

**IDH 3600H 0201 Honors Case Studies in Ethics Syllabus**  
**3 Credit Hours**  
**Fall Semester 2017**

Dr. Michael Strawser  
Department of Philosophy, PSY 223  
Class Meeting Times: TR 3:00-4:15 pm in BHC 126  
Office Hours: Mondays 3:00-4:00 pm in PSY 223 and by appointment  
via [strawser@ucf.edu](mailto:strawser@ucf.edu)

**Course Description**

This is an interdisciplinary, case-study approach to practical contemporary ethical issues in, for example, education, engineering, law, medicine, personal relationships, politics, etc. Students will conduct significant research on the cases, the nature of which will be highly interdisciplinary. Students will also write position papers applying creative and critical thinking skills and theoretical ethical concepts and frameworks to the cases. They will present and defend positions on the cases both individually and in groups. Thus, in this course students will develop their moral understanding and critical thinking skills, their argumentation and writing skills, and they will engage in public speaking and consensus-building.

**Course Goals**

Students will:

- Demonstrate an understanding of the *ethical dimensions* of personal, societal, and professional life.
- Demonstrate knowledge of *major ethical concepts and theories* and use these concepts and theories where applicable to examine and interpret interdisciplinary cases raising significant ethical issues.
- Apply *creative problem-solving* strategies to specific ethical dilemmas.
- Actively engage in *ethical dialogues* by critically discussing and evaluating moral issues.
- Articulate effectively, *argue persuasively*, and think critically about moral judgments.
- Demonstrate the ability to *work towards a consensus* in making ethical decisions and show an appreciation of the challenges and complexities of arriving at such decisions.
- Develop *skills in research* and written and verbal expression.
- Take *responsibility for and ownership* of their own personal ethical development.

**Required Reading Material**

Textbook:

Nancy Stanlick and Michael Strawser, *Asking Good Questions: Case Studies in Ethics and Critical Thinking* (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing Company, 2015).

“Two things fill the mind  
with ever new and  
increasing admiration and  
awe, the more often and  
steadily we reflect upon  
them: the starry heavens  
above me and the moral law  
within me.”



Immanuel Kant

“Happiness requires both complete virtue and a complete life.”



Aristotle

## Recommended Reading Material

- Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* (Virtue Ethics). Available at: <http://classics.mit.edu/Aristotle/nicomachaen.html>
- Immanuel Kant, *Groundwork for a Metaphysic of Morals* (Deontology). Available at: <http://www.earlymoderntexts.com/assets/pdfs/kant1785.pdf>
- John Stuart Mill, *Utilitarianism* (Consequentialism). Available at: <http://www.utilitarianism.com/mill2.htm>
- Intercollegiate Ethics Bowl Information: <http://appe-ethics.org/ethics-bowl/>
- Southeast Regional Ethics Bowl: <http://southeastregionalethicsbowl.org/>

Additional course readings may be required or recommended.

## Course Requirements

### *Webcourse*

This course includes a webcourse component for discussions, assignments, and quizzes. Additional course materials and supplements may also be provided in the webcourse, so students should check the contents of the webcourse regularly. Please note that if you e-mail the instructor outside of the webcourse you should include your full name at the end of your message. The instructor may not respond to messages from unidentified students. In addition, it is against university policy for instructors to include grades or any information about your progress in any course in e-mail messages *except* in webcourses, so please do not ask about your grades in an e-mail. Instead, you can send a message via coursemail or see me in my office.

### *Class Participation*

In a class such as this which is focused on case studies, ethical dialogues, and team debates, class attendance and participation are essential. The instructor will use various pedagogical activities (e.g., timed writing tasks, small group discussion, etc.) to enhance and facilitate student learning. Consequently, class attendance and participation are essential. Students will not have the opportunity to make up missed classroom exercises, which will affect one’s grade adversely in the case of unexcused absences. Students who miss class work because of official excused absences including religious holidays—which require appropriate documentation—will not be penalized, as the points from those exercises will not be included in the student’s final points. However, in the event of sudden illness or emergency when it is not possible to see a doctor, students may be excused and/or able to make up missed classwork when they are better. However, it is necessary that students notify the instructor as soon as possible (an email message is fine) regarding a possible absence to determine whether the absence will be excused. If you cannot notify the instructor before a missed class, then you must notify the instructor within two days after the missed class to have him consider whether the absence will be excused. After two days without any notification the absence will be marked as unexcused. If a student is excused on a day that a graded assignment is due, then after communication between the student and the

instructor, the instructor will determine when the student will be expected to submit the assignment.

### *Writing Assignments*

*Timed Writings (TWs):* In order to facilitate student learning there will be approximately ten to fifteen unannounced timed writing assignments (approx. three to five minutes) throughout the course on material that has been assigned or previously covered. These assignments may occur at the beginning, middle, or end of class, and they may also occur in groups. Consequently, it is essential to be well-prepared and mindful of the course content. Each timed writing assignment will be worth four points. Generally, timed writings cannot be made up, but if you have an illness or otherwise reasonable excuse (which must be approved by the instructor, see above) for missing a timed writing, the missed exercise will not count against you and the points will not be included in your total points.

The timed writing assignments will be assessed as follows.

- 4 points = completely satisfactory attempt to answer question
- 3 points = limited, but generally satisfactory attempt; or completely satisfactory attempt to answer question, but student missed part of class
- 2 point = marginal attempt made with some accurate content, but not fully satisfactory or lacking in detail
- 1 point = no attempt, but student present for entire class period
- 0 points = student absent

*Case Proposal Assignment and Questionnaire:* Shortly after the SEREB (Southeast Regional Ethics Bowl) cases have been released, students will submit a written assignment in which they rank their top five case preferences (where your first preference is #1, etc.) and write a minimum 75-word justification (i.e., reasons) for your first preference, and a minimum 50-word justification for both your 2nd and 3rd preferences.

*Discussion Postings:* Students are required to write several thoughtful, well-researched, and well-argued discussion postings on three of the cases studies used during the course (these will be cases from the Southeast Regional Ethics Bowl). These writings will be posted in the appropriate Discussion Group in the webcourse. Note that the due dates for these assignments will be determined after the SEREB Cases have been released and posted in the webcourse. Note also that these discussion postings will be evaluated as formal written work, so clarity, spelling, grammar, etc. will count! The required Discussion Postings will be as follows:

- *DP#1:* First, students will write three short “facts and issues” discussion postings of a minimum 250 words each in which they briefly summarize each of their three cases and explain the key facts, the most significant area(s) for further research, and the three most prominent ethical issues arising from each case. The summary of the case should be crafted to give an indication of the centrality or importance of the ethical issues that have been identified. Each of these postings will be submitted in webcourses in the appropriate

Case Discussion Group and should be titled “DP#1 Your Last Name.” Note that to avoid any unintentional plagiarism, students are advised not to read other student postings before submitting their own postings. Also, remember to use quotation marks if you quote from the case (3 or more consecutive words), and include citations for any additional material that is referenced.

- *DP#1 Response*: Students will then be required to respond to at least three of these Discussion Postings with a critical comment of a minimum 100 words that *takes the discussion further*. Students should identify their agreements and disagreements with the authors' explanation of key facts and statement of problems. These responses should not be submitted as separate postings, but rather by replying to the original postings. As far as possible, students should try to respond to postings that have no previous response.
- *DP#2*: Students will then write three follow-up “evaluative and argumentative” discussion postings on the same three cases of a minimum of 350 words each in which they provide argumentation concerning the way in which the ethical issues identified in the first paper may be solved. Students should take into account the responses they received on their first posting. Although you should try to work towards a solution, it is not necessary here to “solve” all the problems posed from your first paper, but instead to discuss the ways in which specific ethical theories may be used to attempt to find a solution to the problems you identified or posed in the first paper. Each of these papers will be submitted in webcourses in the appropriate Case Discussion Group and should be titled “DP#2 Your Last Name.”
- *DP#2 Response*: The same instructions as “DP#1 Response” above, but students should consider the following questions when writing their critical responses:
  - Is it clear that the author has understood the relevant facts of the case and has conducted significant research into the case? Are there any facts that you think should be included or need further explanation?
  - Has the author clearly explained the central ethical issues of the cases? Could this consideration be further developed in any significant way?
  - Has the author identified possible positions that may be taken regarding the case? Comment.
  - Has the author presented a sound argument to deal with the central ethical issues of the case? Has the author proved evidence for his/her position? Can you think of any possible objections to the author’s argument? Explain.
  - Can you think of any way that the author’s argument could be made more persuasive? Do you have any questions or suggestions to improve the paper? Explain.
  - Is the writing clear and error-free?

*Case Study Written Assignment*: Students will then choose one of their three cases and write a more sustained and well-polished paper containing a persuasive analysis of the case. These papers should show significant reflections and development from commentary received in the

discussion groups, class discussions, and further research. First, student will submit a rough draft of 1,000 words, and this draft will be peer-reviewed. The students will submit a final draft of approximately 1,500-2,000 words, which should be double-spaced, typed in 12 pt font, Times New Roman, with 1" margins, and contain a minimum of five utilized references that are properly noted using an acceptable style (e.g., Chicago, MLA, or APA). Papers may be submitted by the instructor to turnitin.com.

Students' papers should include the following parts:

- **Question:** Identify and explain what you consider to be the single, central ethical question posed by the case. You could start your paper by writing: "The central ethical question posed by this case is ...?"
- **Claim:** Make a definite claim or proposal which serves to answer the central question. (Signpost your argument: perhaps you could write "I shall argue that the best response to this question is ... because ...")
- **Argument:** This consists of an analysis of the key facts and an explanation of your reasons/reasoning, evidence, objections and replies.

N.B. Your reasoning should include a discussion of a relevant ethical theory or theories.

N.B. You should try to anticipate what could be the biggest objection to your argument, since you won't have much space for more.

N.B. Your reasoning and evidence should demonstrate detailed research into the case.

Papers will be evaluated based on the following criteria with each criterion counting equally:

- **Clarity and Intelligibility:** Have you stated and defended your position with sound logic which allows the readers clearly to understand your line of reasoning?
- **Ethical Relevance:** Have you identified the relevant ethical theories and discussed their pertinence to the case while avoiding ethically irrelevant digressions?
- **Consistency:** Have you presented a unified argument and avoided contradictions and inconsistencies?
- **Thoughtfulness and Creativity:** Have you specifically presented your position on the case with both awareness and thoughtful consideration of different viewpoints, including those which disagree with your position?
- **Preparation:** Have you exhibited sufficient preparation and background research to demonstrate a thorough understanding of the case being discussed?
- **Structure:** Have you proofread your document and corrected errors in grammar, spelling, punctuation, style, and format?

*Test Creation Assignment:* Students will individually create four test questions that they would like to see on the final exam. The questions should include one multiple choice, one true/false, one short answer (answered in a phrase or couple sentences), and one essay question (answered in several paragraphs, one to two pages, i.e., 200-400 words). Each question should be on different material (e.g., you shouldn't have all questions on Utilitarianism). Students will submit the assignments in the webcourse by the due date. Although not all questions need to meet the

following criteria, at least one question should cover each of the following learning objectives (if not more):

- A. Would your question allow students to demonstrate understanding of the course material?
- B. Would your question allow students to analyze central concepts and arguments?
- C. Would your question allow students to evaluate multiple perspectives of an issue?
- D. Would your question allow students to synthesize perspectives into a(n) answer, argument, position that one can live with?

Using the letters for the criteria A, B, C, and D, students must indicate after each question which objective it addresses. Students must also provide answers for all of the questions they create.

Grading: Students will be graded according to the following general rubric:

- Content of questions and answers. For example, considerations of whether the question is well written and contains appropriate options (in the case of multiple choice) and the depth of answers provided as well as length and whether all learning objectives have been covered.
- Quality of questions and answers. For example, considerations of whether your questions exhibit appropriate familiarity with the topics under consideration and the significance of the material, lack of typographical and other errors, creativity, accuracy, and thoughtfulness of answers provided.
- Timeliness. See above on late assignments.

Each question and answer is assigned the following points:

- Multiple Choice (5; note that brief explanation or reference must be given for the answer)
- True/False (4; note that brief explanation or reference must be given for the answer)
- Short answer (4)
- Long essay (12)

A Possible Bonus: Selected student questions will be used on the in class tests, so if your questions are selected you should already know the answers to those questions!

*Oral Presentation:* Following the submission of DP#2, students will choose one of their three cases to present to the class. These oral presentations will follow the Ethics Bowl format and students will have 5-8 minutes to present a summary, identification of the central ethical problem, and proposed solution to the class. The presentations will be followed by Q&A in class. Students will be graded based on the clarity and quality of the case discussion and argument and the evaluation criteria for the written paper given above.

*Quizzes and Final Exam:* There will be two online quizzes throughout the course on the material presented in class. Students will have the opportunity to take these quizzes twice and their highest score will count. There will also be a final exam at the end of the course, and students will help to create this exam with their submission of the Test Creation Assignment. This exam

will consist of multiple choice, true/false questions, short answer essay questions (definition and identification or brief critical analysis), and essay questions. In general, anything from the assigned readings and classroom lectures and discussions will be considered fair game for the quizzes and final exam. A review will be given in class, although it is primarily the student's responsibility to compile a study guide for the test.

Additional explanations of the test and grading criteria will be presented in class and in the webcourse. Students should note that grades in this course are *earned by you* and *recorded by the professor*. They are not “given” by anyone.

A missed test cannot be made up – except for serious illnesses (normally requiring a formal physician’s excuse) or serious emergencies (requiring consultation with the instructors and their consent). If a student does not take the test, then he or she will earn a “0.” Students must speak to the instructor(s) as soon as possible if there is a conflict or issue regarding taking a test.

*Regional Ethics Bowl Participation:* Although all students will be encouraged to attend, only selected students from the class will be invited to participate in the Southeast Regional Ethics Bowl (SEREB) and the Mid-Atlantic Regional Ethics Bowl (MAREB). The SEREB coaches will select students based at least in part on the following criteria: interest, availability for the competition, outstanding oral communication of case studies, outstanding written communication of case studies, outstanding performance on test and quizzes, GPA, college year, and previous ethics bowl experience and success. Those selected to participate in the Regional Ethics Bowls will be sponsored by the UCF Department of Philosophy and the Burnett Honors College. Anyone who is not participating in the actual competition may attend the SEREB as a guest/observer.

## Grading

You will be able to follow your progress in the course by the record of grades found at MyGrades via MyUCF and/or in Webcourses. Your final grade will be determined by dividing the total points received by the total possible points. The percentage will be judged according to the scale below. However, the instructor reserves the right to adjust the percentages required for final grades based on overall student performance. This would only be done for the benefit of all students. In other words, the percentages required below would only be lowered, not raised, in the event of a curve. Note that the instructor will use a standard + grading system, and that university policy does not provide for “A+” grades.

Late written work submitted within 24 hours after the deadline will earn a maximum 50% credit. Late written work submitted after 24 hours past the deadline will not receive any credit.

A = Excellent, far exceeds average understanding as evidenced in course work and goes significantly beyond the basics.	90-100%	C = Average, meets minimum expectations and satisfies course requirements	70-76.x%
--	---------	---	----------

B+ = Far above average, meets or exceeds average understanding as evidenced in course work and fully understands the basics and goes somewhat beyond that level.	87-89.x%	D+ = Below average, meets most minimum expectations and satisfies all or most course requirements.	67-69.x%
B = Above average, fully meets average understanding as evidenced in course work and fully understands the basics and can deal with concepts somewhat beyond that level.	80-86.x%	D = Below average, meets many minimum expectations and satisfies all or most course requirements.	60-66.x%
C+ = Slightly above average, fully meets expectations for basic understanding as evidenced in coursework and understands the basics.	77-79.x%	F = Fails to meet minimum expectations in understanding and coursework as evidenced by performance and submission of graded elements.	0-59.x%

Grades will be based on the following points (see the schedule for the specific order of graded assignment/assessment appearance):

Assignment/Assessment	#	Total Points	Due Date
Case Proposal Assignment & Questionnaire	1	15	9/ <del>11</del> 18
DP#1	3 x 40	120	9/ <del>22</del> 29
DP#1 Responses	3 x 15	45	<del>9/27</del> 10/4
DP#2	3 x 50	150	10/6
DP#2 Responses	3 x 15	45	10/13
Case Study First Draft	1	50	10/27
Case Study Peer Review	1	50	11/10
Case Study Final Draft	1	150	11/20
Quiz 1	1	50	9/ <del>15</del> 22
Quiz 2	1	50	10/20
Test Creation Assignment	1	25	12/1
Final Exam	1	100	12/7
Oral Presentation	1	50	TBD
Timed Writings	1	40-60 est.	TBD

Incompletes are granted only if a student could not complete end-of-term assignments because of something over which he or she had little or no control (e.g., an illness or death in the family). To receive an "I" for the course, the student must have done most of the work for the course and he or she must speak to the instructor(s) before the final class meeting date.



## Academic Policy

Students are expected to follow UCF's Golden Rule for academic excellence and integrity. Any inappropriate behavior, academic or otherwise, will not be tolerated and may be reported to the Office of Student Conduct. For further guidance, please see <http://www.goldenrule.sdes.ucf.edu>. Students' work may be submitted to <http://www.turnitin.com> for authentication. Students found guilty of academic dishonesty or plagiarism will receive, at minimum, an F for the assignment(s) in which some form of dishonesty occurs and be referred to UCF's Office of Student Conduct. Students may also be given an "F" for the course and a "Z" grade designation. Remember that you are responsible for ensuring the accuracy of your essays/papers and the integrity of your research.

## Other Course Policies for Online and Traditional Course Components

If and when you engage in discussions either online or in person, be courteous and considerate. Simply put, be decent to each other (and to the course instructors). Respect for everyone is necessary. Being honest and expressing yourself freely are very important and are in fact essential, but so is being considerate of others. When online, please use appropriate "Netiquette." Please note, however, that if someone presents an absolutely ridiculous position, it is intellectually dishonest not to call it what it is. But you can do so with grace and style and with respect for another person even if you find that person's position to be incomprehensible, insane, weird, peculiar, etc. The point of intellectual honesty is the increase of knowledge.

## Class Schedule

**Note changes made due to Hurricane Irma.**

Dates	Class Content	Reading Assignments	Graded Assignments
Week 1: 8/22, 8/24	Introduction to Course, Syllabus, Ethics	<i>Asking Good Questions</i> (AGQ): Chapter 1, xi-18 (Thursday)	
Week 2: 8/29, 8/31	Ethical Theory	AGQ: Chapter 1, 18-30 (Tuesday)	N.B. No course on Thursday August 31 due to UCF football game.
Week 3: 9/5, 9/7	Ethical Theory, Logic and Persuasion	AGQ: 30-44 (Tuesday), AGQ 45-61 (Thursday)	Regional Cases should be released after Labor Day.
Week 4: 9/12, 9/14	Logic and Persuasion, Conceptualizing Ethical Cases	AGQ: 61-72 (Tuesday); 77-95 (Thursday)	Case Proposal Assignment & Questionnaire Due Monday 9/ <del>11</del> <u>18</u> ; Quiz 1 on Ethical Theory due on Friday 9/ <del>15</del> <u>22</u> by 11:55 pm

Week 5: 9/19, 9/21	Questioning Cases and Mapping Concepts	AGQ: 98-116 (Tuesday)	DP#1 due on Friday 9/ <del>22</del> <u>29</u> by 11:55 pm
Week 6: 9/26, 9/28	Creative Case Analysis	AGQ: 119-133 (Tuesday), AGQ: 133-143 (Thursday)	DP#1 Responses due on Wednesday <del>9/27</del> <u>10/4</u> by 11:55 pm
Week 7: 10/3, 10/5	Applying Ethical Theories	AGQ: 147-163 (Tuesday)	DP#2 due on <del>Monday</del> <u>Friday</u> 10/ <del>9</del> <u>6</u> by 11:55 pm
Week 8: 10/10, 10/12	Oral Presentations	AGQ: 165-182 (Tuesday)	DP#2 Responses due on Friday 10/13; Student Presentations
Week 9: 10/17, 10/19	Oral Presentations <a href="#">10/17: Case 4 Aaron Case 9 Brandon Case 11 Mary B. Case 12 Christopher</a>  <a href="#">10/19: Case 1 Makenzie Case 2 Stephanie Case 5 Ethan Case 6 Mica</a>		Student Presentations; Quiz 2 due on Friday 10/20 by 11:55 pm
Week 10: 10/24, 10/26	Oral Presentations <a href="#">10/24: Case 3 James Case 8 Mary N. Case 10 Darlene</a>		Student Presentations; <del>Case Study First Draft due on Friday 10/27 by 11:55 pm</del>
Week 11: 10/31, 11/2	Team Ethics Bowl Presentations		<a href="#">Case Study First Draft due on Monday 10/30 by 11:55 pm</a>
Saturday, November 4	SEREB at St. Petersburg College 8:00 am – 6:30 pm		<a href="http://southeastregionalethicsbowl.org/">http://southeastregionalethicsbowl.org/</a>

Week 12: 11/7, 11/9	Team Ethics Bowl Presentations		Peer Review due on Friday 11/10 by 11:55 pm
Week 13: 11/14, 11/16	Team Ethics Bowl Presentations		
Saturday, November 18	MAREB at University of North Georgia		
Week 14: 11/22, 11/23	TBD; No class Thurs., 11/23	Happy Thanksgiving!	Case Study Final Draft due on Monday 11/20 by 11:55 pm
Week 15: 11/28, 11/30	Last week of classes; TBD		Test Creation Assignment due on Friday, 12/1 by 11:55 pm
Week 16: Thursday Dec. 7	Final Exam Period: 1:00 PM – 3:50 PM	Final Exam	Final Exam

Note: The instructor welcomes comments and suggestions about the course and encourages feedback throughout the course. He also reserves the right to amend the syllabus at his discretion. The following course schedule is meant as a guide and may be modified when necessary (e.g., for guest speakers, etc.).

“It is better to be a human being  
dissatisfied than a pig satisfied; better to  
be Socrates dissatisfied than a fool  
satisfied. And if the fool, or the pig, is  
of a different opinion, it is only because  
they only know their own side of the  
question.”



John Stuart Mill