Course description. The course is a survey of different major ethical problems and the arguments supporting opposing sides. In each section students will read two opposing views on a topic. The purpose of the class is not to change students’ position about ethical issues, but instead to encourage students to think more deeply about the reasons behind those beliefs. Some of the topics that will be covered are abortion, euthanasia, gun control, animal rights, affirmative action, the death penalty, and war and terrorism. This course satisfies the University of Texas at Arlington core curriculum requirement in Language, Philosophy & Culture.

Learning outcomes. Students will gain a better understanding of the arguments supporting different ethical positions. In the process, we will stress the importance of being charitable to an opposing viewpoint. Students will also improve their ability to evaluate the strength of arguments and some of the common mistakes that occur in reasoning. Since a significant portion of the class will be devoted to discussions, students will develop their ability to communicate about issues that are challenging.

Core curriculum objectives.

- Critical Thinking Skills: to include creative thinking, innovation, inquiry, and analysis, evaluation and synthesis of information;
- Communication Skills: to include effective development, interpretation and expression of ideas through written, oral and visual communication;
- Social Responsibility: to include intercultural competence, knowledge of civic responsibility, and the ability to engage effectively in regional, national and global communities; and
- Personal Responsibility: to include the ability to connect choices, actions and consequences to ethical decision-making.

Signature assignments. The following assignments (among others) will be used to assess the student’s level of achievement of the Core Curriculum Objectives:

1. Each student will analyze an argumentative passage pertaining to a contemporary ethical controversy in order to determine which proposition functions as the conclusion of the argument and which propositions function as the premises. (Critical Thinking Skills)
2. Each student will participate in a group project in which the objective is (a) to take a position on a matter of personal or social responsibility (such as voting or recycling) and support that position with reasons; and (b) write a collaborative essay setting forth the argument. (Critical Thinking Skills, Communication Skills, Social Responsibility, Personal Responsibility)

[The remainder of the syllabus will be filled in by the instructor.]