

**CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, NORTHRIDGE**  
**CONTEMPORARY ETHICAL ISSUES (RS 361 ONLINE)**  
(Class Number: 20581)

**FALL 2017**

**Instructor:** Mustafa Ruzgar, Ph.D.

**E-mail:** mustafa.ruzgar@csun.edu

**Course Website:** Course Site: <http://moodle.csun.edu>

**Virtual Office Hours:** Tuesdays: 5:00-6:00 pm

**Due Dates:** All assignments are due on Fridays, before 11:59 pm.

**Course Description:**

This course is designed to introduce students to contemporary ethical issues through analyses of major ethical concepts and theories as they apply to particular moral issues. Topics ranging from “reproductive choices,” “euthanasia,” “punishment and death penalty,” and “war, peace, and terrorism,” to “race and ethnicity,” “gender,” “world hunger and poverty” to “living together with animals ,” environmental ethics” and “cyber-ethics” will be discussed and analyzed. When appropriate, major theories of ethics will be addressed in each discussion, such as the social contract theory, utilitarianism, virtue ethics, and Kant’s categorical imperative.

**RS 361 Student Learning Objectives**

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.

1. Students will be able to articulate, orally and in writing, the diversity and distinctiveness of the moral values implicit in and the ethical arguments currently employed within various religious and secular traditions.
2. Students will demonstrate an understanding of the influence of diverse religious and secular traditions on moral attitudes and behaviors.
3. Students will be able to develop oral and written proposals for resolving current moral dilemmas in society.
4. Students will be able to recognize and critically evaluate their own and others’ assumptions and biases as they play a role in - - and sometimes distort - - their thinking.
5. Students will demonstrate oral communication skills and mindful listening through conversations in the classroom about the moral values and forms of ethical thinking of fellow students.

**GE Student Learning Outcomes**

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.

### **Required Texts:**

--*Contemporary Moral Issues: Diversity and Consensus* (4<sup>th</sup> Edition) by Lawrence M. Hinman (Routledge), ISBN: 978-0-205-633609. From here on referred as Hinman.

### **Course Expectations:**

Since this is an online course, the means by which the subject matter will be delivered to you will be different from that which would normally take place in a traditional classroom setting. This means that lectures and discussions will not be face-to face in a room but rather “virtual.” The textbook will serve as your “lecture” and online discussions will take the place of classroom dialogue. Thus, it is very important that you keep up with your reading. Your online course offers several advantages to a traditional classroom. Not only does the site offer easy communication with other students and your teacher, it allows access to a wealth of online resources. I encourage you to use this forum to exchange ideas, resources and comments with your fellow students and learn from what others know.

You are required to ‘attend’ class by keeping up on announcements, readings, assignments, and exams. A student in an online course must be prepared to act independently and to encounter technical glitches of all kinds. If you experience technical difficulties that may prevent you from keeping up with the curriculum, you must let me know immediately via e-mail so we can work out a solution.

### **Instructor’s Response Policy:**

I will check my email daily. I will respond to course related questions within 48 hours. I will announce assignment due dates in the course units and through updated messages just as I would in a regular class. Distance Learning is self-directed learning. It requires a high level of responsibility, dedication and self-discipline on the part of the student. In this course, you are responsible for your own work, your own progress and your own grade. In order to succeed, you

need to log in to the course regularly to check announcements, participate in discussions and access course content.

### **Other Policies:**

1. **Deadlines:** Odd things happen in cyberspace—emails get lost, servers disconnect temporarily, and logins fail. Do not wait for the last minute to do your work. Allow time to meet deadlines.
2. **Late Work:** Each week's work must be completed by **Fridays of every week before 11:59 pm.**
3. **Policy on Academic Dishonesty:** Cheating and plagiarism will not be tolerated. Any form of cheating or plagiarizing will result in a failing grade for the course and will be reported to the university for appropriate disciplinary action.

**Cheating:** Using any materials or devices or strategies which provide undue advantage on any exam, assignment, activity or other method of assessment for a course. This includes, but is not limited to, looking at another student's exam, using phones or other communication systems to text message during exams, taking pictures or images of exams, talking with others during exams, using Internet to find information, or any other system of inappropriate "help." Exams are to be measures of what YOU, as an individual, have learned.

**Plagiarism:** Taking anyone else's work as one's own. Presenting another's words, ideas, forms of expression, materials, or labor without proper citation, referencing, and declaration that this material originated outside the student's own work.

4. **Provisions for Possible Syllabus Addenda or Revisions:** There may be some changes in the syllabus. Students are required to comply with any changes made by the instructor.

### **Professional Conduct in Our Virtual Classroom Community:**

I encourage you to participate in the Forum Discussions. This class is a "safe harbor" for you to have discussions. One of the unifying objectives in this course is to familiarize you with best practices and give you exposure to becoming a member of a professional community. I also have the responsibility to insure that our virtual community is a conducive learning environment for all students. As such, all students will please follow these policies of our classroom community for all emails, discussion groups, and chat rooms:

1. No profanity or foul language, either in writing or pictures, of any kind at any time.
2. Please address everyone politely by their name.
3. Under no circumstances may you ask for a classmate's personal contact information or in any way ask for a personal meeting or date.

4. Unless I specifically ask you to do so as a proper part of an assignment, do not include in your email signatures or other material in your messages any kind of a personal nature, including a photo, sales solicitation, information about a business, or a political or religious message of any kind. Do not include a blind or other kind of hyperlink to such information. Violators will be excluded from the course.

5. Please use common sense and common courtesy as if you are already a professional in the business community. Please check with me first if you have any questions about what is appropriate.

## **COURSE REQUIREMENTS and ASSIGNMENTS**

### **A. Participation and Discussion**

**1—Discussion Posts:** There are going to be 10 discussion posts on the specified dates (Please refer to the schedule). All the posts will be based on your reading assignments for the day you are given the assignment. Your discussion post consists of responding to one of the questions initiated by the professor in advance. Your discussion post must be at least 250 words, grammatically sound, and relevant to the question and reading assignment. You must post your responses before the deadline.

**2—Forum Discussions:** There are going to be 10 forum discussions. Each Student is required to answer the forum question with at least 50 words.

**2—Quizzes:** There are going to be 10 quizzes on the specified dates (Please refer to the schedule). All the quizzes will consist of multiple-choice questions and will be strictly from your reading assignments for the day you are given the quiz. You must complete the quizzes before the deadline. There will be a **10 minute respond time for the entire** quiz. Hence, it is essential that you do the reading first and attempt to answer the quiz afterwards.

### **B. Watching and Critical Analysis**

**3—Video Summaries:** There are going to be 10 video summaries on specified dates (Please refer to the schedule). Your video summaries include watching a short video on the internet about the topics posted on the syllabus (you have to search and find the video yourself), summarizing it with 100 words at least, and **including the URL link at the end of your summary**. You must post your video summaries before the deadline.

### **C. Exams**

**4—Midterm Examination:** The midterm examination will include multiple choice and True/False questions from the topics discussed prior to the exam. You must take your midterm examination before the deadline. **There will be a 2-hour limit for the Midterm Examination.**

**5—Final Examination:** The final examination will include multiple-choice and True/False questions only and will be **cumulative**. You must take your final examination before the deadline. **There will be a 4-hour limit for the Final Examination.**

#### **D. Papers**

**6—Reflection Paper:** Write a reflection paper focusing on one of the moral issues discussed during the semester, such as abortion, euthanasia, death penalty, etc. Address what you knew/thought about this issue prior to taking this class and point out how this class has changed, improved, or obliterated your previous perception/opinion. Your reflection paper should be five to six pages, typed, double-spaced, and with an organized body. You must not use any external sources except for your textbook for this assignment. You must post your reflection papers before the deadline.

##### Possible Reflection Paper Topics:

Reproductive choices  
Euthanasia  
Punishment and death penalty  
War, peace, and terrorism  
Race and ethnicity  
Gender  
World hunger and poverty  
Living together with animals  
Environmental ethics  
Cyber-ethics

##### **Grading & Rubrics:**

Quizzes: 50 points (5 points for each quiz)  
Posts: 200 points (20 points for each assignment)  
Video Summaries: 150 points (15 point for each summary)  
Forum Discussions: 50 points (5 points for each forum discussion)  
Midterm Examination: 150 points  
Final Examination: 250 points  
Reflection Paper: 150 points

**Grading Scale:**

<u>Percentage</u>	<u>Grade</u>
1000 - 960 points	A
959 - 900 points	A-
899 - 870 points	B+
869 - 830 points	B
829 - 800 points	B-
799 - 770 points	C+
769 - 730 points	C
729 - 700 points	C-
699 - 670 points	D+
669 - 630 points	D
629 - 600 points	D-
599 points or below	F

**TENTATIVE SCHEDULE**

**ALL ASSIGNMENTS (Quizzes, Posts, Video Summaries, Forum Discussions, Midterm Examination, Final Examination, and Reflection Paper) MUST BE SUBMITTED ON FRIDAYS, BEFORE 11:59 P.M.**

**WEEK 1: AUGUST 28-SEPTEMBER 3**

July 12: *Introduction: A Pluralistic Approach to Contemporary Moral Issues*  
Readings: Hinman: xiv-xxi

**WEEK 2: SEPTEMBER 4-10**

July 17: *Matters of Life and Death—Introduction*  
Readings: Hinman: 2-10

**WEEK 3: SEPTEMBER 11-17**

*Matters of Life and Death—Reproductive Choices*  
Readings: Hinman: 32-42  
Quiz #1  
Post #1  
Video Summary #1  
Forum Discussion #1

**WEEK 4: SEPTEMBER 18-24**

*Matters of Life and Death—Euthanasia*

Readings: Hinman: 113-124

Quiz #2

Post #2

Video Summary #2

Forum Discussion #2

**WEEK 5: SEPTEMBER 25-OCTOBER 1**

*Matters of Life and Death—Punishment and the Death Penalty*

Readings: Hinman: 134-160

Quiz #3

Post #3

Video Summary #3

Forum Discussion #3

**WEEK 6: OCTOBER 2-8**

*Matters of Life and Death—War, Peace, and Terrorism*

Readings: Hinman: 173-209

Quiz #4

Post #4

Video Summary #4

Forum Discussion #4

**WEEK 7: OCTOBER 9-15**

**MIDTERM EXAMINATION: Due October 13th**

*Matters of Diversity and Equality—Introduction*

Readings: Hinman: 214-226

**WEEK 8: OCTOBER 16-22**

*Matters of Diversity and Equality—Race and Ethnicity*

Readings: Hinman: 239-270

Quiz #5

Post #5

Video Summary #5

Forum Discussion #5

**WEEK 9: OCTOBER 23-39**

Matters of Diversity and Equality—Gender

Readings: Hinman: 275-318

Quiz #6

Post #6

Video Summary #6

Forum Discussion #6

**WEEK 10: OCTOBER 30-NOVEMBER 5**

Expanding the Life Circle—World Hunger and Poverty

Readings: Hinman: 361-390

Quiz #7

Post #7

Video Summary #7

Forum Discussion #7

**WEEK 11: NOVEMBER 6-12**

Expanding the Life Circle—Living Together with Animals

Readings: Hinman: 396-426

Quiz #8

Post #8

Video Summary #8

Forum Discussion #8

**WEEK 12: NOVEMBER 13-19**

Expanding the Life Circle—Environmental Ethics

Readings: Hinman: 439-456

Quiz #9

Post #9

Video Summary #9

Forum Discussion #9

**WEEK 13: NOVEMBER 20-26**

Expanding the Life Circle—Cyber-Ethics

Readings: Hinman: 466-502

Quiz #10

Post #10

Video Summary #10

Forum Discussion #10

**WEEK 14: NOVEMBER 27-DECEMBER 3**

**REFLECTION PAPERS: Due December 1<sup>st</sup>**

**WEEK 15: DECEMBER 4-10**

**FINAL EXAMINATION: Due December 15<sup>th</sup>**