100-19 Ethics as an introduction to Philosophy

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Office hours: By appointment only – can be arranged via email or in class. Email is my preferred method of communication.

Course Description: We live in a time of social movements, uprisings, revolutions, rampant violence and new political parties, etc. which all use the language of justice, right, duty and equality. But what do these terms mean, how are these ideas conceptualized by all the groups and individuals using these terms? It is necessary to understand the origins of these important concepts, understand how they have evolved, been stifled and only applied to certain groups of people at the expense of other groups. In this course we will examine the roots of these important concepts by examining traditional ethical theory in detail such as the works of Plato and Mill (utilitarianism) who provided Western philosophy with the foundations for understanding right, equality, and justice. These thinkers represent thought from only one part of the world and it is important to understand ethical theories from non-Western sources as well.

We will discuss more contemporary theories of nonviolence and environmental ethics. Since we are living in such turbulent times including war and a global ecological crisis, it is important to read ethical theories regarding these issues while also considering the more traditional ethical theories.

Some questions this course will delve into are...what does it mean to have a right? What is duty? What is equality? What is justice and is it applied the same way to everyone? How do these concepts change depending on the context and how have they not been applied to groups of people as a means of exclusion? What is the role of government? What are some similarities and differences that we see across different ethical traditions (Eastern and Western, Environmental)?

While these works are challenging, they are accessible for individuals who have not had much experience with reading philosophical works, which is why this will be a challenging, but interesting and relevant course. **It is important to remember that reading philosophy and writing philosophy papers are challenging and that they can be done effectively only if you are committed to the reading and genuinely interested in the work/questions that the readings are approaching.** I am definitely here as a resource so please ask me questions and send me emails, etc. because I am here to help you.

This course is part of the Weekend Scholars Program, the Ethics/Religion and Society focus, which also includes Theological Foundations, Literature and the Moral Imagination, and an elective. E/RS courses investigate ethical or religious dimensions of socially significant issues.

Required texts (other editions and translations are not acceptable)  
Plato, *Republic*, trans. Reeve (Hackett)
Learning Goals: PHIL 100

GOAL 1: Students will be effective communicators in writing and orally

1. Students will organize and express their ideas in writing and orally
2. Students will formulate clear and arguable theses, supported by evidence drawn from appropriate sources
3. Students will utilize an effective writing process guided by audience, purpose, cultural context, and disciplinary standards

GOAL 2: Students will be critical thinkers

1. Students will analyze and interpret texts
2. Students will evaluate the strength of an argument or claim and its evidence
3. Students will discuss fundamental questions that arise 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

GOAL 3: Students will be creators of new knowledge and expression

1. Students will utilize their imagination and creativity, individually and collectively, to innovate and generate new perspectives to problems.

GOAL 4: Students will be able to understand and appreciate the arts, humanities and science disciplines, and reflect on connections among these studies

1. Students will articulate and engage with great ideas in the history of Western thought through the writings of great philosophers

GOAL 5: Students will be integrated individuals who articulate a coherent, ethical perspective on the world and their place in it

1. Students will relate their knowledge and skills in a reflective and constructive way to their life experiences and the challenges confronting today’s world.
2. Students will use information and resources responsibly in their communication and research.
GOAL 6: 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

1. Students will analyze rationally competing claims about individual and political justice within foundational philosophical texts

Methods of Evaluation: Point system (Out of 195 points total)

Participation: Out of 50 points, attendance (not only being physically present, but also mentally present, no cell phones, laptops, please come prepared, no sleeping). If you are using your cell phone, laptop, sleeping, etc. you will be asked to leave and will have a zero for participation that week. It is extremely disrespectful and rude to do any of the above activities and shows a lack of effort and participation on your behalf. Participation includes engagement in class discussions and coming prepared to answer questions during lecture.

The nature of this class is discussion, which is why participation is very important.

- During the second half of the class, we will have discussions and mainly work in small groups. It is your responsibility to be prepared for the discussions so you can participate sufficiently. Failure to participate will lead to a zero in participation for the week.
- Your participation grade is a composite of the following criteria combined with attendance. An A is basically consistent participation in all 3 of these categories:
  - Active participation in interactive lecture: Response to questions asked by instructor, actively ask questions as well/relate to your own lives.
  - Active participation in small group discussions: Dialogue/discussion with group participants, actively look for central quotes in the text to answer discussion questions.
  - Active participation in large group discussions: Dialogue/discussion with peers, response to follow-up questions asked, reference to specific quotes in the text.

Homework Assignments: Out of 75 points, 15 points each, 6 total, weekly (lowest homework assignment will be dropped), in order to ensure that the material is read, there will be a weekly reading comprehension worksheet that consists of short response questions. Answers should be at least a full paragraph long and should explain important concepts in the following ways: use specific central quotes in the text that support your claims, situate and explain these textual quotes in your own words (basically your interpretation of the reading). I am grading you for your effort in these assignments rather than interpretation. This is why quantity does matter to an extent as evidence of your effort to explain your interpretation. Failure to turn this in on the day it is due will lead to a zero for that assignment. I will not accept late assignments unless there are special circumstances that need to be discussed with me before it is due.

Exams: Out of 70 points, midterm (30 points) and final (40 points), these will include short answer questions and a larger essay question.

Points earned will be graded on the following percentage scale:
A 93-100   B- 80-82   D+ 67-69
A- 90-92   C+ 77-79   D 63-66
B+ 87-89   C 73-76    D- 60-62
B 83-86     C- 70-72   F 0-59

Policies:
Attendance: I will take attendance on a regular basis. Since we only have 8 class meetings after the orientation, it is very important to attend all class meetings. If you miss a class, it either needs to be excused by me and turn in discussion questions. Failure to do so will lead to a lower participation grade. Class attendance is positively correlated with grades. If you are absent, it is also your responsibility to keep up with Blackboard and the assignments. You need to check your email and the Blackboard site frequently.

Late Assignments: I do not accept assignments past the date they are due. If you have special circumstances then arrange them with me in advance, before the due date.

Plagiarism: This is a very serious issue that I do not allow for. If you are using any sources other than the one we are reading in class, then you need to footnote it/cite it within your paper or homework assignment. Plagiarism is defined as “the result of interacting with and using the ideas of others without acknowledging the source of the ideas.” To learn more, visit www.xu.edu/library/xututor/plagiarism. Any plagiarism may result in an F for the course, and your dean will be notified of the incident.

Plagiarism involves:
- Quoting directly from any source of material including other students' work and materials from research consultants without appropriately citing the source and identifying the quote
- Knowingly citing an incorrect source
- Using ideas (other than information that is common knowledge) from any course material including other students' work and materials from research consultants without citing the source and identifying the borrowed material/ideas
- Ignorance is no excuse for plagiarism. Students should be aware of their own responsibilities in appropriately quoting and citing sources used.

Academic Honesty:
The pursuit of truth demands high standards of personal honesty. Academic and professional life requires a trust based upon integrity of the written and spoken word. Accordingly, violations of certain standards of ethical 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 material submitted in reports or admission and registration documents, and the falsification of any academic record 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 full authority to assign the grade for the assignment, test, or course. If disputes of interpretation arise, the student, faculty member, and chair should attempt to resolve the difficulty. If this is unsatisfactory, the dean will rule in the matter. As a final appeal, the academic vice president will call a committee of tenured faculty for the purpose of making a final determination.

Classroom Conduct: I do not allow laptops, phones, iPhones, iPods, and any type of technology to be out during our class time. You are expected to bring the book to class or print out the PDF for class. If you have special circumstances, then please arrange with me before class. If I see any of these devices used during class time, I will ask you to put it away and leave the class resulting in having zero participation for that week.

Class Schedule: This is a tentative schedule. Readings may take more or less time than expected. These readings are challenging and can be time-consuming. It is your responsibility to manage your time appropriately. Also, please print out the readings for each class if you do not have the book because it will be easier to follow the lecture and contribute to the discussion. I definitely urge you to space out your reading over the week because these readings can be dense and parts may need to be reread.

May 19th: Orientation – syllabus, introductions, what is philosophy
June 1st: Justice in the Kallipolis: Plato’s Republic Book 1 p.1-22, 36-40 (Homework Assignment Due)
June 8th: Republic p.45-56, 96-104, 112-121, 126-135 (Homework Assignment Due)
June 22nd: Midterm Exam 12:45-2:45pm (Plato Exam)
June 29th: Utilitarianism: Mill Utilitarianism (Homework Assignment Due)
July 6th: No Class-Holiday
July 13th: Nonviolence: Gandhi “Satyagraha” and MLK “Letter from Birmingham Jail” (All in Applied Ethics which are in PDF Format on Blackboard) (Homework Assignment Due)
July 20th: Environmental Ethics: Boundaries: A Casebook in Environmental Ethics ch. 1-2 (Posted on Blackboard as a PDF file) (Homework Assignment Due)
July 27th: Final Exam 8:30am-10:30am