

Module Title:	Philosophical Ethics
Module Code:	404PPET
Level:	4
Credit Rating:	20 credits
Duration:	200 hours
Teaching Hours:	40
Academic Responsibility:	Séamus Mulholland OFM, PhD

Module Aims:

- To create an awareness of the importance of ethical reflection
- To facilitate an understanding of the issues which need to be addressed in making moral judgements
- To enable students to make critical judgements on practical moral issues
- To introduce students to the major ethical theories and their proposers
- To examine the continuing influence and impact of Philosophical Ethics in contemporary society

Module Content:

This module seeks to introduce students to the importance of the role of philosophy in Ethics and ethical debate. It will be stressed that it is important to locate morality in experience and the implications of this will be explored. The module will investigate the sources of western moral philosophy—Plato, Aristotle, Kant, Bentham, and Mill. Modern developments will also be discussed: Intuitionism, Emotivism, (Stevenson); Emotivism (Ethical non-naturalism— A.J.Ayer), Situation Ethics (Fletcher), Mc Intyre's 'Virtue Ethics'. It will then examine some threats to the intelligibility of Ethics: amoralism, determinism, subjectivism, cultural relativism. Finally, it will offer some reflections from a Catholic perspective on contemporary ethical debates such as Civil Partnerships; the recent Adoption legislation as well as proposed equality legislation.

Learning Outcomes:

By the end of this module students should be able to:

1. Demonstrate a systematic understanding of the principle aspects of the philosophical bases of ethics and be able to offer a coherent appreciation of that philosophy and major ethical philosophers.
2. Think and work creatively and intellectually and be stimulated in their search for useful knowledge and insight into the endeavours of philosophical ethics and its practical applications.

3. Provide students with a breadth and depth of study and communication in single [Philosophy] and combined [Philosophy, Theology, Moral Thought] disciplines.

Learning and Teaching Strategies

The module will be taught through a variety of teaching methods: delivered lectures, question/discussion, power point presentation, philosophical text, response and discussion, problem setting and possible solutions from students, presentations by students (with feedback from peers), at least one of the presentations will involve the students working in groups.

Assessment:

The module will be assessed through a variety of means ranging from essays, seminar, powerpoint presentation of topic by students, taped oral examination. It is also possible to combine these assessment methods e.g. 2500 essay + PPP + oral exam or 2500 essay + 1 hour seminar by student or two 2500 word essays. Or a text selection from one of the AG Philosophers with a critique by the student.

Indicative Essay Titles

1. Outline the fundamental precepts of Utilitarianism and discuss whether their philosophical bases are justified.
2. Why does Situation Ethics find such an appeal among Christians, and is such an appeal justified?
3. Is Kant right to think that the consequences of our actions are morally irrelevant?
4. How does Stevenson's explanation of moral disagreement differ from Ayer's?

Illustrative Bibliography

Allen, A. L. *The New Ethics: A Guided Tour of the Twenty First Century Moral Landscape*, New York, 2001

Crook R. H., *An introduction to Christian Ethics*, Upper Saddle River, N.J., Pearson Education, 2006.

Mc Intyre, A *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory*, London, 1984

Mill, J. Stuart, *Utilitarianism, On Liberty, Considerations on Representative Government*. London: Everyman, 1993.

Singer, P., ed. *Ethics*. London: Oxford University Press, 1994.

Uhlmann, M. M., ed. *Last Rights: Assisted Suicide and Euthanasia Debated*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998.

Vardy, P *The Puzzle of Ethics*, London 1994

Williams, B. *Ethics and the Limits of Philosophy*, Massachusetts, 1990