

Here is what our 2017 and 2018 team members say about the value of Ethics Bowl.

Luke Kahl, 2018

On the Ethics Bowl

The Ethics Bowl is a wondrous experience that any student offered to participate in should gladly accept. It is a fun and worthwhile opportunity that encompasses many needed professional skills that are some of the most desired by companies today. These skills do not often show up in other classes in the amount present in the Ethics Bowl, which is centered around them. To begin, the primary skill to appear is critical thinking which permeates every aspect of the Ethics Bowl. From the first days, where the cases are first presented to students so they may outline their ethical stance on the subject up until the actual Ethics Bowl itself, where students must present their well developed argument and critically think on the spot after hearing the oppositions rebuttal. This is not to say critical thinking stops after the class, once exposed to syllogisms (a logical format for arguments) it is hard to not put everything into them in my own experience. It can be fun to get creative with the arguments and think in abstract ways which will help the argument but also make the experience more enjoyable.

Beyond critical thinking, there lays a heavily important social aspect. Students partaking must socialize with their classmates not only in the classroom itself, but on their own time. Without self-initiative Ethics Bowl cannot happen! The class time will be mainly reviewing what happened in discourse outside the class. This makes students manage their time and work around others schedules as well. When working on the cases with classmates a student may have a dissenting view point. This is important for a few reasons. It allows people to persuade peers to their side of the argument and give reasons for it by using critical thinking, but it can help build the overall argument and make the final one stronger. If the peers do not move their original stance to that of the dissenter, then the dissenter must cooperate and voice something they would normally not. This allows them to understand other sides and makes them do something they probably do not want to do, which will happen often in life and is a needed skill.

Once at the Ethics Bowl, students must present themselves publicly and clearly present their arguments. The arguments will be on current events which is important for the public to know about. Not only will students gain knowledge of such events, they will have a clear stance on them based on reason rather than emotion or because others have a stance on it. When presenting people must speak clearly and in an organized way or else the judges will not give them points. The argument must also be friendly, or else points will be lost there too. Generally, from my experience it truly is an environment where everyone wants everyone to do well and there is no need to worry about the presentation unless it is ill-prepared.

Nota Bene: Besides the above, students may also learn fun Latin phrases such as nota bene (special note) or mutatis mutandis (once the necessary changes are made).

Phoenix Thompson, 2017

Why We Ought to Continue Ethics Bowl at HCC

As members of an institution of higher learning we should be in constant pursuit of skills such as critical thinking, public speaking, and team work. There is perhaps no better way to foster and cultivate these skills in our student body, than participating in the academic cooperative known as Ethics Bowl.

What is Ethics Bowl? Ethics Bowl is a regional competition in November, where teams of three to five debate on fifteen ethics cases that are disseminated at the beginning of the semester. These cases are all current topics being discussed among ethicists. As a team, it is your job to think critically and take a stance on each case using ethical theory and other pragmatic responses your team comes up with. At the competition, your team will present three cases and comment on three cases. No team knows exactly which case they will present on, or even the prompting question to which the team must respond, until the moderator announces it shortly before the debate begins. Diligent preparation is a must if you want to be successful, but don't fret, months of hard work and tutelage from your professors will allow you to think on your feet and dissect the case from any angle.

What is an academic cooperative? The academic cooperative that HCC provides is a two-credit class that meets once a week to work on the cases and prepare for the Ethics Bowl competition. Do not let the weekly meeting fool you, this class is mentally demanding and rigorous. These class meetings are where the aforementioned skills are honed and constantly sharpened. In depth discussions, presentations, commentaries, applying difficult texts, and exploring both sides of the argument are some of the tasks we undertook on a weekly basis.

Why should we continue Ethics Bowl at HCC? Critical thinking. Critical thinking. Critical thinking. These buzz words are often thrown around without careful consideration of how to implement them in the class room. Everything about this class is geared toward getting the students to think critically about the cases and analyze them from different angles. Essentially the goal is to come up with solutions to current ethical dilemmas as a team. As a place of education, we should strive to create these ethical problem solvers and provide them a platform. But there is so much more to be gained from this experience than ninja argument skills that can be utilized on the next English paper. If we take the notion of right and wrong seriously, then we have an obligation to provide students with an opportunity to explore these concepts through cases that are applicable and current. Through this exploration students will find themselves being exposed to new ways of thinking and ideas that would not have otherwise occurred to

them, providing perspective, and opening their minds in ways that other classes simply cannot. In other words, the true value of Ethics Bowl is not what it can do for the students academically, but rather the impact it can have on their lives.

Mia Perez, 2017.

The Ethics Bowl creates discussion on current and key ethical issues facing today's society. The team and I used critical thinking to better understand the different cases and defend our positions. Mulling over the cases week after week opened my eyes to new ways of thinking and approaching new viewpoints. The morning of the competition I felt extremely nervous. Yet by the end of the day, it did not outweigh the amount of pride I felt for my team and I. If I could come back every year to participate I would do so in a heartbeat. This class, the material, the trip, they were the most fun I have ever had at this institution. I felt an outpouring of school pride, that which I had never felt before, representing the only community college and Houston college at the Texas Regional Ethics Bowl. This class has truly lead me to think about any confirmation bias I might have towards certain issues first and shift my focus to view them from an ethical standpoint.

This has taught me the importance of broadening my views to reflect that which is the most ethical. I now find myself trying to derive the most ethical outcome in the most ordinary situations. Whenever I watch a movie or see something on television, I unknowingly assess it based on different ethical standpoints. It comes easily for me now after months of practice. I have used my new skills in my different classes and can definitely see myself using it after college. I am looking to become an attorney, so this was an excellent class to take to prepare myself for the future. I plan on transferring to a four-year college and majoring in Political Science. The skills I developed when debating and practicing for the Ethics Bowl can help me exponentially in that field of study. Even if one were not looking to study or become something similar to my interests, I believe that every student should participate and learn the importance of ethics in our day-to-day lives. Joining the HCC Ethics Bowl team would greatly improve critical thinking skills as well. Critical thinking is one of the most important attributes a student can learn these days. It should be applied to everything in life, from school, to work, to politics, and even to entertainment. My Ethics Bowl team taught me vital skills that I can use for the rest of my life. The cases we debated ranged from Euthanasia for Alcoholism to asking if Rivers Are People Too. The critical thinking for those and everything in-between can be applied to future occurrences life or future job occurrences.

It has also taught me the value of teamwork and how to co-ordinate with others. I befriended some awesome people and had loads of fun at the Texas Regional Ethics Bowl in San Antonio. I also got to work on my public speaking skills and discovered that I kind of sound like Obama when I present a case. I will have to work on my lengthy "uhhhh's" that are also littered with vocal fry. I have also learned the importance of civic engagement. It is much more effective and respectful than a common argument on Facebook. I have learned to think clearly and with confidence. I used to find it easier to ignore the faces in the crowd when speaking by taking off my glasses so I cannot see. Now I have the confidence to speak face-to-face without my voice

shaking while I would try to avoid eye contact. With all these skills bettered by this course I urge everyone to participate at least once for the skills will last a lifetime.