

PL 102: Introduction to Ethics, Aesthetics and Cultural Philosophy

Course Objectives

The objective of the course is to introduce students to philosophical studies of ethics, aesthetics and cultural philosophy and to show them how philosophical method can help in solving ethical dilemmas, value conflicts and other contemporary moral issues in the present day Africa.

Course Description

The course surveys the various branches of ethics, moral reasoning and philosophy. It asks, among the rest, what is the meaning of being free and responsible, what are one's rights, what is meant by values, what is the role of cultural identity and tradition in moral reasoning, are moral norms universal, and how does one make moral judgement in a modern multicultural society. The course introduces also the main trends of African philosophical approaches and discusses the meaning of African philosophy as well as the role of philosophy in Africa.

Delivery: 30 Lectures and 15 Seminars

Assessment: Course Work 40 percent. Final Examination 60 percent.

Course Outline

Topic 1 Ethics and Moral Reasoning

- 1.1 What is meant by morality and what is meant by ethics
- 1.2 Introduction to the core concepts in moral reasoning and ethics
- 1.3 Moral judgement and dealing with ethical dilemmas
- 1.4 Introduction to axiology: theory of value
- 1.5 Professional Ethics
- 1.6 Ethics in science and scientific research
- 1.7 Moral problems and value conflicts in pluralistic and multicultural societies

Topic 2 Aesthetics

- 2.1 The concept of beauty
- 2.2 Aesthetic values and aesthetic judgement
- 2.3 The concept of art

Topic 3 Cultural philosophy

- 3.1 Culture, Tradition and philosophy
- 3.2 The role of culture in philosophical ideals and philosophical analysis
- 3.3 Philosophical traditions
- 3.4 Traditional philosophies

Topic 4 Philosophy in Africa and development

- 4.1 Introducing the debates in African philosophy
- 4.2 Main trends in African philosophy
- 4.3 African philosophy vs. philosophy in Africa

Basic readings

Feinberg J. (1973). *Social Philosophy*. Englewood Cliffs. Prentice-Hall.

Francena, W. (1973). *Ethics*. Prentice-Hall. Englewood Cliffs.

Masolo, D.A. (1995). *African Philosophy in Search of Identity*. Nairobi. East African Educational Publishers.

Ochieng'- Odhiambo. F. (1995). *African Philosophy – an Introduction*. Nairobi. Consolata Institute. Of Phil.

Presbey. G, Struhl K & Olsen, R. (1995). *The Philosophical Quest: A Cross Cultural Reader*. McGraw-Hill Co.

Rosenberg, J. (1996). *The Practice of Philosophy*. Prentice Hall. Englewood Cliffs.

PL 211: Theories of Social and Moral Philosophy

Course Objectives

The objective of the course is to give a cross-cultural overview of the main approaches as well as the major questions of social and moral philosophy. It leads the student into an in-depth study of major themes in social and moral thought and theory.

Course Description

The course will present principal concepts, problems and theories in social and moral philosophy. It focused particularly on theories of justice and on the explanations of the philosophical foundations of human rights theories. It discusses such concepts as the state, the nation, sovereignty, authority, freedom, responsibility, rights and duties, justice, democracy, egalitarianism and equality, identity, tolerance, etc. These themes are constantly related to the political and social thought and development of Africa.

Delivery: 30 Lectures and 15 Seminars

Assessment Course Work 40 percent. Final Examination 60 percent.

Course Outline

Topic 1 Introduction to social and moral philosophy

- 1.1 Discussion on the distinctions between philosophical social and moral frameworks and other social sciences as well as the distinction between moral theories and religious doctrines.
- 1.2 Discussion on the relation moral theory and everyday morality and moral judgement, etc.
- 1.3 Introduction to the main concepts in social and moral philosophy such as values, rights, duties, the concepts of good/bad, justice, equality, moral principle, the idea of human nature, etc.

Topic 2 Highlights of the history of moral philosophy and ethics

- 2.1 Moral Philosophy and Social thought in the Ancient Greek
- 2.2 The importance of cosmology, religion, philosophy in human nature.
- 2.3 The relation between ethics and religion in African philosophy, introduction to Eastern moral philosophy and ethics, the overview of European humanism

Topic 3 Main theories in social and moral philosophy: their classics and contemporaries

- 3.1 Teleology and virtue ethics – in Greek philosophy and in modern philosophy
- 3.2 Teleology and utilitarian ethics – in classics and in contemporary ethics;

comparison of utilitarianism in private moral judgement and as a public policy guideline (constitution making, political agenda, election campaigns, etc.)

- 3.3 Deontology before and now – comparing the idea of moral law and moral duty in Immanuel Kant vs. modern religions

Basic Readings

- Feinberg J. (1973). *Social philosophy*. Prentice-Hall. Englewood Cliffs.
Gauthier, David. (1986). *Morals by Agreements*. Oxford. Clarendon Press.
Francena, W. *Ethics*. (1973). New Jersey. Prentice-Hall. Englewood Cliffs.
Oruka, O. (1998). *Ethics*. Nairobi. Nairobi University Press.
Somerville, J. and Santoni, R. (eds.). (1963). *Social and Political Philosophy. Readings from Plato, Aristotle, Machiavelli, Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau*. N.Y. Anchor Books, Doubleday.