



**Shri Mata Vaishno Devi University Katra**  
*School of Philosophy & Culture*

SMVDU/COH&SS/10/91

February 17, 2010

**Circular**

**Subject:** 1<sup>st</sup> Meeting of the Board of Studies of the School of Philosophy & Culture

The first meeting of the Board of Studies of the School in the academic year 2009 – 10 is scheduled on Friday, Feb. 19, 2010 at 11am in the Conference Room of the College of Humanities & Social Sciences. You are requested to kindly attend the meeting. The agenda of the meeting is as follows:

1. Proposal for a Certificate Course in Professional Ethics (the outline of the course and the opinion of the outstation external expert, Prof. B.H. Boruah, Professor of Philosophy, Dept. of HSS, IIT Delhi, are annexed herewith for your perusal)
2. Any other issue

R S Misra  
Director

School of Philosophy & Culture

CC:

1. PS to VC for the information of Hon'ble Vice Chancellor
2. Registrar
3. Concerned \_\_\_\_\_
4. School file/Circular

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# **School of Philosophy & Culture**

## **Certificate Course in Professional Ethics**

**Course Coordinator:** Anil Kumar Tewari

Lecturer, School of Philosophy & Culture

### **Introduction**

The emergence of various professions as a result of scientific inventions and ever-increasing industrialization necessitates comparing of apparently incommensurable and qualitatively different values. The fact of multiple memberships in different social groups makes such a comparison obligatory. And it is, therefore, necessary to be aware of the ethical issues involved in the activities related to one's occupation and workplace. The main objective of this course is to sensitize the mind of students to new modes of thinking about how to respond to ethical issues with integrity and creative imagination in a given professional context. It also aims at enabling the students to recognize and deal ethically with conflicts of interest likely to arise while discharging their professional responsibilities. Moreover, the course aspires to inculcate a critical attitude in the students so that they can appreciate how ethical ideas relate to their professional practices and reflect on professional decisions in an ethical perspective. The course will focus on the following professions: business, engineering, medical, and legal. However, the issues intended to be covered can adequately address the ethical requirements of most of the professions.

### **Course Content**

1. Introduction: Understanding the core professional values which underpin the practices in (1) Business, (2) Engineering, (3) Medical, and (4) Legal professions (5 Hours)
2. Underlying Ethical Theories: (a) Teleological, (b) Deontological, and (c) Virtue Ethical (5 Hours)
3. Selected Case Studies: business, engineering, medical, and legal professions (12 Hours)
4. Criteria for holistic professional Codes: (1) Natural Acceptability, and (2) Experiential Validation (3 Hours)
5. Practice Sessions based on Case Studies (5 Hours)

**Course Duration:** 30 hours to be completed in a Semester

**Contact Hours:** 3 hours a week

**Targeted Students:** Students of Engineering, Sciences, Humanities , and Management streams of SMVDU

**Teaching Resource:** Existing faculty of the School of Philosophy and Culture and guest speakers

**Financial Requirements:**

There would be registration fee of Rs. 1000/- for each candidate and all the financial requirements will be met with the collection from the participants.

**Suggested Readings:**

1. Robinson, Simon (*et al*), (2007), *Engineering, Business and Professional Ethics*, Oxford: Elsevier.
2. Naagarazan, R.S. (2006), *A Text Book on Professional Ethics and Human Values*, New Delhi: New Age International (P) Publishers.
3. Oakley, Justin and Cocking, Dean (2001), *Virtue Ethics and Professional Roles*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
4. Case Studies based on particularly the decisions of Indian Judiciary.

From: "Bijoy H. Boruah" <boruah@iitk.ac.in>  
Subject: Assessment  
Date: Tue, February 16, 2010 9:04 pm  
To: aktewari@iitk.ac.in

Dear Mr Tewari,  
Appended below is my assessment of the proposal for a course on  
"Professional Ethics".  
Bijoy Boruah  
Department of Humanities and Social Sciences  
IIT Delhi

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**Attachments:**

**assessment.doc**

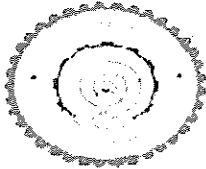
Size: 78 k

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**Bijoy H Boruah**  
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### **Assessment of the proposed Certificate Course in Professional Ethics**

I have gone through the thematic outline and structural description of the proposed course entitled 'Certificate Course in Professional Ethics' with much interest and inquisitiveness. I am happy to say right at the outset that this is a most time-honoured and intellectually apposite offer from the School of Philosophy and Culture of SMVD University. My reasons for this appreciation are stated below.

Professional Ethics is now a globally well-known, much discussed, highly pragmatically conceived, and most widely recommended course of study in almost all institutions of higher education. There is an urgency of this enthusiasm for this particular subject of study in view of the increasing and ever new complexities that have been surfacing in various contemporary professional contexts: medical, legal, engineering-industrial, and business-organizational. Indeed, the practice of any of these professions in many crucial respects has become inseparable from ethical decision-making in those respects. Issues of abortion and euthanasia in medical practice, corporate social/moral responsibility in business-organizational practice, the morality of capital punishment in legal practice, eco-ethical balance in high-tech industrial enterprise are some of the typical instances that readily come to mind. Questions of ethics constitute the principal concern in these complex problems, which are problems for the entire humanity.

It is therefore inevitable, and incumbent on the community of intellectuals engaged in higher education, that students are exposed to the ethically intriguing possibilities of problems in various professional contexts. While theoretical training in various fields of learning is a cognitive necessity for any student to be properly qualified as educated, the full meaning of education is never captured unless and until the student is made to realize the practical complexities of the professional life in which he or she is expected to deliver the expertise acquired during the period of University education. Any course in Professional Ethics is meant to contribute to this fulfillment.

Offering a 'certificate course' in Professional Ethics is very reasonable first step in the direction of exemplifying the truly *practical* or *applied* nature of moral-philosophical thinking. I believe that the very nature of the course will attract the interest of many students, because they will recognize the relevance of the course to contemporary problems in professional life, and in life in general. The course seems to be structured in such a way that there is a proper *balance* between theory and practice. Bringing in relevant 'case studies' from appropriate sectors of professions will mean that the student is placed in the midst of a 'live' problem of complexity demanding a solution dependent on a judicious decision-making step. Such decision-making thought will of course be influenced by certain principal theories of ethics which are standardly discussed in moral philosophy. This course rightly places such theories against matters of actual contexts in order to help formulate ways of effectively dealing with actual problems. It is precisely in this critical juncture of (intellectual) theory and practical (context) that the student will have the

realization of the noble importance of philosophical reflection for the way we are to live our lives in tune with human welfare.

My only suggestion by way of modification is that, instead of devoting 12 hours for Selected Case Studies (Number 3 under **Course Content**, 10 hours be allotted to it. From the remaining 2 hours, 1 hour each may be added to **Introduction** (Number 1) and **Underlying Ethical Theories** (Number 2).

It must be realized, however, that the allotment of time to different topics under **Course Content** is artificial and mechanical beyond a certain point. For the discussion of issues in Professional Ethics will certainly demand going back and forth from one to the other in the whole list of contents. The Instructor of the course will do well to reorganize the distribution of time if and when the need to do so is genuinely felt.

The Bibliography is sufficiently broad-based as well as focused. It is also understood that fresh reading material may be supplied in bits during the course, provided that reference to and discussion of such papers/articles are deemed urgently and contextually relevant.

Furthermore, the course is expected to be highly *interactive* in nature, which means that fifty percent success of the course depends on the active participation of the students in discussions. Because of the decision-theoretic tilt of the course, many issues will become clear to the student only when critical attempts are made to 'work out' the solution to a problem (to be revealed in 'case-studies') in sensitive and reasonable ways.

More than in other courses, student feedback in this particular course will be of immense value both to the Instructor and to the improvement of the course for future occasions. In point of fact, the feedback can be collated in such a way that some meaningful discussion is initiated by the Instructor before the course comes to its final end. This bit of 'experimentalism' will, I believe, prove to be conducive to the popularization of the course. The 'popularization' referred to here is, of course, not to be taken in its pejorative, non-serious sense.

With these remarks, I hereby express my attitude of approval of the course. and accordingly recommend that the course proposal be considered both worthy and desirable for approval by the relevant authority of the University.

(BIJOY H BORUAH)

Tuesday, February 16, 2010