Moral Values in Human Development  SESP 225-316  
School of Education and Social Policy  
Northwestern University  
Course Syllabus  Fall 2006

Tuesdays and Thursdays 9:30 – 10:50 AM  
Annenberg G02  
Instructor: Carol A. Gaetjens Ph.D.  
c-gaetjens@northwestern.edu

Course Description:
Moral Values in Human Development is designed to help students examine a number of important questions from the perspective of developmental psychology: What are moral values? What do we mean when we speak of someone as a person of “high moral values?” Are human beings born moral and if not, how and when do they become moral? What is the evidence, if any, that moral development can continue throughout the life course? Are there gender differences in moral thought and behavior? Is there a connection between moral reasoning and moral behavior? Are there personality characteristics common to moral leaders? Are there social environments conducive to promoting moral leaders? Philosophers, theologians, ethicists and educators have grappled with these questions at least since Plato and continue to debate the answers today.

In the past 100 years social scientists, including psychologists, psychiatrists, social psychologists, and sociologists have made important contributions to this ongoing discussion. To help in addressing these questions about moral values and moral behavior several major perspectives on the development of moral values across the lifespan will be explored: the psychodynamic understanding provided by Sigmund Freud, Erik Erikson, and Selma Fraiberg; the cognitive development theories of the psychologists Piaget, Kohlberg and Gilligan; and the clinical and research observations of Robert Coles, William Damon, Anne Colby, William Perry, John Kotre, Robert Wuthrow and others. Personal moral values as guides to behavior will be examined using Sissela Bok’s Lying and watching the film “Cider House Rules.” The course concludes by examining what factors contribute to moral courage and exemplary moral leadership in adulthood.

Course Rationale:
Students who intend to work in the fields of education, public policy, and corporate life will find this course invaluable for recognizing and understanding the implications of individual, cultural, religious and societal moral values in their private lives as individuals, parents, citizens and leaders in their professional lives.

Course Format:
This is a reading and discussion class intended primarily for upper classmen. Class size is limited to 25 students. Evaluation of student achievement will take into account attendance, evidence of careful preparation as evidenced by active and informed participation in class discussions, as well as the quality of papers based on the readings, class discussions, and self-reflection. It is recommended that students who enroll in this course have completed either Child and Adolescence (SESP 225-C01) or Adulthood and Aging (SESP 225-C02).

Course Objectives:
By the end of the course students will have clarified their personal moral values and have evidenced respect for the values of individuals and groups whose ethical beliefs differ from
their own, both in face to face dialogue, and in responding to divergent positions reflected in the reaction papers to the readings.

**Required Books and the Course Packet:** The books you have been required to purchase and the readings in your course packet will provide a variety of perspectives on the major themes concerning the topic of moral values in human development. The books may be purchased at Norris Bookstore. The two-volume course packet of readings should be purchased at Quartet Copies on Clark Street in Evanston.


**School of Education and Social Policy Academic Integrity Statement, March 2004.**

Students in this course are expected to comply with the policies found in the booklet, “Academic Integrity at Northwestern University: A Basic Guide”. All papers submitted for credit in this course must be sent as email attachments as well as delivered in printed form. Your written work may be electronically tested for plagiarized content. For details regarding academic integrity at Northwestern, visit: [http://www.northwestern.edu/uacc/](http://www.northwestern.edu/uacc/). If you need a copy of the brochure visit the SESP Student Affairs Office on the 1st floor of Annenberg Hall.

**Accommodations for Students with Disabilities**. In compliance with Section 504 of the 1973 Rehabilitation Act and the Americans with Disabilities Act, Northwestern University is committed to providing equal access to all programming. Students with disabilities seeking accommodations are encouraged to contact the office of Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) at 467-5530 or ssd@northwestern.edu. SSD is located in the basement of Scott Hall. SSD also has an excellent web-site which is viewable at: [http://www.stuaff.northwestern.edu/ssd/](http://www.stuaff.northwestern.edu/ssd/)

**General guidelines for written papers:**

**Organization:** All papers, whether short or long, should be well organized, with an introductory paragraph that states your general position and the points or ideas you will make in support of your position. Then follow that introductory outline in the same order in the body of your paper. The tone of the paper should be academic (not folksy). Remember your name is on the paper so the reader knows that what you write is what you think, believe, or feel. In other words, avoid personal pronouns, “I” and “we” as much as possible.

**Formatting:** All papers should be formatted as follows: double-spaced, size 12 font, and at least one inch margins on all sides. **Your first and last names and page number must be in the upper right hand header on each page.** Papers without correct headers in the top right corner will not be graded!! Use your header function and right justify. References must be cited in the text in American Psychological Association (APA) style and included in
the reference list at the end of paper. Don’t obsess about this, just do it by following the format examples in the syllabus and the course packet.

**Strong Advice:** Take extra time to read your paper in hard copy for sentence fragments, misspellings, singular and plural mismatches, repetitiveness and general lack of clarity. If you have friend(s) who are willing to read the paper, have them do so. Two sets of eyes are always better than one set. The spell-check on your computer is helpful but does not replace proof-reading hard copy. Careless errors in writing and presentation detract from good conceptual work and will be reflected in the grade awarded your paper.

**Note:** If a paper is due on a class date, come to class whether the paper is done or not! You may e-mail me the paper as a Microsoft Word.doc attachment any time until midnight of the same day. No points will be deducted if the paper is received on the day it is due regardless of the time.

**Course Requirements and Grading:**
Grading is based on participation and written assignments. There are a total of 160 possible points. The expectation is that in an upper-class seminar all students who participate and turn in all their assignments will earn an A or B depending on the quality of the work.

**Class attendance and participation:** The success of this course depends largely on the conscientious preparation, regular attendance and informed participation of all its members. Without this commitment, the quality of individual class discussions and the value of the course as a whole will be seriously compromised. (30 points)

| Assignment 1: Identify your most important moral values. When (at what age), where (setting, e.g., home, school, religious training, scout troops, sports teams), and from whom (a mentor, teacher, coach) or from what (an incident, a turning point, a book, a spring break project) did you learn these values? Consider such factors as your gender, geographical location in growing up (urban, suburban, rural), race and/or ethnicity, socio-economic status, formal religious training or lack thereof. Make every sentence count and avoid repetition. |
| Length 2 pages. September 26 (15 points) |

| Assignment 2: Moral development |
| As a expert in moral development in children, you have been asked by an elementary school district serving children from preschool (age 3) to 6th grade (age 11 or 12) to address a group of interested parents and teachers about what they can do to promote moral development at home and in the classroom. Address gender differences in the moral development of boys and girls if you think they are pertinent. You must demonstrate familiarity with the course readings and include a reference list. |
| or |
| As an expert in moral development in adolescence and young adulthood, you have been asked by a group of educators from the local high school and neighboring community college to address the issue of what they can do to promote moral development in this age |

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Assignment 3: Watch the movie “Cider House Rules” in DVD/VCR format and then write a paper addressing the following questions. One good paragraph for each question will be sufficient. Be prepared to share your paper with your classmates in discussion and to turn them into me to read and grade.

Dr. Larch: Was he performing a needed service? How did he justify performing illegal abortions to himself and others? Did his addiction problem with ether interfere with his functioning? Did he use Homer for his own ends? Was he a megalomaniac who thought he could run his own little world, however benign? Does the end justify the means in this story?

Homer: Is it possible that Homer matured morally by performing the act of abortion on Rose after having been adamantly against abortion earlier in the movie? When he decides to return to the orphanage to be “of use” is he acting immorally in that he is not a certified doctor or is he acting morally by carrying on the role of Dr. Larch and serving as a father figure to orphans forgotten by society? Which is of higher value in the big picture?

Mr. Rose: Was Mr. Rose a good man, that is, a man who knew between right and wrong? Did he have a well-developed conscience or was he morally bankrupt for committing incest with his daughter? Could a case be made for his behavior by the circumstances of his life that permitted little contact with women? Did his self-injuries and death atone for his earlier behavior?

Cider House Rules: What was the point of the rules posted in the migrant shack? What did they mean symbolically and in reality? Length 2-3 pages. October 31 (20 points)

Assignment 4: How has reading and discussing Sissela Bok’s Lying: Moral choice in Public and Private Life challenged and/or changed your thoughts about lying? Be specific and incorporate topics from the book.

Length 3-4 pages November 16 (25 points)

Assignment 5: After reading Coles’ Lives of Moral Leadership and the articles by Colby and Damon (1995), Kotre (1999), Wuthrow (1991) and Tornstam (1997), and Jimmy Carter summarize what life and contextual factors you think are more likely to produce exemplary moral leaders. You must demonstrate familiarity with the course readings and include a reference list. Pick a good case example(s) from the readings or your own research.

Length 5-6 pages December 4 (40 points)
Tentative Class Schedule

Class 1: September 19  
I. Review of course outline, expectations, key definitions. What are moral values?

Class 2: September 21  
II. Moral Values: what are we talking about?  


Class 3: September 26  
Personal Values Statement is Due.


Class 4: September 28  
Toddlers and Pre-school age children


Class 5: October 3  
School-aged Children


Class 6: October 5  
School-aged children continued


Class 7  October 10  Adolescence


Class 8:  October 12  College-aged and young adulthood


The Case of Medical Students:


Class 9  October 17  Gender Differences in Moral Development: Do they exist?


**Class 10: October 19 Adulthood and later life**


**Class 11 October 24**

**Class 12 October 26 Assignment 2 due: Class presentations**

**Class 13 October 31 Assignment 3 due: Discussion of Cider House Rules**

**Class 14 November 2**

**Class 15 November 7**

**Class 16 November 9**

**Class 17 November 14 Moral Exemplars**

**Class 18 November 16 Moral Exemplars**

**Class 19 November 21 Moral Exemplars continued**
No class November 23 Thanksgiving Holiday

Class 20 November 28

Class 21 November 30 The Geneva Conventions (1950). Articles 1-42 out of 140.

Final paper: Assignment due in Annenberg Office of Student Affair no later than Monday December 4th, 2006 by 5 PM.