

# **Tompkins Cortland Community College**

## **Master Course Syllabus**

**Course Discipline and Number: PHIL 201**  
**Course Title: Contemporary Moral Issues**

**Year: 2024-2025**  
**Credit Hours: 3**

**Attendance Policy:** *To maintain good grades, regular attendance in class is necessary. Absence from class is considered a serious matter and absence never excuses a student from class work. It is the responsibility of all instructors to distribute reasonable attendance policies in writing during the first week of class. Students are required to comply with the attendance policy set by each of their instructors. Students are not penalized if they are unable to attend classes or participate in exams on particular days because of religious beliefs, in accordance with Chapter 161, Section 224-a of the Education Law of the State of New York. Students who plan to be absent from classroom activity for religious reasons should discuss the absence in advance with their instructors. See college catalog for more information.*

**Services for Students with Disabilities:** *It is the College's policy to provide, on an individual basis, appropriate academic adjustments for students with disabilities, which may affect their ability to fully participate in program or course activities or to meet course requirements. Students with disabilities should contact the Coordinator of Access and Equity Services, to discuss their particular need for accommodations. All course materials are available in alternate formats upon request.*

### **Course Description**

An examination of a range of contemporary moral problems and moral theories. Problems for discussion may include vegetarianism, abortion, the nature of our obligations to help others, how we should treat criminals and enemies, and the question of whether there is such a thing as moral truth or not. PHIL 201 fulfills the SUNY General Education Humanities requirement. Prerequisites: MATH 090 if required by placement testing; prior completion or concurrent enrollment in ENGL 101 and RDNG 116 if required by placement testing. 3 Cr. (3 Lec.) Fall and spring semesters.

### **Course Context/Audience**

Philosophy 201 is an elective that fulfills three credits of the TC3 General Education Requirement. The course offers the student the opportunity to focus their attention on their most general normative ends, in order to determine the extent to which the various means available in current society are fitted to those moral ends. In the process of attempting to justify and optimize the fit between the students practice's and moral commitments the student is also able to identify and practice various types of normative reasoning. By an examination of means and ends, and methods of justification, students sharpen their perception of standards which ought to guide their work in other disciplines.

### **Basic Skills/Entry Level Expectations**

**Writing:** WC College level writing skills are required. See course co-requisites or pre-requisites.

**Math:** M2 Completed MATH 090 (if needed) - Course requires only the use of basic mathematical skills.

**Reading:** R3 Course may be taken concurrently with RDNG 116.

### **Course Goals**

Students will learn empirical facts and evidence relevant to moral reasoning in regard to a range of contemporary moral issues such as the ones described above.

They will learn the major normative theories which when applied to these empirical facts and evidence yield the spectrum of reasoned moral opinion about these issues.

Through the examination of these empirical facts and normative theories, as well as a close critical examination of their own views and justifications, they will learn by practice and reflection various procedures of public moral reasoning.

Lastly they will learn a wide range of meta-ethical theories about the wider biological, cultural, spiritual or historical nature of moral judgment, intuition and reason.

## Course Objectives/Topics

Objective/Topic	% Course
70% of this course is closely reasoned interviews of students' moral judgments and justifications. Upon completion of the course students should be able to identify and clearly express their views on a wide range of contemporary moral issues, and offer justifications for these views in logical form, including identifying the major and minor premise of their argument, an assessment of the argument's validity, and specification of evidence or further argumentation in support of its premises. Students will learn to find and state the best counterarguments to their own arguments, as well as to offer the best rebuttals of these counterarguments. This polemical, critical aspect of the course is facilitated not only through the interviews with the teacher in class but in relatively formalized class debate. Finally, names of key philosophers, philosophies, and concepts salient to this reasoning should also be learned. This latter goal is achieved through the 50% of course time spent reading the assigned chapters, handouts, and through class lecture.	100% +
<b>Note:</b> Because student mastery of the knowledge, skills and understanding of individual objectives overlap, the sum of the amounts of class time assigned to each objective exceeds 100%.	

## General Education Goals - Critical Thinking & Social/Global Awareness

CRITICAL THINKING OUTCOMES	HOW DOES THE COURSE ADDRESS THE OUTCOMES (Include required or recommended instructional resources, strategies, learning activities, assignments, etc., that must or could be used to address the goal/outcomes)
<p>Students will be able to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ develop meaningful questions to address problems or issues.</li> <li>➤ gather, interpret, and evaluate relevant sources of information.</li> <li>➤ reach informed conclusions and solutions.</li> <li>➤ consider analytically the viewpoints of self and others.</li> </ul>	<p>Philosophy 201 is an immersion in controversies with many conflicting answers. The Socratic method is employed to raise salient questions. One on one student and teacher dialogues; class debate; debate format on written work.</p> <p>Most ethical controversies rely heavily on both conceptual and factual data which needs to be explored. Historical, social, biological, and polemical context is provided for debates.</p> <p>Philosophy 201 teaches logical argumentation, both formal and informal, emphasizing valid reasoning. A range of formal arguments is presented; students criticize validity of arguments and the truth of premises.</p> <p>Ethical philosophy is presented in a context of controversy; all views are evaluated. Class debate; debate format on written work.</p>

SOCIAL/GLOBAL AWARENESS OUTCOMES	HOW DOES THE COURSE ADDRESS THE OUTCOMES (Include required or recommended instructional resources, strategies, learning activities, assignments, etc., that must or could be used to address the goal/outcomes)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Students will begin to understand how their lives are shaped by their ethical views, and their ethical views by a wide variety of factors.</li> <li>➤ Students will understand that their ethical views and actions have social, economic and environmental consequences.</li> </ul>	<p>Contemporary moral issues directly address the interplay between values and the world at a variety of levels. Present cultural, sociological, historical context for how values charge across time and place.</p> <p>The social consequence of ethic views is the main topic is philosophy 201. Present historical, cultural, sociological context of ethical controversies.</p> <p>Justice, moral responsibility, free will, care, all have social, economic, and environmental consequences. Present ethical controversies in the context of their bearing on livelihoods, resources, and society.</p> <p>Ethical debates about the planet, animal, plants, and the ecosystem are directly addressed. We present the implications of the various ethical controversies for these systems.</p>

### Instructional Methods

A successful approach is as follows: In the first third of the course, students prepare for class by reading a chapter or two from the “theory” section of the text. A short quiz may be given to motivate the reading, and check progress. A lecture follows. During this third of the course students are exposed to various normative and metaethical theories concerning the distribution of value, desert, advantage, and power, organized somewhat along historical lines. A brief sketch of informal logic, distinctions between politics, political philosophy, ethics, and religious ethics is included. An account of classical Platonic, Aristotelian, and Christian realisms, then accounts of humanist, social contract, utilitarian, Kantian ethics are covered. The remaining two thirds of the course are spent in student interviews and class debates on a separate contemporary moral issue each week. For this portion of the course, students read the relevant chapters of the “applied” section of the text to prepare for class.

### Methods of Assessment/Evaluation

Method	% Course Grade
Mid-term and final paper	up to 50%
Attendance, and class participation	up to 20%
Quiz results	minimum of 30%

### Text(s)

#### Recommended

Ethics, Theory and Practice, Barbara MacKinnon, Thompson Publishers.

OR

Consider Ethics, Bruce Waller, Pearson

### Bibliography

Online sources for this course:

The Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy <http://www.iep.utm.edu/>

The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy <http://plato.stanford.edu/> (Tends to be too challenging for most introductory students but often provides useful ideas anyway, even to beginners.)

Wikipedia has become a valuable resource for a quick, entry-level way to track down the meaning of concepts in philosophy. It should be supplemented with the more reliable and peer-reviewed entries in the online encyclopedias above.

Finally, an anthology of annotated excerpts, open source classical readings, and links to philosophy articles on the web developed by the instructor is helpful.

### Other Learning Resources

<b>Audiovisual</b>
No resources specified
<b>Electronic</b>
No resources specified
<b>Other</b>
The teacher is encouraged to hand out copies of the day's news from various perspectives. This is easily done before class with a quick scan of the internet. This keeps things as current as possible. In addition the full range of websites and blogs should be forefront in the student's minds, since they supplement in crucial ways mainstream TV.