St. Olaf College OLE Core General Education Curriculum
Ethical Reasoning in Context Requirement

Description:

Students develop an understanding of a range of ethical perspectives and the contrasts among them within a scholarly field (e.g., history, biology, computer science, philosophy) or a domain of inquiry (e.g., politics, human development, the environment, love and friendship). Students will apply those perspectives to relevant questions and controversies and critically examine their assumptions and limitations.

Intended Learning Outcomes:

Students will:

1. Evaluate a range of ethical perspectives.

2. Apply these ethical perspectives to specific questions.

3. Identify or critically evaluate their own ethical views.

Course Guidelines:

1. **Evaluate a range of ethical perspectives.**
   An "ethical perspective" is any perspective that is substantially oriented towards questions about what is morally right, good, just, or valuable. Some characteristic examples would be varieties of utilitarianism, Marxism, feminism, Thomism, libertarianism, or Buddhism. A "range" of perspectives means a plurality of perspectives that present theoretically or practically significant contrasts in relation to the course topic. Exactly how many perspectives should be presented will vary across course topics, though in most cases it would be at least three. In their course proposals, instructors should give a rationale for how the course content represents a range of significantly contrasting perspectives.

2. **Apply these ethical perspectives to specific questions.**
   "Specific questions" is construed broadly to encompass diverse questions about what to do, how to live, and who we should strive to be, on an individual or social scale. It is not intended to imply value judgements regarding the importance or significance of some questions over others.

3. **Identify or critically evaluate their own ethical views.**
   This requirement does not presume that students will enter or leave the course with a systematic set of ethical commitments on the course topic. It does require, however, that the course afford them a substantial opportunity to explore and reflect on some of their own ethical views and to try to articulate them in relation to course content. Identifying uncertainty or gaps in one's own ethical point of view could be a way of fulfilling this requirement. Students in lower level courses might focus on identifying ethical views, while upper level students could be expected to critically evaluate those views.