

**PROPOSAL FOR AN UNDERGRADUATE INTERDISCIPLINARY MINOR  
IN APPLIED ETHICS AND HUMAN VALUES**

**University of Utah**

**2005-06**

**Background and Justification**

The field of applied ethics consists in the analysis of ethical issues as they arise in the management and resolution of real-world problems. Applied (or as it is sometimes called, practical) ethics promotes an ongoing “conversation” between specific cases and pressing issues, on the one hand, and theory and meta-theory on the other. Interest in applied ethics, in the U.S. and beyond, has greatly increased in recent years, not only in response to scandals in all sectors of society but also as an effort to stimulate the study and practice of ethics across disciplines and professions. Bioethics, business ethics, and environmental ethics are but a few of the areas of applied ethics that have flourished in recent years, and all three areas are well represented by the faculty at the University of Utah. A number of universities in North America and Europe now grant master’s and doctoral degrees in applied ethics. A much larger number of institutions offer undergraduate majors or minors in applied ethics. The Association of Practical and Professional Ethics brings together programs in applied ethics through their clearinghouse and annual conference.

At the University of Utah, we have established impressive faculty strengths in the field of applied ethics. These faculty members are in a wide variety of disciplines, ranging from philosophy to engineering. Cal Boardman (Department of Finance) heads a six-college steering committee on applied ethics, linking together faculty with interests in the field from the colleges of Business, Engineering, Humanities, Law, Medicine, and Social and Behavioral Science. For a complete list of faculty members who have expressed an interest in the program, see Appendix A.

For the past three years, this applied ethics initiative has made research awards to interdisciplinary teams of faculty working in applied ethics. Along the way, we have developed a proposal for an institute in applied ethics and human values that will ultimately include programs emphasizing research, pedagogy, and community service.

Also, we have research related programs at universities throughout the United States, Canada, Europe, and Australasia. With this proposal, we seek to add the University of Utah to the growing list of universities providing focused work in applied ethics and at the same time promote further interdisciplinary collaboration on an array of issues and questions in this arena.

## **Structure of the Proposed Minor**

Good work in applied ethics requires understanding of moral and political philosophy, a grasp of how to apply basic principles to problems in specific areas, and familiarity with the specific areas of application themselves. Accordingly, the minor is structured according to three broad areas of course work: (I) Theory, (II) Applied Theory, and (III) Specific Areas of Practice. Here we acknowledge that the distinctions between these major categories are not always clean; therefore, our model allows for the fact that certain courses may appear in more than one place. Students will be required to take two courses from each broad area and one additional course from area I or II. (Please note that the University requires a *minimum* of 18 student credit hours for an undergraduate minor.) We have selected practical areas to correspond to existing areas of faculty strength and existing courses. This list may well be augmented according to the growth of interest and work in applied ethics in other parts of the campus.

### ***Area I: Theories of Ethics and Moral Dimensions of Political/Public Life***

Students must select at least two courses from the following list:

- Philosophy 3500 (Ethics)
- Philosophy 3700 (Political Philosophy)
- Philosophy 5310 (History of Ethical Theory)
- Philosophy 5500 (Contemporary Ethical Theory)
- Political Science 3010 (Democratic Theory)
- Political Science 5010 (Political Thought from Machiavelli)
- Political Science 5025 (American Political Thought)
- Political Science 5035 (Contemporary Political Thought)
- Political Science 5140 (Feminist Political Theory)

### ***Area II: Theories Applied and Growing Out of Specific Issues Areas***

Students must take at least two courses from one of the following groups. Note that both of these courses must be taken from the *same* group.

#### ***Group A: Bioethics***

- Communication 5140 (Communication and Aging)
- History 4095 (The Body and State in Modern Britain)
- Philosophy 3520 (Bioethics)
- Philosophy 5520 (Advanced Bioethics)
- Political Science 5321 (Health Policy)

#### ***Group B: Business and Professional Ethics***

- Business 1050 (Foundations of Business Thought)
- Communication 4170 (Applied Organizational Communication)

Communication 5170 (Issues in Organizational Communication)  
Communication 5350 (Communication and Professional Ethics)  
Communication 5660 (Media Ethics)  
Management 3800 (Business and Society)  
Philosophy 3510 (Business and Professional Ethics)

*Group C: Engineering and Environmental Ethics*

Philosophy 3510 (Business and Professional Ethics)  
Philosophy 4540 (Engineering, Ethics and Society)  
Philosophy 3530 (Environmental Ethics)  
Philosophy 3730 (Philosophy and International Justice)  
Political Science 5322 (Environmental Policy)

*Group D: Global, Societal and Political Ethics*

Linguistics 3460 (Language in Society)  
Linguistics 3470 (Language and Culture)  
Linguistics 5042 (Minority Language Issues in Education)  
Linguistics 5043 (Language Maintenance & Revitalization)  
Linguistics 5205 (Language and Gender)  
Philosophy 3730 (Philosophy and International Justice)  
Political Science 5440 (Nationalism and Ethnic Conflict)  
Political Science 5450 (Political Violence/Terrorism)  
Sociology 3365 (Ethnic Minorities in the United States)  
Sociology 3380 (Race/Ethnicity, Class and Gender)  
Sociology 3435 (Sociology of Economic Development)

*Group E: Law, Politics and Ethics*

Communication 5300 (Mass Media Law)  
Communication 5320 (Freedom of Expression)  
Philosophy 3710 (Philosophy of Law)  
Philosophy 5750 (Advanced Philosophy of Law)  
Political Science 5120 (Judicial Process)  
Political Science 5211 (Constitutional Law)  
Political Science 5212 (Civil Rights and Civil Liberties)  
Political Science 5240 (Local Government Law)  
Political Science 5250 (Corrections Administration)  
Political Science 5300 (Administrative Theory)  
Political Science 5380 (Public Budgeting and Finance)  
Political Science 5390 (Administration in Local Government)

*Group F: Communication/Media Ethics*

Communication 3030 (Communication and Social Responsibility)

Communication 3070 (Communication and Gender)  
Communication 3170 (Introduction to in Organizational Communication)  
Communication 3190 (Intercultural Communication)  
Communication 3400 (Cultural Studies in Communication)  
Communication 5000 (Ethical Issues across Communication Contexts)  
Communication 5350 (Communication and Professional Ethics)  
Communication 5660 (Media Ethics)  
Linguistics 3600 (Cross-Cultural Communication)

***Area III: Specific Coursework in Applied Areas***

Students must take at least two courses, to be approved by the advisor, from applied fields that emphasize ethics. They are encouraged to take courses in their major with an ethics emphasis to fulfill this requirement.

***Area IV: Elective***

Students must take one additional course, to be selected from either Area I or Area II (please see above). This will permit students either 1) to deepen their understanding of (meta)-theory; or 2) to select an applied theory course from an area other than that chosen already for emphasis, thus allowing for comparative theoretical analysis and application.

**Advising**

Because core strengths for the minor lie in the College of Humanities, especially in the Department of Philosophy and the Department of Communication, advising will be administered in the Department of Philosophy (Leslie Francis, Chair; Jessica Miller, academic advisor). Academic advising duties will be initially shared by members of Applied Ethics Steering Committee. As the minor grows, other relevant faculty will be brought into the process. For example, if a student in the minor requests a specific advisor in another college (e.g., Business, Law, Engineering, or Social and Behavioral Science), that will be arranged on an ad hoc basis. As the Institute for Ethics in Society (working title) is developed, we expect a staff person to centralize advising. Files will be housed in the Department of Philosophy.

**Program Oversight, Evaluation and Revision**

The Applied Ethics Steering Committee would be responsible for the ongoing supervision and modification of this program, regularly seeking input from the wider group of faculty on the campus distribution list for this area of interest. The current chair of this committee is Professor Cal Boardman, in the David Eccles School of Business. Other members of the committee are drawn from the colleges involved in planning the program: Humanities, Social and Behavioral Science, Engineer, Medicine, and Law. The committee reports to the deans of the School of Business and the College of Humanities. This committee will meet at least once per semester to provide support and guidance to

advisors for the minor, approve any internships or special projects, and oversee the various components of the minor, including approving additional courses being used to fulfill the requirements of the minor. The same committee will review each year the list of electives, working with data on student enrollment and being aware of new courses that should be added to the list. The committee will take general responsibility for quality control and will have the authority to remove courses from the list of electives that do not seem to be appropriate to the minor.

### **Linkages to Other Interdisciplinary Programs and to Service Learning**

We understand that many students who will be engaged in this interdisciplinary minor will also find appealing courses associated with other interdisciplinary minors, such as Environmental Studies, International Studies, Gender Studies, Ethnic Studies, and Peace and Conflict Studies. In fact, we are already receiving inquiries along these lines. We do not see the overlap as a problem but rather as an advantage of this and other programs to stimulate students in the direction of issue-oriented investigations, societal problem solving, and engaged citizenship. Also, we expect that a number of the course options, which are already designated for service-learning, will be encouraging students to bring their practical experiences back to the classroom for the reconsideration of theory.

**Appendix A:  
Selected Faculty in Applied Ethics**

(Note: There is now a campus listserv with more than 50 faculty representing seven colleges.)

*David Eccles School of Business*

Accounting:

Christine Botosan (ethics and financial reporting transparency)  
Martha Eining (the ethics of security and access)  
Marlene Plumlee (environmental measurement and disclosure,  
sustainability)

Finance:

Cal Boardman (business philosophy and applied ethics)

Management:

Abe Bakhsheshy (business ethics and social responsibility)  
Kristina Diekmann (fairness, ethical decision making, negotiation and  
conflict resolution)  
Kristin Smith-Crowe (business ethics, forgiveness, and punishment)  
Harris Sondak (ethics and leadership, procedural and distributive justice )

Marketing

Russell Belk (marketing, culture and society)  
Deborah Scammon (medical and administrative ethics, ethics in dealing  
with vulnerable populations)

*College of Humanities*

Communication:

James Anderson (organizational communication ethics, media ethics,  
research ethics)  
Bob Avery (public sphere, public broadcasting, and the public good)  
Karen Ashcraft (organizational communication, gender and race,  
professionalism)  
George Cheney (organizational communication and professional ethics,  
quality of worklife, democracy at work, rhetoric of war and peace)  
Julia Corbett (environmental ethics, public relations ethics, social change)  
Norman Elliott (communication and social responsibility)  
Glen Feighery (media ethics, journalistic ethics)  
James Fisher (journalistic ethics)  
Lisa Flores (gender, race, public movements, and oppression)  
Marouf Hasian (public memory, war, imperialism, genocide, and ethics)  
Leonard Hawes (soluble and intractable conflicts, meta-ethics)  
Richard Rieke (communication and the law, argumentation, and freedom  
of expression)  
Mary Strine (critical theory, cultural studies, and identity)  
Helene (Helga) Shugart (gender, sexuality, identity, social movements)

David Vergobbi (media ethics, public relations ethics, journalistic ethics, mass media law, and freedom of expression)

History:

Nadia Durbach (history of medicine)

Philosophy

Chrisoula Andreou (ethics, practical reasoning, political philosophy, business ethics)

Margaret P. Battin (bioethics, ethics in engineering)

Bryan Benham (research ethics, bioethics)

Deen Chatterjee (global ethics, political philosophy)

Leslie Francis (bioethics, environmental ethics)

Bruce Landesman (global ethics, political philosophy, philosophy of law and legal ethics, business ethics)

Anya Plutynski (environmental ethics)

*College of Social and Behavioral Science*

Political Science:

Nancy Basinger (public administration ethics)

Mark Button (political theory)

Rick Green (public administration ethics)

Chandran Kukathas (political theory and political philosophy)

Steve Ott (public administration ethics, ethics and non-profits)

*School of Engineering*

JoAnn Lighty (engineering and society; women in engineering)

*School of Law*

Dan Greenwood (corporate personhood)

*School of Medicine*

Department of Internal Medicine and Division of Medical Ethics

Jay A. Jacobson (bioethics)

Department of Pediatrics and Division of Medical Ethics

Armand Antommaria (bioethics, ethics and theology)

Department of Pediatrics, Division of Medical Ethics, and Office of Research Integrity

Jeffrey Botkin (bioethics, ethics and genetics, research ethics)

*School of Nursing*

Pat Berry (end-of-life issues, pain management)

**Appendix B:  
Survey of Utah Undergraduate Minor Programs in Applied Ethics**

None of the five four-year Utah college and universities offer an interdisciplinary minor in human values and applied ethics. The five institutions are Brigham Young University, Southern Utah University, University of Utah, Utah State University, and Utah Valley State College.

Four of the schools offer (and SUU is planning to offer) an undergraduate minor in philosophy. If a student wishes to emphasize ethics, all ethics courses, unless there is an approved exception, must be in philosophy. Such a minor allows students to focus on philosophy solely. The downside is that this may cause some tension when ethics courses are taught in other majors but students are not allowed to count those courses towards the philosophy minor. Further, there appears to be little coordination among the faculty across the campuses teaching their respective ethics courses.

The University of Utah is proposing an option for its undergraduate students and an opportunity for faculty collaboration. A student will be able to take either a minor in philosophy with an emphasis in ethics or the new interdisciplinary minor in human values and applied ethics. This new program would provide the student with the opportunity (actually a requirement) to take ethics courses in other areas in the belief that this broadening of education provides an enriching learning experience for the student. Moreover, the tri-partite structure of the minor encourages students to integrate theory and application. In addition, faculty from a variety of disciplines will be invited to coordinate and share knowledge and teaching approaches with colleagues from across the campus.

This will be a unique program in the state and one about which some of the schools have already expressed an interest to learn more.

**Appendix C:  
Survey of Institutions Applied Ethics Programs in North America and Europe**

In the fall of 2003, this committee conducted systematic surveys of programs in applied ethics (including those under the related rubrics of practical ethics, human values, values and policy, business and professional ethics, social justice, corporate social responsibility, and sustainability). At that time, we were examining the programs at other institutions not only for relevance to our undergraduate (and graduate) curricula but also with attention to the research-based and service-oriented dimensions of what we plan to become an institute here at the University of Utah.

Through our survey of over 100 related programs, we found no particular curricular innovations to note here. That is, the program we are designing is as broadly multi-disciplinary as any of the others. What we did find, however, in programs such as those at the University of Colorado at Boulder and Duke University were some ideas on how to create stronger interconnections between teaching, research and service. These we will keep in mind as we flesh out the proposal for an institute. Also, we acknowledge the absence of a capstone course in our proposal. Because of the structure of this minor, where much of the deductive work is done by the student through foundational courses in Philosophy, Political Science, and occasionally other disciplines, and with much of the application being pursued in a variety of contexts (through courses in particular areas such as business, environmental, health/medicine, legal, media etc.), we believe it is not appropriate to try to construct a broad-based capstone course. That said, we are open to the possibility of adding internships and independent studies later as suggested by students' interests and as the program unfolds.