

How Can I Participate in Ethics Across the Curriculum?

The Ethics Across the Curriculum (EAC) program at Young Harris has developed, in part, in response to the interests of the faculty, and therefore, what EAC looks like in your classroom may reflect your pedagogical needs. One motivation for the program is a felt need for a bridge between students' academic lives and their spiritual lives and student development programs. If students learn the tools to talk meaningfully about values and morality in the classroom, they may be better able to articulate and act according to those values in those areas of their lives that are most meaningful.

HOW YOU CAN BE PART OF ETHICS ACROSS THE CURRICULUM

All of the components below are part of having your course included in the EAC program:

- **Planning** – Plan to incorporate an assignment or discussion of ethical issues, themes, and/or theories relevant to the course content in one of the courses you teach.
- **Reporting** – Provide a brief description of your plans for review and inclusion in the program. You can do it on the “Interest Form” you received previously, send me a descriptive email, or I’d be glad to meet with you to discuss and document your ideas.
- **Assessment** – Include some assessment of the ethics component of the course and send the results to me in some form after the completion of the course. This should include assessment of student learning as well as your own brief comments on how you think the ethics component worked in the course. (I would be happy to suggest ideas for assessment.)
- **Discussion** – Be part of at least one formal discussion with other participants in the program during the academic year. We are planning two further opportunities (a lecture and lunch discussion) during the spring for participants.
- **Incentive** – In the past, we were pleased to offer an honorarium for your participation. However, due to budget constraints, we are no longer able to offer this stipend. Nevertheless, Ethics Across the Curriculum is valuable to our institution in a number of ways and, because of this, is included in our Strategic Development Plan. This means that, in addition, to adding interesting and rewarding assignments and discussions to your classes, your participation also counts toward your tenure service requirement.

What if you already include ethical issues and themes in one of your courses? That’s great! In order for your course to be included in the program, just complete the interest form to provide me with documentation. Then you would participate in the assessment and discussion as detailed above.

Do I have to understand and teach ethical theories to be part of the program? No, you don’t have to have any formal “apparatus” of the discipline of philosophical ethics to effectively

include consideration of ethical issues in your classroom. You can allow class discussions of ethical issues to develop around commonly held and common-sense ideas that will come up naturally in the course of the discussion. These may include particular virtues (like honesty, justice, and compassion), the claims of equality and fairness, duties, rights, self-interest, and the commonly assumed moral obligations to do good and prevent harm.

Another possible approach, if you are interested in exploring professional ethics in disciplines such as business, mathematics, or the sciences would be to have your students research and discuss codes of conduct in some of the organizations in which they might find themselves working after graduation.

For any of you who are interested in learning about formal ethical theories and their possible uses in your classroom, I will make opportunities for this available in future workshops and discussions. I will also keep this in mind as I develop case studies and other resources.

WHAT AN 'ETHICS COMPONENT' MEANS AND WHAT IT MIGHT LOOK LIKE IN YOUR COURSE

An ethics component is part of your course curriculum that helps students identify, understand, and make progress toward resolving moral conflicts.

The ethics component can take a variety of forms in your class:

- **It might do 'double duty.'** Use a reading, statistical problem, work of art, speech or film that relates to your discipline and also raises ethical issues. Lead a class discussion on those issues or include the ethical dimensions in the work in a writing or speech assignment.
 - **Examples:** In an art appreciation or art history course, exploration of the works of controversial artists like Robert Mapplethorpe or Andres Serrano (of "Piss Christ" fame) raise ethical questions as well as artistic ones. Are there ethical limitations on artistic freedom? Does taxpayer support of the arts involve a right or duty to censor "offensive" art in the public interest? Who decides? Can a play exploring the position of women in Islamic societies be considered "hate speech" and censored on the grounds that it will incite religious violence?
 - **Disciplines that lend themselves to this approach:** This approach might work particularly well in statistics, speech, composition, literature, language classes and the arts.
- **It might include case studies** that explore some practical ethical issue in your area. Discuss current events in your discipline with an eye to the ethical questions they raise.
 - **Examples:** In computer science, the website www.computingcases.org gives three case studies along with detailed instructions for their classroom use and supporting material. One case is that of Richard Machado who, at age 19, was the first person in the U.S. to be convicted of an e-mail hate crime. Case studies in chemistry and biology are an excellent way to explore questions of ethical research (for instance: what are the limitations of research on human subjects) as well as the use of research (for instance: genetic engineering or cloning).

- **Disciplines that lend themselves to this approach:** Case studies are applicable to almost any discipline, but they are commonly used in business, computer science, environmental studies, biology, chemistry and the social sciences. Outdoor education would also be a natural for this approach.
- **It might include a discussion of professional ethics** as it coincides with your discipline. This could apply to many of the disciplines we teach. It would be great to expose our students to some of the problems that professionals face in careers they may be contemplating.
 - **Examples:** In business, the Enron case leaps to mind, of course. In accounting, what is the professional code of ethics? What are ethical problems an accountant is likely to face? In outdoor education, how does an educator who is dedicated to wilderness balance the invasive potential of taking a class into a pristine environment with the damage done to that environment in the process of educating students about it? In biology and chemistry, what are a researcher's personal ethical responsibilities in the possible uses of her/his research, if any?? In anthropology, students could explore and discuss the topic of fieldwork ethics.
 - **Disciplines that lend themselves to this approach:** Business, anthropology, sociology, outdoor education, biology and environmental science are just some of the areas that might be of interest to our students.
- **It might explore various theories of moral development** and have students reflect on their own moral development.
 - **Examples:** A psychology class could explore Lawrence Kohlberg's theory of moral development and Carol Gilligan's feminist critique of his model. Which do students most identify with? How would students chart their own moral development on these scales?
 - **Disciplines that lend themselves to this approach:** Psychology, sociology, religion and philosophy classes might include readings and discussion on moral development.
- **It might follow a 'thread' of ethical theories and/or issues** throughout the course.
 - **Examples:** As an example of the first approach, in my world religion course this fall I plan to include a specific discussion of the ethical framework of each of the religious traditions we study and relate those frameworks to other aspects of the religions. Another example: A political science course would be a natural arena to discuss the way in which ethical theories like natural law and utilitarianism have influenced political theory and public policy. Discussion of historical events like Hiroshima or the Holocaust naturally raise ethical issues, as do debates on most public policy issues like welfare, just war, environmental regulation, education policy, immigration and many others.
 - **Disciplines that lend themselves to this approach:** Exploration of ethical frameworks and theories might be particularly applicable in courses like Western Civ, history, government, political science, sociology, religion, anthropology and philosophy.
- **EXAMPLES from Union College, New York.** For some interesting examples of ways in which a group of professors from a wide range of disciplines included ethics in their courses, see <http://ethics.union.edu/reports.html> One interesting course in the visual arts explored ethical issues photographers faced in a segment called "Photographing Another Culture: Vietnam."

RESOURCES TO HELP WITH COURSE PLANNING

I am working to find and make available resources available to everyone interested in being part of the program. This spring, especially, the EAC committee will be **compiling a packet** of print materials that will be available electronically and through the bookstore. This packet will include ethical discussions and dilemmas relevant to courses in all four divisions as well as ideas for assessment and worksheets. Other resources include:

- **My help.** I would be happy to meet with you to talk about ways you might incorporate ethics in your classes and work with you to provide any resources you may need.
- **Internet resources, bibliographies, and library resources.** I will be working to build resources for the program both generally and in many different disciplines. I'll let you know as these develop where to access them and how to use them.
- **Workshops and discussion opportunities.** There will be opportunities throughout the year to discuss ethical theories, issues, pedagogies and practical experiences with the program.
- **Conferences.** There will be opportunities for people from every division to attend the annual International Society for Ethics Across the Curriculum Conference. I hope that many of you will be interested in attending this conference in the next several years as we develop the program. There may be other conferences that are relevant to specific disciplines and ethics. If you know of any, let me know. I am doing research on other relevant conferences now.

WHY DOES YOUNG HARRIS HAVE AN *ETHICS ACROSS THE CURRICULUM* PROGRAM?

Ethics Across the Curriculum is a formal and intentional way to integrate much that we have been doing as an institution for many years. What is new about it is a conscious focusing of resources to further develop an area that serves our students, serves the larger society, and harmonizes with the character and mission of college.

In our mission statement, we say that Young Harris College “educates, inspires and empowers students through a comprehensive liberal arts experience that integrates mind, body, and spirit.” In order to fulfill that mission, it is important that our students understand that the moral dimensions of human life are not divorced from reason and knowledge or from their daily lives and planned careers. A liberal arts education should be the education of the whole person – a preparation not just for a job, but for a life well lived.

In our college’s vision statement, we say that we intend to “prepare our students to exercise mature and independent moral judgment in an ever-changing and diverse world.” Such judgment is essential to their own happiness and success as human beings, to their ability to be good citizens of a democracy, and to the challenges they will face in trying to contribute to a more peaceful and just world.

As a college affiliated with the United Methodist Church, we are inheritors of a rich tradition that, at its best, has integrated faith and reason as well as personal virtue and social justice. Our institutional statement of values confirms our commitment to that heritage and to the “Wesleyan tradition of higher education which seeks to develop both a trained mind and a warm heart.” Integration of ethical discussion across our curriculum is one way to celebrate that heritage.