

Module Profile

Module title: Ethics in a Complex World

Module code: UOSM 2009

Faculty	Health Sciences
ECTS Points, eg 10 ECTS	7.5 ECTS
Level (4, 5, 6, 7 or 8 in the FHEQ)	5
Any pre-requisite and/or co-requisite modules	None
Programmes in which the module is core	None
Module co-ordinator	Julie Wintrup
Contact hours	30 (10x 2 hour seminars, 10 x 1 hour small groups)
Non-contact hours	170
Total study time	200 hours
Date approved by Faculty Programmes Committee	

Aims and learning outcomes

Module aim

As part of Southampton's Curriculum Innovation initiative, this optional, interdisciplinary module is available to all students of participating programmes. Its overarching aim is to enable you to become confident in developing your ideas and applying new concepts, both in relation to and outside the confines of your own discipline.

Specifically, it is designed to enable you to begin to develop literacy in applying ethical concepts to pressing contemporary concerns. This is achieved through such means as identifying ethical issues, trying out alternative forms of analysis, sharing ideas and taking up new or alternative perspectives. Ethics is an intellectually rigorous subject so the scope of the module is intentionally broad and it is pitched at an introductory level.

Supportive group-work activities and online resources will help you to think and reflect critically, and to develop further your confidence and self-awareness as a learner. Vitality and interactivity characterise our approach to learning. Student-generated topics and student-led sessions influence the direction and culture of learning. The 'independent inquiry' form of summative assessment provides a balance and allows you to pursue a topic of your choice independently and in greater depth.

Learning Outcomes

By the end of the module, you will be able to:

Learning outcome:	Evidenced by:
1. Outline a contemporary issue, highlighting key features, and identify its underlying ethical or moral components	Group work Mandatory feedback session Summative assignment
2. Describe how contrasting perspectives can deepen and enrich your understanding of complex ethical issues	Summative assignment
3. Critically appraise one or more ethical approaches in	Summative assignment

relation to your chosen topic	
4. Communicate your ideas persuasively, attributing sources and justifying assertions made	Group work Mandatory feedback session Summative assignment
5. Discuss others' work, beliefs and values, engaging critically with research evidence, established theory and new ideas	Group work Mandatory feedback session Summative assignment
6. Evaluate opposing arguments sensitively, taking into consideration different world-views, priorities and experiences.	Group work Mandatory feedback session Summative assignment

Summary of syllabus content

Description

Learning throughout the module is progressive. Concepts are introduced, explored and revisited in greater depth and complexity during the course of the module. Tailored resources are available to support and reinforce learning over time, and ideas debated in seminars are reflected on in small groups. An important feature of the syllabus is the scope to explore, collectively and individually, particular ideas in greater depth in keeping with the independent inquiry component of the assessment.

Indicative contemporary topics include: demographic shifts and population growth, challenges to personal identity in a digital age, controversies and risks in research, use or misuse of information, ownership and inequity, sexual health and reproduction. Each is a catalyst for identification and discussion of underlying ethical issues. Internationally renowned research in each topic area is a resource to students as topics are selected from the expertise of the extended module team and colleagues in related University Strategic Research Groups.

Emerging ethical concepts – typically justice, fairness, caring, sustainability, competing needs / interests, rights and responsibilities, the role of faith and religion, relativism - are explored, deconstructed and critiqued. More formal moral philosophies - specifically deontology, utilitarianism, virtue ethics and distributive justice - are introduced through short, focussed pre-reading with further explication, application and critique during seminars.

You are invited to generate topics and lead parts of seminars later in the module, in small groups. Along with independent research, group work offers opportunities to revisit topics, present and rehearse ideas, to critically reflect, and to apply different theoretical perspectives and ethical stances to your personal area of inquiry. Research into ethics education supports this engaged and interactive approach.

Summary of teaching and learning methods

Description

Seminars will take place weekly throughout the semester, followed later in the week by small group discussion groups of up to eight students and a dedicated facilitator. Reading, online resources and group discussion forums are provided via Blackboard, to which publicly available and tailored resources are also linked.

Seminars

Following short preparatory activities, including pre-reading, seminars will introduce a contemporary topic framed by a provoking question. A 'workshop' approach will enable work in pairs or groups. You will be encouraged to identify and discuss underlying ethical problems and controversies. Sharing of opinions, beliefs and ideas will be encouraged, meanings and implications worked through and connected to broader ethical concepts.

The purpose of this activity is to recognise and value the complex, multi-faceted and irreducible nature of what we term 'ethics'. In doing so we place value on voice, authenticity, flexible thinking and perspective taking. You will be encouraged to relate your ideas and views to more established work or frameworks and to support assertions with reasoning and forms of evidence.

Small group work

This provides time and opportunity for you to reflect critically upon seminar topics, to challenge and critique approaches and to experiment with new ideas. The facilitated small groups provide a forum for you to develop your thinking and plan for the independent inquiry component of the assignment. Attendance at these sessions is considered vital to enable you to discuss issues with others, communicate your own ideas and understand different perspectives. Mid-way through the module, you will be asked to present your proposal for the independent inquiry to other members of the group and your facilitator who will then give you feedback; this session is compulsory.

Resources

Reading and other materials are provided by links on Blackboard. Independent, awareness-raising activities, such as thought experiments, games and personal evaluations, are provided to enable reflection to take place outside of the social context of seminars and small groups.

Summary of assessment methods

The assessment consists of:

1. **Mandatory feedback session:** A presentation of your proposal for the independent inquiry on which you will receive feedback. There is no formal mark for this but participation is compulsory
2. **Summative:** An independent inquiry, which forms the end of module assessment activity. This is formally marked.
3. **Mandatory:** Evidence of regular attendance at the small groups. Regular non-attendance will lead to an overall fail for the module

Assignment brief

Explore, through an independent inquiry, the ethical components of a contemporary issue with which you are familiar or which interests you. This may be an issue raised during the module or may be related to your own discipline or personal interests.

To achieve the learning outcomes:

- Consider how different groups or individuals might view the ethical components you identify, to create a lively, critical discussion
- Apply at least one ethical concept or theory introduced during the module to your chosen contemporary issue to help in your interpretation and analysis
- Support your assertions or conclusions with evidence and clear reasoning

1. **Presentation of proposal (compulsory attendance)**

This takes the form of a short presentation to your small group, of your proposed topic for the independent inquiry. Supported by whatever media you decide to use, describe the topic of inquiry, the ethical issues arising and the particular ethical concept/s or frameworks you are using to analyse and discuss. You should actively seek critical feedback and constructive comment from your peers

2. **End of module assignment**

To achieve the learning outcomes, you may select any one of the following three formats:

- a) A journal article style of written presentation (*Word limit: 2500 +10%*)
- b) A conference-style presentation to peers supported by an abstract and conference proceedings paper (*Word limit: abstract 500; proceedings 1200 + 10%. Presentation: max 15 mins*)
- c) An essay (*Word limit: 2500 +10%*)

The deadline for submission of written work will be circulated to you at the beginning of the module and will be the same whichever format you choose. At the same time you will be given the assessment criteria. If you choose format b) you will be assessed on both your written work and on your ability to give an oral presentation of your work. It is for this reason that students choosing format b) have been given a lower word limit for written work.

Special features of module

For features such as field trips, information should be included as to how students with special needs will be enabled to benefit from this or an equivalent experience.

As an interdisciplinary, optional module open to students of all disciplines, transferable skills are embedded.

Transferable (Key/General) Skill

Communication Skills

- [Speaking, writing, listening
- [Conveying information, explaining ideas, feelings, values and perspectives
- [Participating in group discussions

Intellectual Skills

- [Using information resources
- [Gathering and analysing information, checking sources for accuracy
- [Critically analysing and appraising sources, ideas and perspectives

Interpersonal Skills

- [Establishing and maintaining effective relationships
- [Being sensitive to others' views and concerns
- [Extending appropriate support
- [Team building and problem solving
- [Cross-cultural awareness and respect for different values and beliefs

Organisational Skills

- [Managing group efforts
- [Resolving conflicts
- [Identifying problems & proposing solutions
- [Setting priorities and balancing competing needs
- [Balancing group /social needs against individual needs
- [Keeping peers informed of plans and progress

Personal Skills

- [Goal setting
- [Taking initiative
- [Independent learning

Creative Skills

- [Conceiving novel solutions and approaches to contemporary issues
- [Combining existing materials, ideas, information in new ways
- [Seeing problems, patterns, or opportunities

Resources

For resources which are required or useful for the module: set books, text books, data books, software, web sites, other sources of related information.

Core texts:

Frey, R.G. & Wellman, C.H. (eds) *A Companion to Applied Ethics* (2005) Oxford: Blackwell

Hutchings, K. *Global Ethics: An Introduction* (2010) Cambridge: Polity Press

Online resources

Philosophy Bites

<http://philosophybites.com>

A free online resource with audio podcasts of leading ethicists in conversation with Nigel Warburton

Recommended specialist texts

*Students will be encouraged to read articles and texts related to ethics in their area of interest so a wide range of resource suggestions will be available and regularly updated on Blackboard. Books and articles in health ethics might include, for example:

Books

H. Biggs & K. Horsey (eds), *Human Fertilisation and Embryology: Reproducing Regulation* (2006) Routledge-Cavendish

H. Biggs, *Healthcare Research Ethics and Law: Regulation, Review and Responsibility* (2009) Routledge-Cavendish

Harris, J. *Enhancing Evolution* (2007) Princeton University Press

Articles

H. Biggs, Reproductive Autonomy and Regulation: Challenges to Feminism, *Fem Leg Stud* (2010) 18:299–308

Fenwick, A. (2010) Are guidelines for genetic testing of children necessary? *Familial Cancer*, 9, (1), 23 – 25

Graduate Attributes

* Please state the Graduate Attributes obtainable through participation in your module and in what areas each attribute is obtained e.g. Communication Skills obtained via presentation

Please state how students will be aware of achieving the attributes e.g. reflection blog

Attributes are as follows:

For more information about the definitions about these attributes www.soton.ac.uk/cjp

Attributes	*How students obtain them	*How students reflect on them
Reflective Learner	By engaging in structured independent learning activities before and throughout the module	In group discussions and through in-depth study for assignment
Academic Learner	Through the process of	Through in-depth study and

	independent inquiry which requires use of ethical frameworks to understand and critically appraise a subject in depth	independent inquiry for assignment
Communication Skills	By demonstrating knowledge and expressing ideas with confidence and clarity during group work	Through group work and written communications
Ethical Leader	By exploring the ethical implications of individual and collective actions and decisions on the lives and well-being of others	Through taught sessions, reading and independent inquiry
Global Citizen	By becoming aware of different worldviews and moral stances in an interconnected global society and by respecting and appreciating others' values and beliefs	Through taught sessions, reading, independent inquiry and group work
Research & Enquiry	By formulating new ideas and creative approaches to contemporary moral problems and issues.	Through their independent inquiry and assignment

How many students do you predict could be accommodated on this module?

On the proviso that the University's financial model provides funding based on student numbers?

Year 1: 32

Subsequent years to be discussed

In terms of students, for which programmes would the module be most suitable?

All students welcome from all participating programmes

Name (completed by) Julie Wintrup	
Date 18 th July 2012	