2013

100-20 Ethics as an introduction to Philosophy

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PHIL100 - 20 – ETHICS AS INTRODUCTION TO PHILOSOPHY

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Office Location: Hinkle Hall 228
Office Phone: 513 745 3697
Office Hours: By appointment
Class Meeting Time: MTWRF 1:00-4:45PM, Smith Hall G23
Section Number: 20

Note: Please include the course number in the subject line of any email correspondence.

COURSE AIMS
The central aim of this course is to understand what makes a human life good. We shall ask which lives are worth living and why, and whether leading a good life requires asking these questions in the first place.

The point of departure for our inquiry into the human good will be Plato’s Republic. In the Republic, Socrates argues that the good life is one that is lived in accordance with the demands of justice, and we will investigate, in some detail, Socrates’ arguments for this important claim. However, we will also engage with the challenges to Socrates’ view raised by David Hume, Immanuel Kant, and John Stuart Mill. We will focus on relevant similarities and differences between their accounts of the human good and that of Plato. We shall focus specifically on questions concerning the role that justice plays in constituting the good life for human beings.

ETHICS, RELIGION, AND SOCIETY
This course is part of the Xavier Ethics, Religion, and Society program, and satisfies a course requirement in that program. As part of the E/RS program, this course is intended to promote reflection on questions of moral significance. For those interested, more information about E/RS can be found at their web site: http://www.xavier.edu/ers/

To this end, this course works to contribute in an essential way to the central goals and objectives of the E/RS program: Students will be intellectually, morally and spiritually educated individuals capable of critical reflection on ethical and/or religious questions of social significance from the perspective of multiple disciplines with unique methods. Students will analyze rationally competing claims about individual and political justice within foundational philosophical texts (Goal 7, Objective 1)

XAVIER CORE CURRICULUM
This course satisfies one or more requirements in Xavier University’s Core Curriculum. We shall aim to accomplish the following significant goals:
1. First and foremost, students will be inaugurated into a grand tradition of reflection on philosophical questions that animate the intellectual life of the western world from the middle of the first millennium BC up until the present day. Students will come to consider the connections between great texts from the history of philosophy and other significant scientific, moral, cultural, political, and spiritual contributions drawn from our shared history. (Goal 4, Objective 2 especially)
2. Students will develop the ability to engage in thoughtful reflection on questions of moral significance, and to articulate a coherent ethical perspective on the world and their place in it. Students will learn to relate their understanding and thinking in a relevant and constructive way to their own experiences and to the contemporary world. They will be responsible in articulating the views of others in their writing and speech. (Goal 5, Objectives 2 and 3)
3. Students will be intelligent questioners. They will be able to reflect thoughtfully on fundamental questions arising from the human condition, such as questions about the grounds of morality, the essence of justice, the nature of reality, the possibility of certainty, the nature of beauty, or the reasonableness of religious faith. Students will be able to analyze and interpret great texts, and to evaluate the strength of an argument or claim and its evidence. (Goal 2, Objectives 1, 3, and 4)

4. Students will be effective communicators both orally and in writing. They will be able to organize and express their ideas, formulate clear and arguable theses, supported by evidence drawn from appropriate sources, and utilize an effective writing process guided by audience, purpose, cultural context, and disciplinary standards. (Goal 1, Objectives 1, 2, and 3)

5. Students will be thoughtful, creative, and critical agents of inquiry, discovery, and expression in new domains of knowledge. Students will utilize their imagination and creativity, individually and collectively, to innovate and generate new perspectives to problems. (Goal 3, Objective 1)

**REQUIRED WORKS**


**GRADE BREAKDOWN**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Short paper</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>1st Examination</td>
<td>30%</td>
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<tr>
<td>2nd Examination</td>
<td>30%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>20%</td>
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**PAPERS**

Students will be required to write one short paper (7-8 pages). The essay question will be distributed on Friday, May 10. Students will be required to submit their introductory paragraph and a point form outline on Thursday, May 16. The aim of these papers is to provide an indication of the extent to which you understand the works that we study in the course. For this reason, they will be primarily exegetical (or interpretive). You will be asked to restate, in your own words, the position of the author under question on a specific issue, and the argument that that author puts forth to defend that view. The instructor will be happy to discuss the criteria on the basis of which these papers will be assessed during office hours.

Consultation of secondary sources (i.e. anything but the text under consideration) is strongly discouraged.

Papers must be submitted digitally to the Turn it in link on the course web site no later than 4PM on Monday, May 27.

**EXAMINATIONS**

The examinations will concern substantive issues covered in the course. They will be a mix of multiple choice, fill-in-the-blanks, and short answer questions.
PARTICIPATION
This portion of your grade will be assigned based on the extent of your participation in class. It will be based on the frequency with which you provide valuable contributions to class discussion, which includes asking relevant or cogent questions, as well as your general attentiveness and engagement with the course material. Since much of the class will proceed by discussion of specific passages in the course texts it is imperative that you bring the week’s readings to class with you.

TOPICS COVERED
Note that the schedule provided in this document constitutes a rough outline of the specific schedule. Students are required to consult the course website through the My Courses tab of the Xavier online portal for detailed breakdowns of the week’s readings. These breakdowns will be updated weekly and will include suggested study questions.

Materials listed in the following schedule that do not appear on the required texts list will be available by electronic reserve through the Xavier portal.

Monday, May 6: Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics I.1.1-2 and I.2.1-3 (provided in class); Plato, Republic, 1-22.
Tuesday, May 7: Republic, 22-40
Wednesday, May 8: Republic, 45-56; 94-111
Thursday, May 9: Republic, 112-135
Friday, May 10: FIRST EXAMINATION; Hume, Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals, 13-34
Tuesday, May 14: Kant, Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals, 12-17, 23-33, 35-43
Wednesday, May 15: Mill, Utilitarianism, 1-26
Thursday, May 16: INTRO PARAGRAPH AND OUTLINE FOR PAPER DUE; Singer, “Equality for Animals?”; Mill, Utilitarianism, 42-64
Friday, May 17: SECOND EXAMINATION; Plato, Republic, 199-215

FINAL PAPER DUE MONDAY, MAY 27, 4PM to the Turn it in Link on the course Blackboard Site

COURSE POLICIES

ATTENDANCE
Attendance in class is mandatory. Students are expected to arrive promptly at the start of class, prepared actively to engage with the course material.

Unexcused absences are not permitted. Each absence will result in a final grade reduction of 0.33 grade points. For example, a student who earned the grade of B but missed one class would receive a B-; one who missed two classes would receive a C+, and so on.

Exceptions will be made for documented absences due to otherwise sanctioned university activity, for observation of religious holidays, due to serious illness (the instructor reserves the right to request documentation from the student’s doctor stating that their absence has been due to illness), etc. Students who miss classes for any of these reasons should consult the professor as far in advance as possible. In the event of extreme illness, students need to make arrangements to meet with the professor to discuss their ability to complete the minimum requirements of the course. While absences due to illness will be excused, in the event that the student has missed a significant portion of the class, it may be impossible for them to complete the course. Concerned students should contact the professor as soon as possible.
CLASSROOM ETIQUETTE
Students are expected to arrive for class on time and prepared to contribute actively to the class discussion. Timely arrival and preparedness include addressing bodily needs (such as snacking and restroom use) prior to the start of class.

Use of electronic devices of any kind in class is prohibited, except in cases of documented need.

Obviously unacceptable in-class behaviors include: internet viewing, text-messaging, napping, and conversation of issues not related to the class discussion.

ACADEMIC HONESTY
The Xavier University Catalog states (http://www.xavier.edu/registrar/ugrd_policies.html#Academic_honesty): “The pursuit of truth demands high standards of personal honesty. Academic and professional life requires a trust based on integrity of the written and spoken word. Accordingly, violations of certain standards of behavior will not be tolerated at Xavier University. These include theft, cheating, plagiarism, unauthorized assistance in assignments and tests, unauthorized copying of computer software, the falsification of results and materials submitted in reports or admission and registration documents, and the falsification of any academic records including letters of recommendation.

“All work submitted for academic evaluation must be the student’s own. Certainly, the activities of other scholars will influence all students. However, the direct and unattributed use of another’s efforts is prohibited as is the use of any work untruthfully submitted as one’s own.

“Penalties for violations of this policy may include one or more of the following: a zero for that assignment or test, an ‘F’ in the course, and expulsion from the University. The dean of the college in which the student is enrolled is to be informed in writing of all such incidents, though the teacher has the full authority to assign the grade for the assignment, test, or course.”

Plagiarism of any kind will not be tolerated. The instructor requires that students submit their written work both in hard copy to the instructor on the due date and to TURNITIN (http://www.turnitin.com).

All students must complete the plagiarism tutorial on the library web site in advance of the due date for their first paper. Links to this tutorial can be found on the course web site in the first week of class.

CRITERIA FOR ASSESSMENT OF WRITTEN WORK
The Philosophy Department has adopted the following standards for the evaluation of all forms of written work:

A = Work that not merely fully and accurately reproduces class discussion, the main thread in the argument or the major philosophical significance under discussion, but which goes beyond these and indicates a contribution of the student, giving evidence of a deeper understanding of the material in question.

B = Work that shows a more or less complete and exact understanding of the issues, texts and/or arguments as explained in class, clearly and logically formulated, but without advancing beyond these explanations.

C = Work that shows a basic understanding of the material but with errors, omissions and confusions of either a formal or contextual nature.

D = Work that shows a minimal acquaintance with the material, or serious logical or conceptual flaws in formulating responses to the question raised, the argument at issue, or the philosophical text under discussion.

F = Work that indicates inadequate acquaintance with texts, issues, or ideas with little or no valid argumentation; or the work is handed in beyond the point of acceptance or else plagiarized. Cases of plagiarism, which involves the use of published work or other written material without proper citation, must be given a ‘0’.