



**Requirements for new ethics courses**

**brought by the GERC Committee**

**MOTION:**

The Faculty Senate moves to codify the current practices for approving proposed new courses to meet the ethics degree requirement. This policy would replace the policy passed by Faculty Senate at its meeting on December 2, 2019.

**RATIONALE:**

The GERC Committee's current practices for reviewing new ethics courses, significant changes to existing ethics courses, and/or when evaluating transfer courses has not been well codified. There needs to be a written policy so that departments know the requirements when they wish to propose new courses.

**EFFECTIVE:**

Immediately upon Chancellor approval.

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DocuSigned by:

*Sine Anahita*

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Sine Anahita, UAF Faculty Senate President

The Chancellor:  Approves

Vetoes  Acknowledges

Daniel M. White, UAF Chancellor

Date: 2/7/20

## **Ethics Designation Rubric**

### **I.      Explanation**

A.      The following rubric will be used to evaluate course proposals to fulfill the Ethics baccalaureate degree requirement and will be effective immediately. The syllabus and supporting documentation must demonstrate clear evidence of the way in which the course will meet the criteria of the rubric. In evaluating a course using the rubric, consider whether the syllabus demonstrates a significant (50% or more) focus on theoretical frameworks (i.e. the ideas, principles, and concepts of past and present experts) in the field of Ethics, and a critical understanding and evaluation of those frameworks. In addition, the course description and course objectives should reflect the importance of developing in students the necessary skills to critically evaluate the quality of the answers given by a moral theory, as well as the moral theory itself.

B.      To fulfill the Ethics baccalaureate degree requirement, the proposed course must score a minimum of seven points on the rubric.

C.      In addition, in order to maintain consistency within the UA system, courses in fulfillment of this requirement at UAF must be offered at the 300-level and have as a prerequisite junior-level standing. For transfer students who are petitioning a course below the 300-level in fulfillment of this requirement, the GERC committee will make a decision on a case-by-case basis using the rubric.

D.      Inasmuch as the language in this document was not in place when the courses that currently meet the Ethics requirement were developed, the following courses are grandfathered into this designation: BA F323X, COJO F300X, JUST F300X, NRM F303X, PHIL F322X, PS F300X. In recognition of the importance of developing in UAF students the skills needed to confront the many challenging moral situations they will face in their personal and professional lives, courses in this list that do not currently meet the rubric are thus encouraged to bring their courses into alignment with the requirements given in this document.

### **II.      Description**

Ethics is a discipline within Philosophy that studies the moral difference between right and wrong through various theoretical frameworks. The University of Alaska Fairbanks recognizes the essential need of students to learn these frameworks in order to be able to navigate the complex ethical theater of modern, professional life. If students do not understand and assimilate these ethical theoretical frameworks, then they will lack the necessary navigational skills to recognize complex ethical situations, and calculate the moral course of action. This need is only made more dire when one realizes that ethical problems are generated continuously (e.g. cloning, modern warfare, social media, etc.). For this reason, UAF has adopted an Ethics degree requirement for all baccalaureate students.

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Thus, courses that satisfy the Ethics baccalaureate degree requirement present a rigorous and extensive study of the prominent theories that underlie ethical decision-making. In these classes, moral issues and dilemmas play the secondary role of promoting critical understanding of these theories. It is important therefore to understand and preserve the difference between an *ethical theory* class, and an *applied ethics* class: the second requires the first, but can not stand in its stead. Important themes should include, but not be limited to, justice, responsibility, the good life, types of value, the greatest good, virtue, and duty. Given the nature of the requirement, courses are expected to spend a majority of their time on explaining and evaluating the theories that underlie moral decision-making. Courses should focus on familiarizing students with the fundamental components required for clear, creative, and thoughtful moral evaluation and theory-backed judgment (e.g. intrinsic v. instrumental value, descriptivism v. prescriptivism, subjectification v. dehumanization; positive v. negative action, etc). The study of ethical frameworks must include metaethics, as well as the normative theories of consequentialism, deontology, and virtue ethics, and other relevant theories as well. The objective of the requirement is to help students develop a systematic, theory-based approach to novel and complex moral issues in their personal, professional, and political communities, so that they can become active and responsible citizens.

As a supplement to those courses that satisfy the Ethics baccalaureate degree requirement, individual colleges, departments, and programs are encouraged to develop a discipline-specific *applied ethics* course, so that students in their discipline have an opportunity to put into practice the skills that they learn in their *ethical theory* course—doing so will help students hone their moral reasoning abilities through an overview of some salient moral dilemmas in their fields. Such courses would be in addition to, but not in fulfillment of, the Ethics baccalaureate degree requirement.

## III. Rubric

Criteria	Meets (2)	Approaches (1)	Does not meet (0)
<b>Knowledge:</b> Explain how the course facilitates students' acquisition of knowledge of ethical terminology, theories, and decision-making processes.	The course requires students to learn ethical terminology, theories, and decision-making processes, and connects that knowledge to ideas in other areas of human inquiry and activity.	The course requires students to learn ethical terminology, theories, or decision-making processes.	The course requires students to apply ethical theories and terminology to specific cases.
<b>Analysis:</b> Explain how the course requires students to use formal logic, analysis, and critical thinking to evaluate ethical theories and ethical decision-making.	The course uses rigorous logical and evidence-based standards to examine the material, and requires students to examine and defend their positions this way.	The course requires students to make connections between claims and asks them to engage in evaluative tasks with regard to the material and assignments.	The course does not require students to engage with the material in a critical manner.
<b>Application:</b> Explain how the course develops students' practical skill of taking a theory-driven approach to new and challenging ethical issues and situations.	The course requires students to critically reflect on the way in which different ethical theories handle novel and challenging cases and situations, in order to develop their practical moral reasoning abilities.	The course requires students to apply ethical theories to familiar and/or non-complex cases and situations.	The course does not require students to apply ethical theories to specific cases and situations.
<b>Communication:</b> Explain how the course enhances students' capacity for communication of their own moral reasoning, as well as develops a better understanding of the moral reasoning of others.	The course fosters discussion between students concerning the arguments in support of their moral judgements, using the discussions to critically examine and evaluate the quality of those moral reasons.	The course requires students to provide arguments in favor of the conclusions of their moral decision-making processes.	The course does not require students to communicate or discuss their moral reasoning.