Universidad de Navarra

CORE- Worldviews and Ethics

Teaching guide 2026-27

BASIC INFORMATION

This course belongs to the Core Curriculum of the University of Navarra http://www.unav.edu/web/core-curriculum/inicio

Degree: The course is open to students in gap-year, exchange programs, and/or pursuing a degree in any Faculty

Module / Subject: Core Curriculum / Cultural Keys

ECTS: 3

Type of Course: Elective

Professor: Mercedes Rubio

Language of instruction: English

CLASS SCHEDULE & ROOM

Schedule: Wednesdays, 17:30-19:30

Room: Central Building - 2nd floor, Room 36

COURSE SYLLABUS

Brief Description of the Course

What does happiness consist in? Is human freedom genuine or only apparent? Is there a way of distinguishing between moral good and evil?

These questions are perennial ones, and have received various answers throughout history. The present course focuses on answers offered by a small selection of philosophical and religious perspectives, ancient and modern, western and eastern, with the object, firstly, of understanding their different ways of looking at reality; secondly, of critically evaluating their way of thought; and thirdly, of comparing them to see their similarities and differences.

This course covers the following worldviews: Classical Greece and late Antiquity, Judaism, Christianity, Islam, modern and contemporary philosophy.

The course puts three families of "worldviews" in conversation:

• Classical Greek philosophy: Plato, Aristotle, and the Hellenistic schools (Stoics and Hedonists /Epicureans).

• Religious traditions: Judaism, Christianity and Islam, understood as living worldviews with their own visions of the human person, freedom, and the good life.

• Modern and contemporary philosophy: F. Nietzsche as radical critic of traditional morality, and L. Polo as a contemporary proposal of an integrative anthropological ethics.

The course aims to present each tradition as a starting point for the students to reflect on their own understanding of humanity, freedom, happiness, interpersonal relationships, and social responsibility.

Program

Session 1: Introduction. What is a worldview and what is ethics

Session 2: The Greek discovery of the human being: Plato and Aristotle

Session 3: The human being in Judaism, Christianity and Islam

Session 4: Plato and Aristotle on happiness as the goal of human life

Session 5: Happiness and freedom in Judaism, Christianity and Islam

Session 6: What is pleasure, really. Epicurus

Session 7: Stoic freedom and happiness

Session 8: Nietzsche, superman and the death of God.

Session 9: After Nietzsche.

Session 10: Who is a human person. L. Polo's anthropological proposal.

Session 11: Knowledge, will and freedom in personal growth

Session 12: The human person as a relational being

Session 13: Ethics and the social dimension of the human person

OBJECTIVES AND LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of the course, students will be able to:

1. Identify the main answers given by Plato, Aristotle, Stoics, Hedonists, Judaism, Islam, Nietzsche and Leonardo Polo to core anthropological and ethical questions.

2. Compare these worldviews on key issues: human nature, happiness, freedom, virtue, and social life.

3. Read short primary texts (in English translation) with basic philosophical and hermeneutical care.

4. Discuss ethical dilemmas respectfully in a multicultural classroom, giving reasons and listening to reasons.

5. Recognize how implicit worldviews shape everyday choices, media, and public debates.

6. Formulate their own reasoned position on selected ethical questions, aware of the tradition it belongs to.

Competences

• Cognitive: critical reading, conceptual analysis, comparison across traditions.

• Communicative: oral argument, structured writing, respectful dialogue in English.

• Personal: self-knowledge, reflection on one's own worldview, ethical sensitivity.

• Social: intercultural understanding, teamwork, tolerance grounded in reasoned conviction.

FORMATIVE ACTIVITIES

Methodology

The course follows a simple, highly interactive format adapted to gap-year and exchange international students who are not philosophy majors:

• Mini-lecture: the instructor presents the key ideas of the session with slides, images, and clear examples.

• Text moment: a short primary text (½–1 page in English) is read together and briefly commented.

• Interactive activity: rotating formats — small-group discussion, structured debate, case study, quizzes, one-minute papers, table talks.

• Wrap-up (5–10 min): shared synthesis and a "question to take home" for the following week.

Texts are provided in advance on the course platform. English is kept clear and accessible; unfamiliar technical terms are always explained in class.

Course rules

• English is the working language; questions in other languages will be reformulated in English for the group.

• Laptops and phones are put away during class, unless explicitly requested or authorised by the instructor.

• Students are expected to contribute to an atmosphere of respect and the need for everyone to listen and to participate in class activities.

· The use of IA tools is not allowed.

EVALUATION & GRADING SYSTEM

Test 1 (Session 6, in class, 45 min) 20% Short questions on Units 1–2

Test 2 (Session 10, in class, 45 min) 20% Short questions on Units 3–4

Class participation & activities 30% Quality of participation, in-class exercises, papers

Final exam 30% Written exam (full program included)*

• Ordinary Take: Monday, 7 December 2026, 9:00–11:00 · FCOM – P0 – Room 009

• Extraordinary Take: Monday, 7 June 2027, 9:00–11:00 · FCOM – P0 – Room 009

*A minimum of 6/10 in the final exam is required to pass. Students who do not reach that minimum keep the grade of the components already passed for the extraordinary call.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Primary texts (short excerpts, in English translation, provided by the instructor):

· Plato, *Republic* (Books IV & VII); *Phaedo* (selection on the soul). Find it in the Library

· Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* (Books I, II, VIII). Find it in the Library

· Epicurus, *Letter to Menoeceus*. Find it in the Library electronic version

· Epictetus, *Enchiridion*; Marcus Aurelius, *Meditations* (selection). Find it in the Library electronic version

· *Hebrew Bible*: Genesis 1–2; Exodus 20 (Decalogue); selected Psalms. Find it in the Library electronic version

· *Qur'an*: selected verses on human nature (*fitra*), stewardship (*khalifa*), and the good life; a brief hadith selection. Find it in the Library electronic version

· F. Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil* Find it in the Library electronic version and *On the Genealogy of Morality* (selection). Find it in the Library

· L. Polo, *Ethics: A Modern Version of Its Classic Themes* (selection); short passages on person, freedom and giving. Find it in the Library

Secondary references:

· J. F. Sellés, *Antropología para inconformes* (selected chapters, English handouts). Find it in the Library

· L. Polo, *Quién es el hombre* / *Who Is Man?* (selection). Find it in the Library electronic version

· A. MacIntyre, *A Short History of Ethics* (background reference). Find it in the Library electronic version

· J. Pieper, *The Four Cardinal Virtues* (background reference). Find it in the Library

Students are encouraged to ask for advice on further bibliography.

CONSULTATION HOURS

- Students are encouraged to request appointments by email: mrubiog@unav.es