Civics and Individual Ethics

Student Learning Outcome: Students will demonstrate an ability to engage in ethical reasoning about civic and individual life.

The Value of Civics and Individual Ethics

Moral judgments confront us everywhere. Ethical reasoning provides students foundational skills to reflect rigorously on ethical issues and to apply ethical reasoning in civic and individual life. It allows students to identify their own ethical convictions, think self-critically about them, and reflect on their merits. This is a key component of a liberal arts education.

Supporting Skills

1. Students will demonstrate an understanding of what constitutes a good life and/or a good society.
2. Students will apply learning in the course to articulate the nature of a good life or how one may contribute to a good society.

Course Content Criteria

1. Courses in this category offer a sustained reflection on the nature of the good life and the good society. Ethical questions and investigations are raised early in the course and returned to frequently.
2. Courses in this category consistently work with concepts such as justice, freedom, fairness, privacy, security, tolerance, equality, rights, or concern for the general welfare.
3. Courses in this category include an assessment assignment that requires students to demonstrate each of the skills in the Civics and Individual Ethics Assessment Rubric (below). This assessment assignment should be one of the following: an objective exam, an essay question on an exam, an essay, or a research paper.

Glossary

1. Good society: A communally organized form of life that guides participants toward justice, freedom, fairness, privacy, security, tolerance, equality, rights, or concern for the general welfare.
2. Good life: Reasoning about a good life seeks practical means by which persons pursue what is good, right, or beneficial, and avoid what is evil, bad, wrong, or harmful. Reasoning about a good life requires the ability to discern and express, to some degree, what the distinctions are between what is good/bad, right/wrong, and/or beneficial/harmful for a particular topic within a course or discipline, and then clearly state the means by which goods, rights, and benefits are achieved and/or bads, wrongs, or harms are avoided.
3. Ethical reasoning: Reasoning about a good life or good society.

Experience Criteria

Students may apply to fulfill the CIE requirement through a co-curricular activity. These criteria apply to experiences that meet the CIE curricular requirement and describe the characteristics of the experience, the steps a student must follow to petition the experience for approval, and the number and types of assignments students must submit to satisfy the requirement.

1. Student experiences must involve 45 hours of engaged interaction in a context in which students are explicitly concerned with concepts such as justice, freedom, fairness, privacy, security, tolerance, equality, rights, or concern for the general welfare.
2. Students must submit a minimum of three written reflections. The first, submitted prior to the experience, raises ethical questions related to the experience being petitioned. The second should be a sustained journal written during the experience to record the student’s immediate reflection on his or her experience. The third must be submitted after the experience, and must explore and evaluate the impact of the experience on the student’s moral or ethical convictions. The combined total of the three reflections must be approximately 15 pages in length or approximately 4500 words.
3. Students seeking to petition an experience after matriculation at SMU must submit a pre-approval petition for the experience.
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<th>Supporting Skills</th>
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<td><strong>Demonstrate an understanding of what constitutes a good life and/or a good society.</strong></td>
<td>Analyzes and extends knowledge from course material (e.g., what is good/bad, right/wrong, beneficial/harmful; what is justice, freedom, fairness, privacy, tolerance, equality, rights, or concern for the general welfare) that is relevant to what is a good life and/or a good society.</td>
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<td>Is unable to identify knowledge from course material (e.g., what is good/bad, right/wrong, beneficial/harmful; what is justice, freedom, fairness, privacy, tolerance, equality, rights, or concern for the general welfare) that is relevant to what is a good life and/or a good society.</td>
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<td><strong>Apply learning in the course to articulate the nature of a good life or how one may contribute to a good society.</strong></td>
<td>Analyzes and extends knowledge from course material (e.g., what is good/bad, right/wrong, beneficial/harmful; what is justice, freedom, fairness, privacy, tolerance, equality, rights, or concern for the general welfare) that is relevant to understanding one's own participation in a good life and/or understanding what is a good society and how to contribute to it.</td>
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