PERSONAL ETHICS FOR THE 21st CENTURY

SPRING 2007:  L&S 160B  Monday/Wednesday 4:00-5:30 (3 UNITS)

Seeking effective ethical orientation in a complex world?

Concerned about handling the ethical challenges that are heading your way?

Wanting to “keep your cool” and bring the best you’ve got to difficult situations?

This spring, Effective Personal Ethics for the 21st Century is being offered, to strengthen students’ abilities to anticipate, critically analyze, appropriately respond to, and provide personal and professional leadership regarding, the ethical issues that will arise throughout self-development, interpersonal relationships, at work, and generally in life.

Ethics comes from the Greek root ethos, meaning essential character. When we make ethical decisions, we are, each time, actually re-creating ourselves, our relationships, our own lives, and the world we live-in. At the same time, however, traditional sources of wisdom (elders, families, ethnic traditions, classical religions) are frequently incapable of providing substantial and concrete orientation and guidance in the complex, fast-paced, multi-ethnic, evolving global society in which we find ourselves today.

The course is designed to provide each student with actual tools for greater personal clarity about core values and more confident and effective ability for comprehensive ethical decision-making and action. The course will deeply explore those characteristics of human nature that currently hinder ethical behavior and the realization of maximum human potential, as well highlighting as those characteristics and practices that can, with cultivation, allow all of us to more fully realize our inherent integration, imagination, creative capacity, and fully-satisfying participation in personal, professional, and social life and the larger Earth adventure.

Topics, which will draw-upon multi-disciplinary revelations from the 20th century in quantum physics, more comprehensive evolutionary understanding, systems theory, depth psychology, etc., and thus allow us to meet the challenges of the 21st century with unprecedented insight, will include:

- Exploring the role of the human enterprise in the overall evolving story of the Universe
- Exploring the development of the human mind, its limitations and its potential
- Exploring aspects of self deeper than personality
- Exploring practices that foster the availability of integrated, whole-being wisdom in approaching critical decisions
- Exploring classical and modern philosophical and comparative religious approaches
- Exploring one’s unique vocation and creative contribution in the Universal scheme of things

The course will provide an opportunity for students to “orient” themselves as co-creative agents of their present world and future. It will encourage the ability to transcend reaction and move into a genuinely creative response to difficult and significant challenges, thus fostering the “response-ability,” stability, emotional intelligence, discrimination, and “corrective self-awareness” required of 21st-century global citizens.

No prior background in ethics or philosophy is required. All majors are welcome. For more course information and comments from past students see: http://faculty.haas.berkeley.edu/phillips/

This course satisfies the Letters & Science Philosophy & Values Breadth Requirement.

10/20/2006