

# University Studies Program

## GENERAL EDUCATION FOR THE 21<sup>st</sup> CENTURY

### Sample: Description of Ethical Reasoning and Sample Learning Outcomes from Quest II Draft Syllabus (Sustainability Signature Question)

*Ethical Reasoning is the hallmark of Quest II courses and should be evident in the student learning outcomes, assignments, and assessments in Quest II syllabi. Here is an example from Robert Wagoner (Philosophy) of how to define ethical reasoning and incorporate it into student learning outcomes. Also take note of how Dr. Wagoner has simultaneously woven his Signature Question (Sustainability) into the learning outcomes. This excerpt is used with his permission.*

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#### **Ethical Reasoning**

An important component of Quest II is its emphasis on ETHICAL REASONING. People engage in *reasoning* in a number of ways. We are capable of theoretical reasoning – reasoning about, for instance, the way a system of ideas or claims is connected. We are capable of *practical reasoning* – reasoning about what to do and how to do it. ETHICAL REASONING is a form of reasoning we all do when we ask questions like “Should I do this?” “Is it right to do that?” “Is this policy good?” “Am I doing what I should to be a good person?” “What should a good person do?” Thus, ETHICAL REASONING is, broadly, reasoning that incorporates our beliefs about values (good, bad). Ethical Reasoning typically reaches a conclusion of the form “X is right/wrong” or “I should do X/not do X”.

#### **Learning Outcomes and Core Abilities**

Students can expect to leave this course with the ability to:

1. Identify and describe the components of philosophical arguments.
2. Assess the quality of arguments
3. Identify and explain some famous and influential philosophical arguments.
4. Identify and explain some challenges these arguments face.
5. Think creatively and critically about evidence – e.g., about whether *this* is or is not evidence for *that*.
6. Think creatively and critically about ethical issues, especially in the evaluation of theories or arguments.
7. Identify core assumptions or commitments that distinguish one theory or argument from another.
8. Describe in detail some of the issues embraced by the term ‘SUSTAINABILITY’
9. State and explain a definition of SUSTAINABILITY.
10. Identify and explain the significance of some human practices (e.g., manufacturing, aiding undeveloped countries, living in cities) to the SIGNATURE QUESTION.

11. Articulate and explain what ETHICAL REASONING is.
12. Analyze examples of ETHICAL REASONING in terms of their components (e.g., beliefs about value, non-value beliefs, empirical claims).
13. Identify and Explain some of the ways in which (and cases in which) ETHICAL REASONING is indispensable for understanding issues embraced by SUSTAINABILITY.

In addition to these abilities, students can expect

14. To be able to describe the value of a liberal education.
15. To be familiar with the expectations of a college-level education, the UW Oshkosh **Essential Learning Outcomes**, and the University Studies Program.
16. To be familiar with the ePortfolio.