RARITAN VALLEY COMMUNITY COLLEGE
ACADEMIC COURSE OUTLINE

PHIL – 106 CURRENT MORAL AND SOCIAL ISSUES

I. Basic course information

(A) Course Number and Title: PHIL 106 Current Moral and Social Issues

(B) Date of Proposal or Revision: Spring 2007

(C) Sponsoring Department: Humanities, Social Sciences, and Education

(D) Semester Credit Hours: 3 credits

(E) Weekly Contact Hours: 3 Lecture: 3 Lab: 0

(F) Prerequisites: none

(G) Laboratory Fees: N/A

II. Catalog Description

An examination of both practical and theoretical issues in the area of moral philosophy: Reading will include historical sources and recent and contemporary material on such topics as euthanasia, assisted suicide, abortion, reproductive technology, warfare and terrorism, wealth distribution, capital punishment, and matters concerning the environment.

III. Statement of Course Need

This course deals with moral philosophy and its application to current issues. It provides a bridge between mainstream philosophy and topics that concern the students in their personal lives.

IV. Place of Course in College Curriculum

A.

- Humanities credit
- Free elective
- Can be used to satisfy a requirement for the AA degree in Criminal Studies
Prerequisite for the AS degree in Health Sciences and the AAS degree in Law Enforcement

V. Outline of Course Content

- the nature of philosophy
- the nature of ethics as a subdivision of axiology and philosophy
- Greek moral thought
- the modern tradition: Kant, Mill, et al.
- current issues: cultural relativism, euthanasia, wealth distribution, et al.
- student presentations: service learning and individual research projects

VI. Educational Goals and Learning Outcomes

Educational Goals

Students will:
- gain and introduction to ethics as a subdivision of philosophy (GE 4, 5, 6)
- become acquainted with major philosophical views (principally, Greek, subjectivist, Kantian, and utilitarian) concerning morality (GE 4, 5, 6)
- gain an overview of specific areas of controversy in law, biomedicine, international conflict, and wealth distribution (GE 4, 5, 6)
- develop their ability to articulate their views concerning issues in these same areas (GE 1, 2, 4, 5, 6)
- develop their ability to expound at length upon these issues in writing (GE 1, 2, 4, 5, 6).

Learning Outcomes

Students will be able to:
- explain in writing the place of ethics within philosophy as a whole
- explain how writers like Hume and the later positivists reduce value judgments to expressions of personal feeling
- state at least one version of Kant’s categorical imperative and describe instances of its application
- state the principle of utility and describe instances of its application
- state the essential meaning of cultural relativism and criticisms of the theory
- cite lines of argument on each side of views concerning abortion, euthanasia, capital punishment, the redistribution of wealth, the conduct of warfare, and the difference in principle between warfare and terrorism.
VII. Modes of Teaching and Learning

- informal lecture
- small group discussion
- class-wide discussion
- student presentations of individual research and community service projects

VIII. Papers, Examinations, and other Assessment Instruments

- essay exams
- impromptu quizzes where needed.

IX. Grade Determinants

- exams
- in-class performance
- extra credit presentations

X. Texts and Materials


XI. Resources

- texts, whiteboard, occasional photocopy
- fieldwork (e.g., RVCC-based service learning) for added course credit.