ANTY 403E: Ethics and Anthropology

Professor G.G. Weix

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Stone Hall room 304

Office: Social Sciences 223

11:10 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

Office hours: TR 12:40-2:00 p.m.

TA: Itzel Yarger-Zagal

TR 9:00-10:30 a.m. and by appt.

Phone: 243-6319

Course Description
This course examines different traditions of ethical reasoning and decision-making, and anthropological understanding and knowledge, in relation to each other. Students will learn to identify the traditional concepts of morality and ethical reasoning in the three main traditions of western philosophy, and compare them in the context of issues and debates in sociocultural anthropology, with some discussion of topics from archaeology, physical anthropology and linguistic anthropology as well as the field of anthropology as a whole.

Required Readings

Goals
1. To identify the three main traditions of western philosophical study of ethics.
2. To consider avenues for ethical decision-making and action in comparative and cross cultural perspective.
2. To identify, analyze and evaluate specific ethical issues in each of the sub-disciplines of anthropology, and in the field of anthropology as a whole.

Policy
Attendance is required, and will be documented each day with a sign-in sheet and/or in-class exercises. Absences are excused for illness, family emergency, military duty, religious holidays and participation in University sponsored sports events. Disability accommodation To register with Disability Services and arrange accommodation for taking exams, please notify the instructor by February 4th.

Assignments and Evaluation Required assignments include:
  a) a portfolio of written commentaries on assigned readings (100 points)
  b) periodic in-class writing exercises and discussion (45 points)
  c) an objective midterm and final exam (100 points each)
Grades are assigned on the following scale: 92-100 = A, 82-91 = B, 72-81 = C, 62-71 = D, 61 and below = F. (+ and – are at the discretion of the instructor).

The final grade is based on a cumulative score of 300 points. Credit (CR) requires a minimum of 200 points. Graduate student supplement is described separately.
SYLLABUS

WEEK ONE: What are ethics and anthropology?
January 29 Introduction and Overview Goals/Expectations, Handout
31 AAA Code of Ethics Commentary 1 due Feb. 5

Film: The Anthropologist
Reading for Feb 5: Preface and Chapter 1: “Staking the Field”

WEEK TWO: Ethics: a student’s guide
February 5 Pedagogy: a moral education Commentary 2 due Feb. 7
7 Anthropology’s paradigm Commentary 3 due Feb. 12

Film: The Life and Times of Sara Baartman: the Venus Hottentot
Reading for Feb. 7: “The Mark of the Moral”
Reading for Feb. 12: Chapter 3: “The Range of Moral Differences…”

WEEK THREE: Cultural Relativism
February 12 Cultural vs. Moral Relativism Commentary 4 due Feb. 14
14 Universals and Human Nature Commentary 5 due Feb. 19

Films: The Last Tasmanian Rape is…
Reading for Feb. 14: “…and the Quest for Universals”
Reading for Feb. 19: Chapter 4: “On Being a Good Mother”

WEEK FOUR: Personhood and Loss
February 19 Concepts of Person and Self Commentary 6 due Feb. 21
21 Loss, Suffering, Harm, Healing Commentary 7 due Feb.26

Film: Leona’s Sister, Gerri
Reading for Feb. 21: Chapter 5: “The Prohibition against Incest”
Reading for Feb. 26: Chapter 6: “Control of In-Group Aggression”

WEEK FIVE: Agency and Violence
February 26 Discussion and Review of Concepts and Issues

Reading for Mar 5: Chapter 9: “Distributive Justice”

WEEK SIX: Forms of Justice
March 5 Distributive Justice Commentary 8 due March 7
7 Legal vs. Moral Authority Commentary 9 due March 12

Reading for Mar 7: Chapter 8: A few Reflections in Midstream”
Reading for March 12: Chapter 9: “The Moral Community and the Person”
WEEK SEVEN: Reason and Emotion
March 12 Tests of Validity Commentary 10 due March 14
14 Human Values Commentary 11 due March 19
Reading for March 14: Chapter 10: System: Ethical Concepts
Reading for March 19: Chapter 11: System: Ethical Generalizations

WEEK EIGHT: Rational Decisions and Actions
March 19 Rationality vs. Rationalization Commentary 12 due March 21
21 Justification Commentary 13 due March 26
Reading for March 21: Chapter 12: Justification
Reading for March 26: Chapter 13: Sanctions and Moral Feelings

WEEK NINE: Hierarchy and Obligation
March 26 Sanctions and Shame Commentary 14 due March 28
28 Obligation and Duty
Reading for March 28: Chapter 14: Moral Configurations
Reading for April 9: Chapter 15: Evaluation

WEEK TEN: Affinities and Autonomy
April 9 Affinities and Evaluation Commentary 15 due April 11
11 Autonomy and Interests Commentary 16 due April 14
Reading for April 11: Chapter 16: Some Philosophical Considerations

WEEK ELEVEN: Allegories of Identity
April 14 Allegory and Identity
16 Human Rights

WEEK TWELVE: Individual Responsibility
April 21 Individual Responsibility
23 Fieldwork Ethics

WEEK THIRTEEN: Collective Action and Agency
April 30 Collective Identity
May 2 Political Agency Portfolios Due in class.

WEEK FOURTEEN: Morality and History
MAY 7 Review and Discussion
9 Conclusion, Course Evaluation, Self-Assessment

Final Exam: Tuesday May 14 8:00-10:00 a.m.