



Fact Sheet

ETHICS IN AMERICA

TEST INFORMATION

This test was developed to enable schools to award credit to students for knowledge equivalent to that which is learned by students taking the course. The school may choose to award college credit to the student based on the achievement of a passing score. The passing score for each examination is determined by the school based on recommendations from the American Council on Education® (ACE). This minimum credit-awarding score is equal to the mean score of students in the norming sample who received a grade of C in the course. Some schools set their own standards for awarding credit and may require a higher score than the ACE recommendation. Students should obtain this information from the institution where they expect to receive credit.

The essay will ask the examinee to analyze a morally problematic situation in terms of issues relevant to a decision and arguments for alternative positions; it will require the examinee to reach his or her own reasoned conclusion.

The essay section will not be scored by The Chauncey Group. It will be forwarded to colleges and universities for their use in determining the award of credit.

CONTENT

The following topics, which are commonly taught in courses on this subject, are covered by this examination.

**Approximate
Percent
29%**

I. Ethical traditions

- A. Greek views: Thucydides, Socrates, Plato, Aristotle
 - 1. Relationship of morality to community

- 2. Duty to obey the law
 - 3. Relationship between self-interest and virtue
 - 4. Relationship between virtue and happiness
 - 5. Conceptions of justice
 - 6. Justice as the interest of the stronger
 - 7. Justice as playing the proper role
 - 8. Equity as proper ratio of benefits
 - 9. Virtue and human nature
 - 10. Nature and kinds of virtue
 - 11. Virtue as excellence
 - 12. Virtue, habit, and character
 - 13. Voluntary action
 - 14. Doctrine of the mean
 - 15. The best human life
- B. Biblical traditions: books of the law, prophets, gospels, writings of Paul
- 1. Relationship between law and morality
 - 2. Role of the covenant
 - 3. Role of the prophets in denouncing evil
 - 4. Conceptions of justice in punishment and in the distribution of wealth
 - 5. Relationship between morality and community
 - 6. Place of mercy and love
 - 7. Apparent paradoxes in the traditions



**Approximate
Percent
35%**

- C. Moral law: Epictetus, Aquinas, Hobbes, Locke, Jefferson, Kant, Rawls, King, Rousseau, and others
 - 1. Views of human nature
 - 2. Basis of natural law
 - 3. Natural rights and duties
 - 4. Relationship of natural law to religious belief
 - 5. Source of political authority
 - 6. Social contract
 - 7. Relationship of natural law and human law
 - 8. Justifiability of revolution or civil disobedience
 - 9. Equality and liberty
 - 10. Deontological vs. consequential moral frameworks
 - 11. Hypothetical and categorical imperatives
 - 12. Good will and duty for its own sake
 - 13. Persons as ends in themselves, not as means only
 - 14. Loyalty and virtue
 - 15. Relationship of morality to self-interest and happiness
 - 16. Conceptions of justice
 - 17. Fairness and distributive justice
- D. Consequential ethics: Epicurus, Bentham, Mill
 - 1. Consequential vs. deontological moral frameworks
 - 2. Hedonism and kinds of pleasure
 - 3. Self-interest or prudence and the common good
 - 4. Principle of utility or greatest happiness principle
 - 5. Felicific (or hedonic) calculus
 - 6. Conscience and external sanctions of morality
 - 7. Self-regarding and other-regarding conduct
 - 8. Individual liberty and the limits of the state's authority
- E. Feminist ethics
 - 1. Critique of standard ethics
 - 2. Alternative visions - care ethic and ethic of trust

- II. Ethical analysis of issues arising in interpersonal and personal-societal relationships and in professional and occupational roles (such as law, government, medicine, business military service, journalism). Issues such as, but not limited to:
 - A. Doing good, not doing harm, and preventing harm
 - B. Obligations to strangers
 - C. Special moral relationships (such as parenthood)
 - D. Conflict of duties
 - E. Autonomy and privacy
 - F. Fidelity, accountability, and trustworthiness
 - G. Veracity
 - H. Right to information
 - I. Confidentiality
 - J. Informed consent
 - K. Institutional responsibilities
 - L. Professional code of ethics
 - M. Paternalism
 - N. Retributive and distributive justice
 - O. Balancing harms

- III. Relationships between ethical traditions and the ethical analysis of situations **36%**

SAMPLE QUESTIONS

1. Which of the following thinkers evaluates the morality of actions in terms of the amount of pleasure and pain they produce?
 - (A) Aristotle
 - (B) Kant
 - (C) Bentham
 - (D) King
2. According to which of the following philosophers is it immoral to commit suicide?
 - (A) The hedonist Epicurus, because suicide decreases one's pleasure
 - (B) The Stoic Epictetus, because suicide is contrary to nature
 - (C) Kant, because persons who commit suicide treat themselves as a means only
 - (D) Mill, because suicide never maximizes utility
3. For a utilitarian, the ethical evaluation of a decision to tell a lie will NOT depend on whether the
 - (A) person to whom the lie is told will benefit from the lie
 - (B) person telling the lie would mind someone else lying to him or her
 - (C) person telling the lie will suffer if the truth is told
 - (D) lie will cause suffering to third parties

Directions: The following questions are based on fictional situations and are in a different format from that of other questions in this test. Moral relevance and the moral reasons are to be understood in terms of the theories presented in the course materials. Judge a consideration to be morally relevant if at least one of those views would allow its relevance.

Preceding each group of numbered phrases or statements is a question that can be answered "Yes" or "No." Answer this question separately for each phrase or statement in the group by marking lettered space A on your answer sheet for "Yes" or lettered space B for "No" next to the number for each phrase or statement. Do not assume that there are more "Yes" answers or more "No" answers.

Questions 4-10 are based on the following situation.

Dr. DePaolo, chief of psychiatry at University Hospital, submitted a research plan to the hospital's Institutional Review Board to use patients in the hospital to test the effectiveness of a new type of drug for treatment of severe depression. The doctor proposed a "double-blind" design in which subjects would be randomly assigned to one of three groups: one group to receive the experimental drug, a second group to receive a standard agent for treatment of depression, and a third group to receive a placebo (a harmless inert substance). Dr. DePaolo as the experimenter was not to know which subjects were assigned to each group. The plan was approved. A third of the way through the experimental trials, one of the subjects complained to Dr. DePaolo, saying, "Doctor, since I have been taking this medication, I have been feeling much more depressed and have been thinking again about committing suicide."

Is the following an issue that would have been relevant for a member of the Institutional Review Board to raise in judging the plan from the point of view of the ethics of research on human subjects?

4. Whether the patients were depressed to a degree that would impair their judgment in agreeing to participate in the trial
5. What information was to be given to the subjects about the possible risks and benefits of the trial to them
6. Whether the hospital would incur unreimbursed costs by participating in the trial

Is the following an appropriate course of action for Dr. DePaolo to follow concerning the depressed subject if Dr. DePaolo applies the principle, "First, do not harm"?

7. Record the comment as data for the experimental trial and continue the trial
8. Wait until the end of the trial to treat the subject with the drug that has been found to be most effective for that subject
9. Remove the subject from the experimental trial and resume treatment with an approved drug suitable for that subject
10. Unseal the trial records to determine which experimental group the subject is in before deciding whether to continue the trial for that subject

ESSAY QUESTION

Choose one of the following situations to analyze.

Situation: While off duty, Timmons, a police officer, finds a package containing \$1,000 on the floor of a supermarket. The package and its contents give no indication of its owner's name. In the package, however, is a betting ticket for a legal lottery which the owner of the package could use to identify the package if it is reported found. Timmons needs cash in order to make a down payment on a new house. Without new housing, Timmons's children will continue to be exposed to high levels of radon, a dangerous gas emanating from the granite underneath Timmons's present house. Radon exposure, if prolonged, can cause cancer.

Decision: Should Timmons keep the package and its contents without reporting it to the store or the local authorities?

- Part 1. List the most significant moral principles or issues and the most significant facts, including any undecided factual issues, that have a bearing on making the decision, and describe the alternatives available.
- Part 2. Then, using this analysis, take an ethical position about what decision should be made, and support your position with the best ethical arguments you can make.
- Part 3. Then, in the most reasonable way that you can, state a view that is strongly opposed to your position in the most reasonable way that you can, and make the best ethical arguments you can for this opposing view.
- Part 4. Then reconsider your position, and say whether and why it should be changed or modified in view of the opposing arguments you have made.

Write one and no more than two paragraphs on each part.

Allocate your time equally among the four parts.

STUDYING FOR THE EXAMINATION

The following is a list of reference publications that were being used as textbooks in college courses of the same or similar title at the time the test was developed. Appropriate textbooks for study are not limited to those listed below. If you wish to obtain study resources to prepare for the examination, you may reference either the current edition of the following titles **or** textbooks currently used at a local college or university for the same class title. It is recommended that you reference **more than one textbook** on the topics outlined in this fact sheet. You should **begin by checking textbook content against the content outline** included on the front page of this Fact Sheet **before** selecting textbooks that cover the test content from which to study. Textbooks may be found at the campus bookstore of a local college or university offering a course on the subject.

Sources for study material suggested but not limited to the following:

Barcalow, Emmett. *Moral Philosophy Theory and Issues*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, current edition. An interpretive analysis without primary source references.

Goldberg, David T. *Ethical Theory & Social Issues: Historical Texts & Contemporary Readings*. Orlando, FL: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, current edition. Anthology of classical readings in ethics. Articles on affirmative action; censorship and pornography; sexual morality and AIDS; and other applied ethics topics.

Newton, Lisa H., ed. *Ethics in America Source Reader*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc., current edition.

Sommers, Christina, and Fred Sommers. *Vice & Virtue in Everyday Life*. Fort Worth, TX: Harcourt Brace College, current edition. Short selections, both historical and contemporary, in ethical theory and its applications.

White, James E., ed. *Contemporary Moral Problems*. Minneapolis/St. Paul, MN: West Publishing, current edition. Anthology of readings on contemporary moral issues with an opening section covering ethical theory. Includes feminist theory and selections from feminist writers.

CREDIT RECOMMENDATIONS

The Center for Adult Learning and Educational Credentials of the American Council on Education (ACE) has reviewed and evaluated the DSST examination development process and has made the following recommendations:

Area or Course

Equivalent:	Ethics in America
Level:	Lower level Baccalaureate
Amount of Credit:	Three (3) semester hours
Source:	ACE Commission on Educational Credit and Credentials

INFORMATION

Colleges and universities that would like additional information about the national norming, or assistance in local norming or score validation studies should write to: DSST Program, Mail Stop 11-P, The Chauncey Group International, 664 Rosedale Road, Princeton, New Jersey 08540.

It is advisable that schools develop a consistent policy about awarding credit based on scores from this test and that the policy be reviewed periodically. The Chauncey Group will be happy to help schools in this effort.

Correct responses to sample questions: 1.C; 2.C; 3.B; PART III: 4.A; 5.A; 6.B; 7.B; 8.B; 9.A; 10.B.

Current textbook used by a local college or university for a course on the subject.

