Unit 3 Ethics

Unit 3 Challenges and Opportunities for Learning

Ethics is one of the most accessible of the core units, perhaps the most accessible compared with the other three core units: logic, metaphysics, and epistemology. Although there are many opportunities to link ethics with these core units, ethics also connects strongly with Unit 6: Social and Political Philosophy.

Unit 3 Culminating Activity (assessment of learning)

The Unit 3 culminating activity—Personal Statement of Ethics—is a framework around which students develop their knowledge and understanding of ethics. Use the ideas that follow to help your students begin working toward completion of their statement of ethics.

Description of Culminating Activity

Students develop their own two- to three-page statement of ethics, explaining the moral principles and philosophies that guide them in making right choices for conduct. A full description of the activity, as well as evaluation criteria, are available on BLM 7.1.

Learning Goals

Students inquire into the various theories of ethics and consider and exemplify in writing how they personally make moral decisions in their lives, based on combinations of these theories and other influencing factors, such as their upbringing. The goal is for students to improve their self-expression and writing skills while demonstrating comprehension of several theories.

Learning Skills

The development of learning skills and work habits is an integral part of a student's learning (*Growing Success*, p. 10). Specifically, teaching and assessment of these learning skills—responsibility, collaboration, independent work, organization, self-regulation, and initiative—will enhance students' success in the culminating activity, entire course, and post-secondary life.

Use BLM E Learning Skills Tracking Sheet to track students' learning skills for this unit and for the culminating activity.

Prior Learning Needed

Some discussion of character formation is essential. Students may have come across concepts of character formation in Family Studies or even in a health unit in Physical Education. See Teaching Plan 2, Teaching Strategy 5 regarding the Michael Sandel lectures, which help tremendously in setting up the culminating activity. See also Major Normative Systems of Ethics and the Summary of Major Schools (SE pp. 186-195).

Materials Needed for Culminating Activity

Students may be encouraged to use Appendix 1: Research and Inquiry Skills (SE pp. 544-547), and may benefit from a library or computer lab period to conduct research beyond the textbook on various ethical theories. Encourage students to consult some primary sources.

Motivational Strategies for Engaging Students

A challenge will help get students thinking: What if it was Judgment Day, either in the afterlife or in a court of law, and you had to defend the basis of your ethical behaviour,

choices, and decisions? What would be your defence? Incorporate your ideas into your personal statement of ethics.

Accommodations

Some students may not grasp that the culminating activity task is to make a personal commentary—using theories but not simply describing them. Peer evaluation may help shortstop this problem, if you prompt students to look for personal reflection in the other students' writing instead of mere reportage of theories.

Differentiated Instruction (alternative assessment opportunities)

Instead of writing a personal statement of ethics, ask students to write a second-person account of their ethical stance for a newspaper or magazine. Or students could write an account of real life ethical dilemmas and how they were solved, drawing on personal experience and normative and/or applied ethics. Alternatively, students could make a short film, graphic novel, or one-act play that conveys how they make or have made ethical decisions in life. A narrator of a short film could deliberate on moral dilemmas, offering possible solutions. In a one-act play or graphic novel, the dialogue and scenes could take the reader (or viewer) through an ethical dilemma, working towards its resolution.