

Course Project

Social Ethics

COURSE OBJECTIVES

Upon successful completion of this course, the student will be able to:

1. Describe the major traditions of social ethical theory
2. Explain the reasoning behind selected theorists' arguments
3. Determine the strengths and weaknesses of an ethical theory
4. Evaluate the social and ethical impact of real-life cultural events or personal experiences

PROJECT DESCRIPTION (OR BACKGROUND INFORMATION)

For this project, you will present an analysis of an ethical problem in your community through the lenses of two ethical theorists using a presentation medium of your choice. You may choose to write an essay of approximately eight pages, or create a video presentation (see instructions for submitting a video included below), or write a short story of approximately eight pages, or create a website, etc. This list of options is not all-inclusive. Whatever format is chosen, please refer to the rubric as a guide for ensuring all necessary components and details are submitted in your response. Your project will:

- Explain an ethical issue in your community
- Outline the main arguments and features of two ethical theorists
- Analyze your community's ethical issue using your two chosen ethical theorists
- Construct a debate between the two theorists, allowing them to critique and respond to each other
- Appraise which theorist best resolves the ethical issue
- Predict what outcomes would result from each ethical theorist's solution

PROJECT INSTRUCTIONS

Studying social ethics helps provide us with a thoughtful foundation from which we can evaluate the ethical problems with which we are confronted in our relationships and in our communities. In this project, you will identify and research an ethical question in your community. You can conduct this research by finding and reading primary and secondary sources on the issue and/or by interviewing someone in your community who engages with an ethically-charged social issue in their work—a public school teacher, a social worker, an employee of the justice system, etc. Then, use the theoretical tools for ethical evaluation that you have developed in this course to construct a “debate” between two of the theorists in this course about that ethical issue. You can present that debate via

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Course Project

Social Ethics

one of a number of different media – through an analytical essay, a video presentation, a short story, a website, etc. Be sure, however, to give each theorist a “charitable” reading – i.e. construct the strongest argument you can using their philosophical viewpoint, observing both their strengths and their weaknesses. Once you have given each a fair reading, give your own final assessment of which theorist offers the most viable answer to the ethical problem you have investigated.

The final product of your research, however you choose to present it, will have four general components:

- 1) A detailed explanation of the ethical issue in question. Based on what you have learned through your research, who are the key individuals, organizations, social groups, or other “stakeholders” involved in this ethical issue? What competing values or priorities give the situation an ethical valence? If you conducted an interview, what does the community member think or feel about the situation? What have they seen work and not work in addressing it (i.e. what is their experiential history with it)?
- 2) A clear exposition of two ethical theorists’ main arguments. What are their priorities as ethicists? What do they believe are the most essential features of ethical reasoning? How do they develop and deploy their arguments?
- 3) An in-depth application of the theories you’ve outlined in #2 to the ethical question you’ve investigated in #1. How would these theorists respond to this ethical question? How would they critique or refute one another in addressing that ethical question? Construct this as a debate, allowing the theorists to respond to one another.
- 4) Your own assessment of which of these theorists is best able to address the ethical problem you’ve unpacked. Why is this theory more reliable than the other? What positive outcomes can you anticipate from a resolution to this problem based on the theory you have chosen? What negative outcomes (or less positive ones) would have proceeded from the alternative? Your answer must provide an argument for why this theory is more rationally justifiable than the other. Do not rely on “preference” or general intuition about what “seems” better; explain *why* you have come to the conclusion that you have.

PROJECT SUBMISSION

1. A title page is not required for project submissions. Because evaluators do not see student names when reviewing student work, it is important that students not include any personal identifiers in their project submissions.
2. Save your document as a PDF file. In Microsoft Word, you can use the Save As option to select PDF as your file format.
3. *If your project requires a video*, you should post the video to a free video hosting site like www.youtube.com, www.photobucket.com, or one of the other free webhosting websites. The following website maintains a list of video hosting sites; <http://www.videohostings.com/>.

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Social Ethics

In the written materials that you submit as part of the assignment, you should include the title of the video and a link for the faculty member to use to grade your submission.

4. Upload the PDF file in your course.
5. Your assignment will not be returned to you so keep a copy for your files.