes</i>	<i>Equivalent percentage of the total course hours missed</i>	<i>Minimum penalty</i>
one 180-minute class	up to 10%	no penalty
two 180-minute classes	10.1–20%	reduction of the final grade by 5%; written warning
three and more 180-minute classes	more than 20%	automatic course failure and possible expulsion

Persistent absenteeism (students approaching 20% of the total course hours missed, or violating the attendance policy in more than one class) will result in a written warning, a notification to the student’s home school, and possibly a dismissal from the program.

Missing more than 20% of the total class hours will lead to a **course failure**, and **potential program dismissal**. This is a CIEE rule that applies to all CIEE courses and is in line with the Participant Contract that each CIEE student signs before arriving on-site.



Late arrival to class will be considered a partial (up to 15 minutes late) or full (15 or more minutes late) absence. **Three partial absences due to late arrivals will be regarded as one full class absence.**

Students must notify their professor and Program Coordinators (PC) beforehand if they are going to miss class for any reason and are responsible for any material covered in class in their absence.

If missing a class during which a test, exam, the student's presentation or other graded class assignments are administered, **make-up assignment will only be allowed in approved circumstances**, such as serious medical issues. In this case, the student must submit a local doctor's note within 24 hours of his/her absence to the PC, who will decide whether the student qualifies for a make-up assignment. Doctor's notes may be submitted via e-mail or phone (a scan or a photograph are acceptable), however **the student must ensure that the note is delivered to the PC.**

Should a truly **extraordinary situation** arise, the student must contact the PC immediately concerning permission for a make-up assignment. Make-up assignments are not granted automatically! The PC decides the course of action for all absence cases that are not straightforward. **Always contact the PC with any inquiry about potential absence(s) and the nature thereof.**

Personal travel (including flight delays and cancelled flights), handling passport and other document replacements, interviews, volunteering and other similar situations are not considered justifiable reasons for missing class or getting permission for make-up assignments.

For class conflicts (irregularities in the class schedule, including field trips, make-up classes and other instances), **always contact the Academic Assistant** to decide the appropriate course of action.

Course attendance is recorded on individual Canvas Course Sites. **Students are responsible for checking their attendance regularly to ensure the correctness of the records.** In case of discrepancies, students are required to contact the Academic Assistant **within one week of the discrepancy date** to have it corrected. Later claims **will not** be considered.

CIEE staff does not directly manage absences at FAMU and ECES, but they have similar attendance policies and attendance is monitored there. Grade penalties may result from excessive absences.



CIEE Academic Honesty Policy

CIEE subscribes to standard U.S. norms requiring that students exhibit the highest standards regarding academic honesty. Cheating and plagiarism in any course assignment or exam will not be tolerated and may result in a student failing the course or being expelled from the program. Standards of honesty and norms governing originality of work differ significantly from country to country. We expect students to adhere to both the American norms and the local norms, and in the case of conflict between the two, the more stringent of the two will preside. Three important principles are considered when defining and demanding academic honesty. These are related to the fundamental tenet that one should not present the work of another person as one's own.

The first principle is that final examinations, quizzes and other tests must be done without assistance from another person, without looking at or otherwise consulting the work of another person, and without access to notes, books, or other pertinent information (unless the professor has explicitly announced that a particular test is to be taken on an "open book" basis).

The second principle applies specifically to course work: the same written paper may not be submitted in two classes. Nor may a paper for which you have already received credit at your home institution be submitted to satisfy a paper requirement while studying overseas.

The third principle is that any use of the work of another person must be documented in any written papers, oral presentations, or other assignments carried out in connection with a course. This usually is done when quoting directly from another's work or including information told to you by another person. The general rule is that if you have to look something up, or if you learned it recently either by reading or hearing something, you have to document it.

The penalty ranges from an F grade on the assignment, failure in the course to dismissal from the program. The Academic Director is consulted and involved in decision making in every case of a possible violation of academic honesty.

Weekly Schedule

A note on the readings:

- *All readings (unless otherwise specified) can be found in the Course Reader (Exact page numbers can be found in the "Table of Contents" of the Course Reader).*
- *After the mid-term, readings have the designation "Group A" and "Group B". This indicates that half the class will read the "Group A" text and half the class will read the "Group B" text (Of course, each group is welcome to read the other group's text, but it is not necessary). The class meeting will be spent discussing, comparing and evaluating the arguments and concepts found in the texts. This arrangement is meant to cut down on the amount of reading while still being exposed to plenty of ethical arguments and concepts.*

Week 1

Class 1

- Introduction
- Methodology and structure of the course
- Syllabus

Class 2

- Ancient Greek Ethics: Plato and Epicurus

Required readings:

- Plato's "Allegory of the Cave" (from *The Republic*)
- Selection from Plato's *Euthyphro*
- Epicurus's "Letter to Menoeceus" (p. 69-71)

Week 2

Class 1

- Ancient Greek Ethics: Plato continued
- Plato on the relationship between power, justice and the Good

Required readings:

- Selection from Plato's *Republic*

Class 2

- Ancient Greek Ethics: Aristotle
- Virtue ethics, ancient, medieval and modern:
 - A note on St. Thomas
 - A note on Taylor and MacIntyre

Required readings:

- Selections from Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* (Books I, II and X)

Week 3

Class 1

- Intro to Modern Ethics
- Kantian Ethics
- A response to Hume
- Overcoming the passions
- The "categorical imperative"
- The "realm of ends"
- The legacy of German Idealism

Required readings:

- Selection from Kant's *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*

Class 2

- John Stuart Mill's "utilitarian" ethics
- Teleological, consequentialist ethics
- Hedonistic calculation?

Required readings:

- Selection from Mill's *Utilitarianism*

Week 4

Class 1

- The ethical challenges of Nietzsche and Freud

Required Readings:

- Selection from Nietzsche's *Beyond Good and Evil* ("Against Conventional Morality")
- Selection from Freud's *Civilisation and its Discontents*

Class 2

- Marx and The Frankfurt School
- A note on Horkheimer and Adorno
 - Instrumental rationality and the limits of the Enlightenment
- Marcuse and the new challenges of the post-war "affluent society"
- A note on Habermas's reappropriation of Kantian Ethics
 - "Ideal rational subjects" and "ideal speech situations"

Required Readings:

- Selections from Marx (*The German Ideology, Grundrisse, Wage Labor and Capital, and Capital*)
- Marcuse's "New Forms of Control" (from *One-Dimensional Man*)

Week 5

Class 1

- 2 Historical Detours: Nazism and the Czechoslovak surveillance state
- Arendt and Havel: 2 existential analyses of responsibility and "authenticity"
 - A note on Heidegger

Required Readings:

- Arendt's "Organized Guilt and Universal Responsibility"
- Selection from Havel's "The Power of the Powerless"



Class 2

- French Structuralism and Post-Structuralism
 - A note on Claude Levi-Strauss
 - A note on Lacan
 - A note on Althusser
- Foucault, “disciplinary power,” and “panopticism”

Required Readings:

- Foucault’s “Panopticism” (from *Discipline and Punish*)
- Optional: Althusser’s “Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses”

Week 6
Midterm Exam
Period

Class 1

- Review for Exam

Class 2

Midterm Exam

Week 7
Midterm Exam
Period

Class 1

- Structure of the course going forward
- Topics up for discussion
- References for logic and argumentation
- Identifying and analyzing moral arguments
- Assessing moral arguments

Required Readings:

- n/a

Class 2

- Ethics Lab:
 - Exercising moral reasoning
 - Various short ethical cases for practice

Required Readings:

- TBD (Selections will be linked on this week’s Canvas module)

Week 8

Class 1

Ethics Lab: Euthanasia

- Structuring the sides of the argument
- Evaluation
- Conclusions



Required Readings:

- Group A: Brad Hooker, “Rule-Utilitarianism and Euthanasia”
- Group B: John Hardwig, “Dying at the Right Time”

Class 2

Ethics Lab: Abortion

- Structuring the sides of the argument
- Evaluation
- Conclusions

Required Readings:

- Group A: Judith Jarvis Thomson, “A Defense of Abortion”
- Group B: Don Marquis, “An Argument that Abortion is Wrong”

Week 9

Class 1

Ethics Lab: Singer and others on animal rights and “speciesism”

- Structuring the sides of the argument
- Evaluation
- Conclusions

Required Readings:

- Peter Singer, “All Animals Are Equal”
- Group A: Michael Allen Fox, “The Moral Community”
- Group B: R. G. Frey, “Moral Standing, the Value of Lives, and Speciesism”

Class 2

Liberalism vs. Socialism

- Liberty and Democracy: Some notes on Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau, and de Tocqueville
- The Framing of Contemporary Ethical, Political and Economic Debate
- Quantitative (economic) value vs. Qualitative (political) value
- Berlin on freedom, positive and negative
- Taylor on positive freedom

Required Readings:

- Group A: Isaiah Berlin, “Two Concepts of Liberty”
- Group B: Charles Taylor, ‘What’s Wrong with Negative Liberty?’

Note: **Both** texts should be read before final exam!!!



- **Paper topics due!!!** (See CRE p. 162 for some ideas, or feel free to email me and we can discuss possible topics)

Week 10

Class 1

Ethics Lab: On Justice

- Structuring the sides of the argument
- Evaluation
- Conclusions

Required Readings:

- Group A: John Rawls, “A Theory of Justice”
 - Group B: Robert Nozick, “The Entitlement Theory of Justice”
- Note: **Both** texts should be read before final exam!!!

Class 2

The Ethics of Free Speech

- Mill on free speech
- A note on Karl Popper
- The contemporary free speech debate

Required Readings:

- John Stuart Mill, “Freedom of Thought and Discussion” (From *On Liberty*)
- Group A: John Arthur, “Sticks and Stones”
- Group B: Andrew Altman, “Speech Codes and Expressive Harm”
- Alan Jacobs’ “Wokeness and Myth on Campus” (linked in this week’s Canvas module)

Week 11

Class 1

Ethics Lab: Gender and Sexuality

- Structuring the sides of the argument
 - Evaluation
 - Conclusions
-
- A note on Jordan Peterson and the “naturalistic fallacy”
-
- Short paper presentations and feedback (presentation worth 5% of final paper grade)

Required readings:

- Group A: Michael Levin, “Why Homosexuality is Abnormal”



- Group B: John Corvino, “Homosexuality and the Moral Relevance of Experience”

Class 2

Ethics and Postmodernism

- Derrida, Blanchot and Nancy

- **Outline of final paper due!** (worth 5% of final grade)

Required readings:

- Selection from Derrida, Blanchot and Nancy (TBD)
- Optional: Selection from Lyotard’s *The Postmodern Condition*

Week 12

Class 1

- Postmodernism and “liquid modernity”
- The fate of traditional distinctions and norms in fluid, “liquid” societies
 - A note on Sigmund Bauman
- Qualification vs. Quantification
 - A note on Deleuze and Guattari
- Butler, “performativity,” and gender

- Short paper presentations and feedback (presentation worth 5% of final paper grade)

Required readings:

- Butler’s “Performative Acts and Gender Constitution”
- Optional: Bauman’s “Migration and Identities in the Globalized World”

Class 2

Aristotelian Ethics revisited: Alisdair MacIntyre

- Panacea for late modernity?

First Draft of Final Paper due!!! (worth 10% of paper grade)

- Short paper presentations and feedback (presentation worth 5% of final paper grade)

Required readings:



- MacIntyre's "The Virtues, the Unity of a Human Life and the Concept of Tradition" (from *After Virtue*) (linked in this week's Canvas module)

Week 13

Final Exam Week

Class 1

Liberal vs. Illiberal Democracy in Europe and the West

- The relationship between economic and spiritual anxieties to authoritarianism
 - Authoritarianism, racism and xenophobia
 - Authoritarianism, truth and media
 - Warnings from the East: the growing discontent from CEE countries, spreading westward (Former Yugoslavia, Russia, Hungary, and others)
 - Our possible futures: Autocracies, Democracies or Otherwise?
-
- Short paper presentations and feedback (presentation worth 5% of final paper grade)
-
- Review for Exam

Required readings:

- Readings *TBD*...
- Optional: Umberto Eco's "Ur-Fascism"

Class 2

Final Exam

Final Paper due!!! (worth the remaining 80% of paper grade)

Course Materials

Required Reading:

Immanuel Kant's "Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals"
Judith Butler's "Giving an Account of Oneself"

Additionally, a course reader supplied by the instructor made up of selections of texts by the following authors: Plato, Thomas Jefferson, G. F. W. Hegel, Jeremy Bentham, John Stuart Mill, Karl Marx, Friedrich Nietzsche, Sigmund Freud, Friedrich Hayek, John Maynard Keynes, Karl Popper, Hannah Arendt, Theodor Adorno, Jurgen Habermas, Michel Foucault, Gilles Deleuze



and Felix Guattari, Jacques Derrida, Jean-Luc Nancy, Zygmunt Baumann, Slavoj Žižek, Peter Singer and Fareed Zakaria.

Other Resources

- “Critical Reasoning in Ethics: A Practical Introduction,” by Anne Thomson (Routledge, 1999)

Online Resources

- Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy