ETHICS MINOR

The Program on Ethics offers an interdisciplinary undergraduate minor in ethics. The minor is intended to be an integrated component of a student’s major studies. Students will complete the minor by taking select values courses in philosophy and their major. A rapidly changing world brings with it both benefits and problems. Thinking seriously about the problems requires students who have the ability to think across disciplinary boundaries.

The minor in ethics (formerly known as the minor in values in society) is intended to provide interdisciplinary training in ethical reasoning, with a view towards the application of this reasoning to concrete problems of social and political importance. By encouraging students to recognize and analyze how the abstract terms of ethical theory play out in practice, as well as how the practical realities of work within various disciplines inform and constrain ethical argumentation, this minor enables students to make positive and informed contributions to their worlds.

Contact the Program on Ethics

REQUIREMENTS

1. To earn the Minor, students must complete at least 27 credits, to include the following:
2. Three courses in which normative thinking and conceptual analysis of values and frameworks are central (List A Courses). At least one of these must be a 300-level or above.
3. Two courses in which values-laden issues are central (List B courses). At least one of these must be 300-level or above.
4. Completion of ETHICS 495: Ethics in Practice (2 credit capstone; please see below for course description).
5. The minor is available to any major. However, a minimum of 15 credits used for the minor must come from outside a student’s major.
6. A minimum of 15 credits must be completed at the UW.
7. Students must obtain a minimum 2.0 average in the courses they wish to use for the Minor.

For complete lists of courses that can be used to complete the minor, please refer to the Minor Course Listings. From time to time, courses may be reclassified, added to, or removed from the list of acceptable courses. Students who have planned their studies on the basis of an earlier list may fulfill the requirements of the minor as specified in the earlier list. In addition, students may petition the Ethics undergraduate advisor for approval for courses not listed. If there is a course that you think should be considered for the Minor, please let us know.

SAMPLE PLANS BY INTEREST AREA

The Minor is designed to accommodate students who are interested in ethics as it arises in a wide variety of contexts. For example, a student interested in ethics, animals, and the environment may complete the Minor with the following courses:

1. PHIL 240—Introduction to Ethics
2. PHIL 243/ENVIR 243—Environmental Ethics
3. PHIL 415—Advanced Topics in Animal Welfare
4. POL S 383—Environmental Politics and Policy in the United States
5. ESRM 458—Management of Endangered, Threatened, and Sensitive Species
6. ETHICS 495—Ethics in Practice

Or, a student interested in international business and justice may complete the Minor with the following
courses:
1. PHIL 102—Contemporary Moral Problems
2. PHIL 110—Introduction to Social and Political Philosophy
3. PHIL 407—International Justice
4. SIS 123—Introduction to Globalization
5. MGMT 320—Business, Government, and Society
6. ETHICS 495—Ethics in Practice

ETHICS 495: ETHICS IN PRACTICE

This two-credit capstone course is designed as the culmination of the ethics minor, and encourages students to synthesize their interdisciplinary training in ethics by putting their developed expertise into practice in the community around them. Students will complete a fieldwork experience that pushes them to grapple with the complications and experience the rewards that come from the difficult challenge of implementing policy or action that is ethically sensitive and practically feasible. It is expected that this fieldwork will take one of two forms:

(1) Students may engage in a service learning project, designed to make use of their disciplinary competencies and their ethics training to aid in a process of social change; or

(2) Students may develop an independent project of engagement in the community that emphasizes ethical analysis, aims at social change, and involves significant fieldwork (e.g., interviews with key players, attendance at organization meetings, policy analysis, development of recommendations, etc.). The independent project requires capstone instructor approval.

Students will meet regularly with the capstone instructor as well as other students completing the capstone course. The course allows students to incorporate material learned in the process of completing the minor with a hands-on project relevant to their studies, and to share their experiences and expertise with other students completing the minor. The aim is for the shared capstone experience to enrich and deepen each student’s understanding of the complexities and challenges of putting normative thinking into practice.

PROGRAM GOALS

Students will learn to think critically and imaginatively about the moral issues that they will face in their professional and personal lives. They will master the skills, methods, and knowledge that they will need for the rigorous, thoughtful, and creative treatment of normative analysis in general.

Students will gain a wider knowledge base than is usually targeted in traditional intra-disciplinary studies. Students will study normative thinking and develop their critical evaluation skills; at the same time, they will gain familiarity with significant empirical information that will shape their practical normative arguments. They will learn from the diverse perspectives and ideas that are central to each of the various academic disciplines from which the minor is built.

Students will learn to communicate effectively about complex and sometimes highly charged issues. The ability to exchange information and viewpoints across a range of audiences and purposes is crucial to determining appropriate responses to today’s moral problems. Students will learn to speak and listen in ways that allow them to learn from each other and to deliberate together rather than simply debate each other.

Finally, as the culmination of the above learning outcomes, students will be asked to integrate their interdisciplinary training in ethics by putting their developed expertise into practice in the community around them. Students will complete a fieldwork experience that pushes them to grapple with the complications and experience the rewards that come from the difficult challenge of implementing policy or action that is ethically sensitive and practically feasible.

UNDERGRADUATE ADVISOR

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