1. COURSE DESCRIPTION

Ethics is a branch of philosophy that studies the goodness and pertinence of human behaviour. Therefore, an ethics course must be directly focused to praxis. Thus, and in spite of introducing a series of concepts and key thinkers during the first part of the course, the main part of this course will deal with practical ethical issues: either examples or case studies put forward by the lecturer, or tasks that students will have to perform.

With this course, students are required to realise the ethical dilemmas they face in their everyday life, as well as those they will likely face in their future professional activity. For this purpose, students will entangle in a series of ethical *aporias*, which they will have to solve by using the different tools that will be explained during the course, as well as the example of key thinkers whose ideas may help shape students’ decisions. Students will then be expected to resolve those dilemmas being fully conscious of the consequences of their decisions, hence enabling them to design their path towards a virtuous professional life.

In sum, this is not a course *about* ethics, but an ethics course. In a course *about* ethics, category where the majority of courses that can be found in other institutions fall into, ethics is explained from a historical perspective in a too academic manner, leading the student to focus on a few texts and developing a merely rational knowledge on the matter. In this ethics course, however, students will use ethical ideas and “tools” to sort out everyday life problems. In other words, this course focuses on seeking virtue in the life of a person who is at the centre of activity.
2. OBJECTIVES AND SKILLS

Basically, the main learning objectives of this course are the following:

- Developing critical thinking regarding moral issues.
- Understanding a series of tools and procedures to know oneself further, leaving conventional clichés, fashions and other examples of false consciousness.
- Understanding the influence of our socio-economical and cultural frameworks in the development of our moral judgements.
- Understanding what life in society consists of and the rights and duties that derive from it.
- Understanding of a series of basic concepts related to morality, such as good, freedom, responsibility, the difference between respect and tolerance, etc.
- Understanding of the interaction between the common and the different, between the individual and the social.
- Developing the necessary skills to apply basic ethical concepts to the moral dilemmas of everyday life.
- Developing certain practical knowledge about what university life means towards professional life.

3. CONTENT

The contents of this course basically revolve around two axes: on the one hand, the understanding of ethics as knowledge of oneself and knowing how to be authentic; and, on the other hand, the understanding of ethics as an indispensable knowledge in order to know how to live in society. Hence, the course is divided into four parts:

- In the first part the main concepts of the subject will be introduced.
- In the second part, ethics will be presented from a historical perspective, going through all the major philosophical traditions and their view on ethical dilemmas.
- In the third part, ethics will be regarded as part of metaphysics. In other words, we will understand ethics as knowledge of oneself and the way to behave according to that self-knowledge.
- In the fourth part, we will focus on the current postmodern context and its influences in our view of the world and, therefore, in the way we behave. Hence, a series of current moral dilemmas will be introduced.

Lastly, the last session will be used exclusively for students’ presentations and the debate they trigger.

It is important to point out that, despite only a few sessions deal exclusively with the history of ethics, different historical perspectives, key thinkers and ideas will be mentioned during the whole course, as need be. Arranging the course syllabus this way will allow the student to know how to better link the different topics covered in the course to his own personal and professional life.
PART I. CONCEPTUAL AND HISTORICAL APPROACH TO ETHICS.

SESSIONS 1 AND 2
INTRODUCTION: TERMS AND STRUCTURE OF THE COURSE.

Approach to the concept of ethics. Knowing how to live. Two different approaches: knowing oneself, and knowing how to behave in society. Usefulness of ethical knowledge in one’s personal and professional life. Differences between ethics and morality. Excerpt from the movie “Mongol”, in order to discuss the ethical implications of Genghis Khan wife's actions.

SESSION 3
THE CONCEPT OF VALUE AND THE MAIN PHENOMENON.


PART II. HISTORICAL APPROACH TO ETHICS.

SESSION 4
A BRIEF HISTORY OF ETHICS I.


SESSION 5
A BRIEF HISTORY OF ETHICS II.


PART III. MY IDENTITY AND MY WORLD.

SESSIONS 6 AND 7
IDENTITY AND CONSCIOUSNESS.


SESSIONS 8 AND 9
THE HERO’S JOURNEY

The stages of what we are becoming. The unconscious, the collective unconscious and archetypes. Joseph Campbell’s The hero with a thousand faces. The monomyth. Stages of the hero’s journey: departure, initiation and return. Application of the hero’s journey to our own personal lives. The hero’s journey and the entrepreneur.
SESSION 10
MAN AS BEING IN TIME: THE INDIVIDUAL AND THEIR WORLD.


SESSION 11
ATTITUDES WHEN FACING MORAL DILEMAS.

Different attitudes in the face of moral dilemmas: adherence (mimesis), resignation, hiding, heroism, the artist, the scientist, the coward, the shrewd. Recognising oneself as being more oneself. Life as learning to die. Excerpt from the movie “Meet Joe Black”.

PART IV. MORAL DILEMMAS WITHIN THE CURRENT POSTMODERN CONTEXT.

SESSION 12
IS PROGRESS REALLY POSSIBLE?

Is it convenient to decide between tradition and progress? Knowledge and science. The problems of modernity: the naive faith in a linear, upward progress and the reason behind. Analogy and the role of art. The useful work. Case studies: developmental capitalism; Amazon forest.

SESSION 13
RELATIVISM AND UNIVERSALISM. HOW SHOULD I BEHAVE?

Differences between relativism and universalism. Different types of fundamentalism. Distinction between an individual with principles and a fundamentalist. Implications of fundamentalism in everyday life in the West. Spinoza’s relativism. Postmodern relativism. Moral relativism due to God’s death. Implications of relativism towards life’s meaning. The question about moral character. Macintyre’s critique of modern ethics: the question should be “what kind of person I should be”, rather than “what I should do”. Virtue and man as member of a community where the two axes of ethics come together: authenticity in our individuality and knowing how to behave in society. Man as role model to its peers. One’s profession as ethical function. Idealism and reality.

SESSIONS 14 AND 15
GROUP PRESENTATIONS.

Group presentations by class members. The professor will offer a few topics and students will have to debate about them according to the material seen in class.

4. METHODOLOGY AND ECTS WEIGHTING

Each session will consist of a lecture, a case study or excerpt from a movie, and the following debate, in which the students are expected to participate actively. Both the lecture and the case study will aim to make students realise of a moral dilemma, as well as of the different parts that make it up and the necessary tools to sort it out. Hence, students’ participation in class is very important.
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5. ELECTRONIC RESOURCES

This subject does not require the use of any electronic resources, and the use of laptops will not be permitted in class. Nevertheless, if you need to bring your laptop, please contact the professor. In any case, you will not need your laptop to take notes in class, as the professor will give handouts in every session.

Mobile phones are to be turned off and out of sight during class.

6. ASSESSMENT

6.1. GENERAL OBSERVATIONS

The final grade of each student will depend not only on their theoretical knowledge about ethics, but also on their ability to express with their own words how such knowledge may be applied to their everyday personal and professional life. For this purpose, all students will have to develop their skills by writing two essays and doing a presentation in class. Moreover, there will be three short tests. Class participation will be rewarded and there is no final exam.

6.2. ASSESSMENT AND WEIGHTING CRITERIA

The contribution of each task to the final grade will follow these lines:

- **Final Essay**: 40% of the final grade. 3,000 to 4,000 words. Topic to be chosen among those suggested by the professor in class, but has to be approved by him after a discussion during office hours. It is up to the student to apply the theoretical content of the topic suggested either to a case study, or to a situation or to a person (including themselves). It must be referenced correctly, following the standard academic referencing protocol. The professor will announce the deadline during the first day of class.

- **Hero’s journey**: 20% of the final grade. Students will have to apply “the hero’s journey” to their own lives: both to their life as a whole, and to a specific episode of their lives. The professor will announce the deadline during the first day of class.

- **Tests**: 20% of the final grade. During the term, there will be two tests comprising multiple choice questions about the compulsory readings and the lectures covered so far. The professor will announce the dates of the tests during the first day of class.
- **Presentation**: 10% of the final grade. All students, divided into groups, will have to present a topic based on a text, book or discourse suggested by the professor, highlighting the ethical dilemmas they find and exploring different solutions. Group presentations will take place during sessions 14 and 15.
- The remaining 10% will be obtained by participating and having a **positive attitude** in class. Three main criteria will be used in reaching judgment about your **class participation**: (1) Depth and Quality of Contribution. (2) Moving Your Peers’ Understanding Forward. (3) Frequency.

**RETAKE POLICY**

Each student has four chances to pass any given course distributed in two consecutive academic years (regular period and July period).

Students who do not comply with the 70% attendance rule will lose their 1st and 2nd chance, and go directly to the 3rd one (they will need to enrol again in this course next academic year).

Grading for retakes will be subject to the following rules:

1. Students failing the course in the first regular period will have to do a retake in July (except those not complying with the attendance rules, which are banned from this possibility).
2. Dates and location of the July retakes will be posted in advance and will not be changed. Please take this into consideration when planning your summer.
3. The retake will consist on an exam, during which students will have to choose four out of ten possible questions and answer them according to the contents of the course (i.e. material seen in class plus the required and recommended readings).
   - Students in their third attempt will not be required to attend the minimum expected from regular students. They will have to submit the final essay and the hero’s journey assignment as specified above.

The maximum grade that a student may obtain in the retake will be 8 out of 10.