1. Catalog Description

PHI 2500G  The Good Life: Theory and Practice. (3-0-3) F, S. Short Title: The Good Life
A philosophical study of the good life. What constitutes a good life? How ought one to live?
Examination and critical analysis of a variety of ethical theories from classical through the present
and their practical application to contemporary issues.
Prerequisites: None.
This course is writing-active.

2. Student learning objectives

In successfully completing PHI 2500G, students will

1) demonstrate the ability to write and speak effectively. Students are required to read, from both
historical and contemporary sources, a variety of arguments concerning the role of religion, politics
and self-interest in the construction of a system of values. They are then required to critically
evaluate these arguments in written assignments such as exams, in-class response papers, and
homework exercises. There is also an emphasis on participation in class discussion which develops
listening and speaking skills.

2) demonstrate the ability to think critically. Students are required to critically evaluate particular
normative ethical theories and their applications to a variety of contemporary moral problems in
written assignments such as exams, in-class response papers, and homework exercises. Students also
develop an ability to recognize certain features of good and bad arguments and to use this reasoning
ability to develop their own conception of "the good life" in a way that withstands conflict and
criticism.

3) function as responsible citizens. One of the primary goals of this course is to assist students in
discovering the nature of their social obligations. Students examine their responsibilities to
themselves and to others, both as individuals and as members of the society in which they live.
Students are exposed to theories such as Cultural Relativism and Ethical Relativism and are required
to evaluate such theories in written assignments. Students may be required to perform a community
service task of their choosing, such as donating blood, working for the blood bank or raking leaves
for a neighbor.

b) Additional student learning objectives. Students will

1) examine a variety of historical conceptions of the good life, including ancient Greek, Judeo-
Christian and early modern.
2) examine the role of aesthetic experience in the good life in various areas, such as religion and the
ethical theory utilitarianism.
3) actively investigate several different conceptions of "well-being" and the role happiness and
pleasure have played and should play, in any reasonable conception of it.
3. Course outline

PHI 2500G is divided into 15 units, to be distributed evenly during a 15-week/50-minute course (45 classes) or a 15-week/75-minute course (30 classes).

The course is divided into two parts: Theory and Practice. The sample outline included here separates those two parts as one example of how the course may look. However, it is also possible to present particular issues when the theories are introduced as an alternate way of illustrating their practical consequences and examining their differences.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Topic</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Part I - Theories</strong> - The following is a list of theories and sample readings.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Introduction to the course. Discussion of classical conception of the “good life” and its relation to happiness, pleasure, leisure, education, virtue, etc.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Religion. Discussion of Divine Command Theory and relation between belief in God’s existence and the moral life.</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Relativism. Discussion of Cultural Relativism and Ethical Relativism and the significance of the difference between these two theories.</td>
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<td>4-5</td>
<td>Psychological Egoism and Ethical Egoism. Investigation of egoism both as theory of human motivation and as a theory of ethics. Examination of the possibility of acting against one's interest as well as the obligation to do so.</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Utilitarianism. Discussion of the difference between happiness and pleasure, the relation of happiness to the “good life” and the obligation to “maximize happiness.”</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>Kantianism. Introduction to Kant's Categorical Imperative and the notion of absolute moral rules. Distinction between consequentialist and deontological theories. Relation between reason and morality.</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>Virtue ethics. What traits of character make one a good person? Discussion of virtues as found in Socrates, Plato and Aristotle. Role of virtues in living the “good life.” Distinction between virtue ethics and theories of right action.</td>
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**Part II - Practical Applications** - The following is a list of sample topics and readings.

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<th>Week</th>
<th>Topic</th>
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<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td><strong>Famine Relief</strong> - P. Singer, “Famine, Affluence and Morality” and G. Hardin, “The Case Against Helping the Poor”</td>
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15 Review and closing remarks

4. Evaluation of student learning

a) Student learning is evaluated on the basis of
   1) two or three essay exams
   2) essay quizzes and/or in-class response papers, and/or homework assignments
   3) a comprehensive final exam

b) This is a writing-active course. Homework, quizzes, in-class assignments and exams are predominantly essay. Students are expected to show an understanding of the material discussed in class and to offer critiques of various positions. Students are encouraged to work on developing coherent and persuasive arguments for positions they endorse. The goal of the assignments is to foster reflective, consistent, and independent thinking.

5. Rationale

a) PHI 2500G is part of the Social and Behavioral Sciences segment of the General Education Curriculum. In this course students examine a variety of competing ethical theories in different historical and cultural contexts and critically evaluate these theories. By fostering a dissatisfaction with facile answers to fundamental questions of human existence, students come to understand what it means to have ethical obligations and to appreciate the implications of such obligations for their own lives - both as students and as members of the community in which they live.

b) This is an introductory course. There are no prerequisites.

c) This course is not similar to any other existing courses at EIU.

d) This course is an approved elective in the philosophy major and minor.

6. Implementation

a) This course is assigned initially to Dr. Jonelle DePetro.


c) No additional cost to students.
d) Fall 2000

7. Community College transfer
A community college course may be judged equivalent to this course.

8. Date approved by the department _______3-27-00__________________

9. Date approved by CAHCC ____________________4-5-00____________

10. Date approved by CAA _________________________________________

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