

ETHICS CORE AREA

INTRODUCTION

Ethics concerns how people ought to live and why they ought to live that way. It approaches such issues from a normative point of view; it is concerned with how moral agents should treat persons and other entities with moral status and with what it means to live a good life. In dealing with such matters, ethics examines justifications for normative claims and articulates the theories, traditions, and ideas that shape such claims.

OVERALL LEARNING GOAL OF COURSE IN THE ETHICS CORE AREA

Students should be able to reason ethically about the world and about their lives. They should accomplish this by engaging in a normative assessment of individual and institutional decisions, policies, and ways of living a good life and by personally engaging these.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES FOR COURSES IN THE ETHICS CORE AREA

1. Students should be able to reason ethically by drawing on certain ethical theories and traditions, by normatively assessing individual, professional, and institutional decisions, and by articulating their personal engagement with the meaning of the right and the good. Among these theories and traditions are virtue ethics, deontological theories, feminist ethics, ethics of care, natural law theories, consequentialist theories, and social contract theories.
2. Students should be able to understand, critically evaluate, and apply certain major ethical theories and traditions to personal, professional, and institutional decisions of normative significance. As part of such efforts, students should be able to describe how they understand some central ethical concepts such as justice, happiness, the good, virtue, dignity, rights, and equality.
3. Students should be able to demonstrate appreciation of nuance and ambiguity, as well as clarity and precision, in their thinking and writing about moral problems, concepts, and ideals.
4. Students should reflect on their own ethical decisions and actions, on their role as a morally responsible member of the human community, and on what it means to be a good person.

QUALIFYING CRITERIA FOR COURSES IN THE ETHICS CORE AREA

1. Courses should have a normative orientation; they should focus on what ought to be the case, never just on what is the case.
2. Courses should give serious consideration to one or more major ethical theories and traditions and their applications.
3. Courses should assume that the defensibility of any perspective must be open to rational evaluation.
4. Courses should foster students' inclination and ability to identify, reflect upon, evaluate, integrate, and apply different moral perspectives and concepts in order to form moral judgments, to defend them with good reasons, and to articulate how those judgments may fit into a larger framework of, for example, right actions and good lives.
5. Courses should be, broadly understood, a rational inquiry into moral issues and reflect an understanding that emotions, attitudes, and traits of character may be integral aspects of ethical decision-making and ethical reflection.

March 1, 2008

Rev March 3, 2008