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| **RS 361: CONTEMPORARY ISSUES IN ETHICS**  **Fall 2016 – California State University, Northridge**  **Mondays and Wednesdays 2:00-3:15 pm**  Instructor: Timothy Kuns  Email: timothy.kuns@csun.edu  Room: SH 314  Office hours: 1:00-1:50, Wednesdays, Santa Suzanna Hall, room 419 by appointment  Please make and confirm appointments by email. |
| **Course Description:** This course fulfills the requirements for RS361 Contemporary Issues in Ethics and “emphasizes the development of skills in critical thinking through analysis of such contemporary ethical issues as abortion, euthanasia, genetic engineering, sexual behavior, racism, gender bias, punishment, animal rights, the environment and the relationships between religion and morality.”  Goal: Students will seek constructive solutions to ethical issues in both personal and professional settings while avoiding impediments to meaningful dialogue.  Students will be able to:   1. Understand, explain, and apply the major ethical theories 2. Identify the values, principles, and biases which motivate an ethical point of view 3. Critique the validity of an ethical position based on the quality of information and argument, and its adherence to an ethical framework 4. Articulate verbally and in writing an ethical position based on ethical skills and principles |
| **Required Textbooks:**  *A Practical Companion to Ethics* (Fourth Edition) by Anthony Weston, Oxford University Press, 2011.  *Ethics and Business: An Introduction* by Kevin Gibson, Cambridge University Press, 2007.  Additional reading will be assigned from online sources throughout the semester. |
| **General Education Student Learning Objectives:**  Goal: Students will understand the rich history and diversity of human knowledge, discourse and achievements of their own and other cultures as they are expressed in the arts, literatures, religions, and philosophy.  Students will:  1. Explain and reflect critically upon the human search for meaning, values, discourse and expression in one or more eras/stylistic periods or cultures;  2. Analyze, interpret, and reflect critically upon ideas of value, meaning, discourse and expression from a variety of perspectives from the arts and/or humanities;  3. Produce work/works of art that communicate to a diverse audience through a demonstrated understanding and fluency of expressive forms;  4. Demonstrate ability to engage and reflect upon their intellectual and creative development within the arts and humanities;  5. Use appropriate critical vocabulary to describe and analyze works of artistic expression, literature, philosophy, or religion and a comprehension of the historical context within which a body of work was created or a tradition emerged;  6. Describe and explain the historical and/or cultural context within which a body of work was created or a tradition emerged. |
| **Religious Studies Student Learning Objectives:**  Students will be able to:  1. Recognize and to articulate, orally and in writing, the difference between an academic approach to religion and a personal, devotional approach.  2. Demonstrate a basic level of proficiency in recognizing the major contributors to the modern study of religion and their models/theories from philosophy, theology, the history of religions, and the social sciences.  3. Understand the following terms in their conventional, popular usage, and then discuss the variety of ways that religious studies scholars have critiqued, expanded, or problematized these: religion, religious, myth, ritual, symbol, philosophy, subjectivity, objectivity, secular/secularization, cult, sect, mysticism, theism, atheism, polytheism, monotheism, spirituality, magic, paganism, animism, canon, religious violence, post-colonialism, individualistic compared to community-based religions.  4. Explain and give basic examples of the social function of religion with regard to gender, ethnicity, and nationality.  5. Recognize religiosity in an aspect of modern culture such as different forms of media, art, music, films, politics, sports, and the public discourse on science.  6. Demonstrate a basic level of proficiency in describing several specific religious traditions, including their historical development, major beliefs and practices, and demonstrate a basic level of proficiency in interpreting religious texts and rituals from each religious tradition. |
| **Writing Intensive Student Learning Objectives:**  RS361 Contemporary Issues in Ethics, is designated Writing Intensive (WI).  Goal: Students will develop their abilities to express themselves and the knowledge they have obtained through practicing various forms of writing within different disciplinary contexts. Writing intensive courses will build upon the skills gained in the Analytical Reading and Expository Writing section of Basic Skills. In each WI course students will be required to complete writing assignments totaling a minimum of 2500 words.  Students will:  1. Develop and clearly define their ideas through writing;  2. Ethically integrate sources of various kinds into their writing;  3. Compose texts through drafting, revising, and completing a finished product;  4. Express themselves through their writing by posing questions, making original claims, and coherently structuring complex ideas;  5. Revise their writing for greater cogency and clarity;  6. Utilize adopted communication modes and documentation styles of specific disciplines (MLA, APA, Chicago, CBE, etc) where appropriate. |
| **Preparation:** Please be on time and fully prepared to discuss assignments and reading. Written assignments are to be submitted on the day due. Bring with you copies of reading assignments, course outlines, and other material on the day the material will be discussed. |
| **Course Work:** Students are expected to attend all class sessions, read all assigned reading, and complete all written assignments. Please notify me in advance if you will be unable to attend a class. |
| **Evaluation:** Students will receive reading quizzes, a midterm, and a final. Additionally, written assignments will comprise 40% of final grade.  Quizzes – 20%  Midterm – 20%  Final – 20%  Written Assignments – 40% (four writing assignments worth 10% each) |
| **Grading:** Grading will be based on the following scale  94-100 = A 77-79 = C+  90-93 = A- 74-76 = C  87-89 = B+ 70-73 = C-  84-86 = B 60-69 = D  80-83 = B- <60 = F |
| **Electronic Etiquette:** Personal electronic devices, e.g. iPhones, Androids, etc. are not to be used for personal purposes during class. You may use personal computers/tablets during class for class purposes only, such as reading assignments and taking notes. I reserve the right to deny your computer privileges during class. |
| **Plagiarism and cheating:** Plagiarism and other forms of cheating will not be tolerated and will result in failing the class. Additionally, faculty members are required to report incidents of academic dishonesty to the Office of the Vice President for Student Affairs. Refer to the most recent addition of the Student Handbook for a more complete discussion of Cheating and Plagiarism. |
| **Accommodation for Disabilities:** If you require special accommodation for a disability, please register with the Disability Resources and Educational Services (DRES) office or the National Center on Deafness (DCOD). The DRES office is located in Bayramian Hall, room 110 and can be reached at (818) 677-2684. NCOD is located on Bertrand Street in Jeanne Chisholm Hall and can be reached at (818) 677-2611. |
| **Personal Difficulties:** If you are having personal difficulties (e.g. health, emotional issues, or family problems) during the semester which interfere with your ability to perform the necessary assignments or attend classes, please notify me as soon as possible. |
| **Religious Observances:** If an assignment due date or a test conflicts with a religious observance, then please complete and turn in the assignment early. |
| **Class Discussion:** The motto for this class could well be the advice to “be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry” (James 1:19, NIV). This is not a class about arguing a point of view and taking no prisoners. Constructive dialogue, active listening and thinking, especially before speaking, are the guidelines we should observe during class discussions. There is a difference between being passionate about an issue and seeking to destroy someone who disagrees with you. Having said that everyone in the class is expected to participate in discussion. |
| **Written Assignments:**  Length: All four written assignments are to be between 750 and 1000 words. (In MS Word use: CTRL+SHIFT+G to determine word count.) The challenge here is NOT the word count; the challenge is writing efficiently and effectively. In other words, word count is a requirement and is not a grading criterion.  Formatting requirements: Please prepare these assignments using Times New Roman 12 point font, double spaced, with page margins set to 1 inch on the Left, Right, Top, and Bottom.  Style: Written assignments should comply with APA style requirements.  Submission: Submit papers via Moodle in PDF format. Papers are due at the beginning of class time on the date specified. |
| **Email Communications:** Please use the following convention in the Subject Line when communicating with me by email: RS361 – <your name as registered for the class> - <brief reason for the email>  An example:  Subject: **RS361 – Tim Kuns – I’d like to schedule an appointment** |
| **Moodle:** Please consult Moodle frequently for course updates, news, and handouts. |

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| **Weekly Class Schedule** | | | | |
| WEEK | DATE | READING/TOPIC/WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS | Quiz |  |
| 1 | 8/29 | Weston, Ch. 1 – Getting Started |  |  |
| 1 | 8/31 | Discussion: Ethics, who needs it? Impediments to productive dialogue | Y |  |
| 2 | 9/5 | **NO CLASS – LABOR DAY** |  |  |
| 2 | 9/7 | Weston, Ch. 2 – Beyond Authority  Discussion: Isn’t religion enough? Aren’t laws enough? | Y |  |
| 3 | 9/12 | Weston, Ch. 3 – Ethical Theories  First written assignment due: Religion and Ethics |  |  |
| 3 | 9/14 | Discussion: How ethical models can be applied to specific problems and issues | Y |  |
| 4 | 9/19 | Weston, Ch. 4 – When Values Clash |  |  |
| 4 | 9/21 | Discussion: When ethical models collide | Y |  |
| 5 | 9/26 | Weston, Ch. 5 – Creative Problem-Solving in Ethics |  |  |
| 5 | 9/28 | Discussion: What strategies are effective in addressing ethical conflicts? | Y |  |
| 6 | 10/3 | Weston, Ch. 6 – Making a Difference.  Second written assignment due: Application of an ethical model to a contemporary ethical problem |  |  |
| 6 | 10/5 | Exam – Weston Text |  |  |
| 7 | 10/10 | Gibson, Ch. 1 – Overview of Business Ethics |  |  |
| 7 | 10/12 | Case: The Business of Pornography | Y |  |
| 8 | 10/17 | Gibson, Ch. 2 – Ethical Theory |  |  |
| 8 | 10/19 | Case: Agri-Business - Terminator Seeds (GURT) | Y |  |
| 9 | 10/24 | Gibson, Ch. 3 – Ethical Implications of the Capitalism  Third written assignment due: The Ethical Issues of Capitalism |  |  |
| 9 | 10/26 | Case: BreX – Fool’s Gold | Y |  |
| 10 | 10/31 | Gibson, Ch. 4 – Feminism |  |  |
| 10 | 11/2 | Case: Women in the Work Place | Y |  |
| 11 | 11/7 | Gibson, Ch. 5 – Responsibility |  |  |
| 11 | 11/9 | Case: Product Liability | Y |  |
| 12 | 11/14 | Gibson, Ch. 6 – Rights |  |  |
| 12 | 11/16 | Case: Human Guinea Pigs | Y |  |
| 13 | 11/21 | Gibson, Ch. 7 – Autonomy |  |  |
| 13 | 11/23 | Case: Who is responsible for Jodie’s Hearing Loss | Y |  |
| 14 | 11/28 | Gibson, Ch. 8 – Beneficence |  |  |
| 14 | 11/30 | Case: Tobacco Philanthropy | Y |  |
| 15 | 12/5 | Gibson, Ch. 9 – The Environment  Fourth written Assignment due: Ethics and the Business of … |  |  |
| 15 | 12/7 | Case: Industrial Farming | Y |  |
| 16 | 12/12 | FINAL |  |  |
| **End of Syllabus** | | | | |