National University of Engineering (UNI)
School of Computer Science
Syllabus 2027-I

1. COURSE

BEF201. Ethics and Political Philosophy (Mandatory)

2. GENERAL INFORMATION

2.1 Course	:	BEF201. Ethics and Political Philosophy
2.2 Cycle	:	2^{nd} Cycle.
2.3 Credits	:	2
2.4 Hours	:	1 HT; 2 HP;
2.5 Duration of the period	:	16 weeks
2.6 Type of course	:	Mandatory
2.7 Learning modality	:	Face to face
2.8 Prerrequisites	:	None

3. PROFESSORS

Meetings after coordination with the professor

4. INTRODUCTION TO THE COURSE

This course introduces students to the fundamentals of ethics and political philosophy as a humanistic foundation for professional practice, and extends them to engineering ethics and professional responsibility. Through the study of normative ethical theories, the major traditions of political thought, and contemporary debates in political philosophy, students develop the critical tools to analyze moral and political problems. The course closes with the application of these tools to the ethical dilemmas engineers face in professional practice.

5. GOALS

- Distinguish ethics, morality, and law, and compare the main normative ethical theories.
- Explain the foundations of the social contract tradition and the major modern ethico-political proposals.
- Analyze contemporary political philosophy debates from multiple theoretical perspectives.
- Apply ethical decision-making frameworks and professional codes of conduct to engineering practice.

6. COMPETENCES

AG-C01) The Professional and the World: Analyzes and evaluates the impact of solutions to complex computing problems on the sustainable development of society. (Usage)

AG-C02) Ethics: Applies ethical principles and commits to professional ethics and the standards of professional computing practice. (Usage)

AG-C09) Design and Development of Solutions: Designs, implements, and evaluates solutions for complex computing problems. (Familiarity)

7. TOPICS

Unit 1: Basic Notions of Ethics and Political Philosophy (15 hours)	
Competences Expected: AG-C09	
Topics	**Learning Outcomes**
• What is ethics? Distinguishing ethics, morality, and law as normative systems • Main normative ethical theories: consequentialism, deontology, and virtue ethics • What is political philosophy? Fundamental questions about power, legitimacy, and the state • The social contract tradition: Hobbes, Locke, and Rousseau • Conceptions of justice: distributive, procedural, and retributive	• Distinguish ethics, morality, and law as normative systems [Familiarity] • Compare the main normative ethical theories and their criteria for moral evaluation [Usage] • Explain the foundations of the social contract tradition and its main proponents [Familiarity] • Identify different conceptions of justice and apply them to concrete cases [Assessment]
Readings : [RR15], [Kym02]	

Unit 2: Major Ethico-Political Proposals (6 hours)	
Competences Expected: AG-C09	
Topics	**Learning Outcomes**
• Political and economic liberalism: individual liberty and the limits of the state • Socialism and Marxist thought: the critique of private property and exploitation • Civic republicanism and liberty understood as non-domination • Communitarianism and its critique of liberal individualism	• Compare liberal, socialist, republican, and communitarian proposals in response to a concrete social problem [Usage] • Identify the philosophical foundations of a given ethico-political position [Assessment]
Readings : [Kym02]	

Unit 3: Engineering Ethics and Professional Responsibility (12 hours)	
Competences Expected: AG-C01,AG-C02	
Topics	**Learning Outcomes**
• Ethical theories applied to engineering: utilitarianism, deontological ethics, virtue ethics • Professional codes of conduct (e.g. NSPE, IEEE, ASME, and national engineering boards) and their fundamental canons • The engineer's paramount responsibility to public safety, health, and welfare • Ethical dilemmas in practice: conflicts of interest, whistleblowing, gifts • Ethical decision-making frameworks and case-study analysis • Global engineering ethics and cross-cultural challenges • Ethical obligations toward sustainable development and environmental stewardship • Ethical implications of emerging technologies (AI, automation, data privacy) • Ethical conduct in dispute resolution and litigation	• Explain the fundamental principles of an engineer's code of ethics [Familiarity] • Apply an ethical decision-making framework to a hypothetical engineering scenario [Assessment] • Identify conflicts of interest and other common ethical pitfalls in project work [Familiarity] • Analyze a historical engineering failure from an ethical perspective [Assessment] • Evaluate the ethical dimensions of a project with significant social or environmental impacts in a different cultural context [Assessment] • Articulate the ethical argument for incorporating sustainability into all engineering work [Familiarity] • Discuss the ethical responsibilities related to the collection and use of data in smart infrastructure projects [Assessment] • Describe the role of ethics in alternative dispute resolution processes [Familiarity]
Readings : [HPR13], [Fle20]	

Unit 4: Currents in Contemporary Political Philosophy (9 hours)	
Competences Expected: AG-C09	
Topics	**Learning Outcomes**
• Rawls's theory of justice: the original position and the veil of ignorance • Contemporary libertarianism: Nozick and property rights • Feminist political philosophy and theories of care • Multiculturalism, recognition, and identity politics • Deliberative democracy and the public sphere	• Explain the concepts of the original position and the veil of ignorance in Rawls's theory [Usage] • Contrast libertarian and Rawlsian proposals on distributive justice [Assessment] • Analyze a contemporary political debate from at least two of the political philosophy currents studied [Assessment] • Describe the foundations of deliberative democracy and its role in the public sphere [Familiarity]
Readings : [Raw99], [Kym02]	

8. WORKPLAN

8.1 Methodology

Individual and team participation is encouraged to present their ideas, motivating them with additional points in the different stages of the course evaluation.

8.2 Theory Sessions

The theory sessions are held in master classes with activities including active learning and roleplay to allow students to internalize the concepts.

8.3 Practical Sessions

The practical sessions are held in class where a series of exercises and/or practical concepts are developed through problem solving, problem solving, specific exercises and/or in application contexts.

9. EVALUATION SYSTEM

Theory Sessions:
The theory sessions are held in master classes with activities including active learning and roleplay to allow students to internalize the concepts.

Lab Sessions:
In order to verify their competences, several activities including active learning and roleplay will be developed during lab sessions.

Oral Presentations:
Individual and team participation is encouraged to present their ideas, motivating them with additional points in the different stages of the course evaluation.

Reading:
Throughout the course different readings are provided, which are evaluated. The average of the notes in the readings is considered as the mark of a qualified practice. The use of our virtual campus allows each student to access the course information, and interact outside the classroom with the teacher and with the other students.

The final grade NF depends on the following grades:

- PE: Partial Exam.
- FE: Final Exam.
- P: Permanent Evaluation (Average of practical work and graded assignments).

The final grade NF is calculated as follows:

$$NF = \frac{PE + FE + P}{3}$$

10. BASIC BIBLIOGRAPHY

[Raw99] John Rawls. *A Theory of Justice*. Revised. Belknap Press, 1999.

[Kym02] Will Kymlicka. *Contemporary Political Philosophy: An Introduction*. 2nd. Oxford University Press, 2002.

[HPR13] Charles E. Harris, Michael S. Pritchard, and Michael J. Rabins. *Engineering Ethics: Concepts and Cases*. 5th. Cengage Learning, 2013.

[RR15] James Rachels and Stuart Rachels. *The Elements of Moral Philosophy*. 8th. McGraw-Hill Education, 2015.

[Fle20] Charles B. Fleddermann. *Engineering Ethics*. 5th. Pearson, 2020.