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100-18 Ethics as Introduction to Philosophy

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Ethics as Introduction to Philosophy

By exploring different philosophical approaches to basic ethical questions, we will engage in ethical analysis of a variety of issues connected to the central theme of justice. The purpose of this exploration is not primarily to introduce you to what others have said but rather to encourage you to face these questions seriously yourself.

Course Goals: As a result of this class, I hope you will
- Become interested in engaging some of the fundamental questions about ethics that are part of the question of how we should live.
- Become better readers by interpreting important texts by philosophers on ethics, identifying major arguments and fundamental principles in those texts.
- Become better writers by organizing your thoughts on complex issues in class discussion and in regular formal and informal writing assignments.

Course Outcomes: As a result of this class, students should be able to:
- Articulate some of the fundamental questions about ethics.
- Explain different alternatives for answering some fundamental questions about ethics.
- Evaluate different alternatives for answering some fundamental questions about ethics.
- Explain a philosophical argument, analysing the fundamental principles on which it relies and the evidence it offers.
- Read a primary text in philosophy, identifying major arguments and fundamental principles in that text.
- Write an argumentative essay, formulating and defending a thesis about an important topic in ethics.

As the foundational philosophy course in the Ethics/Religion and Society focus, this course fulfills an E/RS requirement and a required core course in philosophy. This course will help students achieve the following SLOs for the Core Curriculum:
1a. Recognize and cogently discuss significant questions in the humanities.
1b. Apply the approaches of multiple disciplines to a significant issue.
2a. Find, evaluate, and logically convey information and ideas in written presentations.
3a. Identify and critically assess multiple dimensions of an ethical issue in an attempt to reach a conclusion.
4b. Discuss and evaluate what constitutes human wellness.
6a. Investigate the root causes of injustice with compassion and academic rigor.
6b. Describe the evolution of their vocation and aspirations to contribute to the world
**Texts:** Plato, *Republic*
Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning the Principle of Morals*
Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morality*

**Grading:**
- Participation 10%
- Informal Writing 20%
- Papers 50%
- Final exam 20%

**Participation:** This is primarily a discussion class, which means that students must be active participants in the course. I expect everyone to contribute to our discussions and to be respectfully engaged with the class when others are talking.

- If you pay attention in class and are able to answer questions when I call on you, you will earn a “C” for participation. A higher grade requires regular, active contributions, including asking questions in class, talking to me in my office hours, or emailing me.
- Sleeping, texting, talking to other students and doing work for other classes are disruptive and indicate a deliberate disengagement from the class. They will lower your participation grade significantly.

**Informal Writing:** You will do regular informal writing this semester. You should expect at least one assignment a week, some in class and some as take-home assignments. Most are designed to help you think about the material, not to test what you understand.

- Each assignment will be graded full credit (1), partial credit (.5) or no credit (0). This portion of your grade will be based on the percentage for which you receive full credit.
- I have also provided review questions for each section of the course (available in the Modules on our Canvas course). You can submit one answer to each set of questions to earn extra credit toward your informal writing grade. Each answer you submit will count as the equivalent of a single writing assignment.

**Papers:** You will write two papers, both of which will require you to take a meaningful stand with respect to the text(s) we have read.

- Your first paper will be worth 15% of your grade in the course, the second worth 25%.
- For your first paper, you will also submit a series of Paper Preparation assignments, which will be worth a total of 10% of your grade.

**Final Exam:** Your final will be an in-class cumulative exam, which will require you to explain arguments discussed in class. Specifics will be given at least a week before the exam.

**Extra Credit:** The reading assignment for each class includes study questions that are intended to help you think about and understand the reading. You are not required to submit your answers to these questions, but I recommend writing them up as part of doing the readings with sufficient care. In order to encourage you to do so, I will count answers you do submit as extra credit.

- In order to receive credit for a set of study questions, you must answer all parts of each question and include direct quotes from the text (adequately cited).
- These study question assignments can earn you up to 5% toward your course grade.
COURSE POLICIES

Attendance: While you are expected to keep up with the reading at home, much of the work of the course takes place in the classroom, which means it is important that you are in class.

- **If you miss class 1-4 times:** For each absence, you will lose 0.5 points (on a 100 point scale) from your final grade.
- **If you miss class 5-8 times:** For each absence after the first four, you will lose a grade from your final grade in the course (e.g. from a B to a B-).
- The penalty applies regardless of whether your absence is excused. You can, however, avoid the penalty by turning in the make-up work:
  - Get notes from another student for the day(s) you missed and summarize them, explaining the three or four most important ideas covered on the day you missed.
  - Include questions that you have after reading those notes, along with questions you had about the reading for the week that were not answered in those notes.
  - NOTE: This summary should show you have read and thought about the notes you got. Simply copying another student’s class notes is not sufficient.
  - Type up your summary and turn in a hard copy, along with a xerox copy of the notes you borrowed, at the beginning of the class after your first class back.

- **If you miss more than 8 classes:** You will automatically fail the course.

- Missing part of class (by being late, leaving early, or leaving for a few mintues in the middle of class) will also affect your grade. For every three times you miss part of class, you will lose 0.5 points from your final grade. Make-up work will not erase this penalty.

Late/missed work:
- Weekly study questions submitted for extra credit are due at the beginning of each class on the reading we will discuss that class. I will not accept these posts late.
- Papers must be submitted online by midnight on the day indicated. Papers will lose a third of a grade (e.g. from a B to B-) for each day late; weekends count as a single day.
- Paper preparation assignments must be submitted online by midnight on the day indicated. Assignments will lose a full letter grade (e.g. from a B to a C) for each day late; weekends count as a single day.
- Due dates for informal writing assignments will be indicated when assigned. I will not accept these assignments late.
- Technical problems are not an adequate excuse for submitting work late. Submit your work early enough that you have time to address any technical problems that come up.
- Since most of your work will be submitted electronically, it is your responsibility to ensure that it has been submitted correctly.

Plagiarism: You will be expected to follow the policy for academic honesty as outlined in the Xavier University Catalog. Violation of this policy will result in an F on the assignment. A second violation of this policy will result in an F for the course.

- All papers will be submitted to turnitin.com, a service that checks papers against those on the web and in its database. If you have any questions or concerns, please see me.
- Working with other students does not constitute plagiarism, but copying another student’s work does. If you work with your classmates or with other students who have taken my class in the past, be sure anything you turn in is written in your own words.
- Consulting a website such as Sparknotes does not constitute plagiarism. Cutting and pasting from a website, however, is plagiarism, even if you rephrase occasional passages. Any time you use someone else’s words, you must provide an adequate citation.
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Dec. 3 Republic 7: 514a-518d Dec. 5 Paper Two Due

Week 16: Dec. 8 Republic 10: 614b-621d (SQ 5-7)
Dec. 10 Review

FINAL EXAM: Monday, Dec 15, 4:30-6:20 pm

NOTE: This schedule is subject to change. Any changes to the weekly readings, including specific pages for you to focus on in the reading, will be posted on Canvas, in the assignment for that week’s study questions. You should always check Canvas to be sure you are doing the correct assignment.

ASSIGNMENT SCHEDULE

For each class, you will have a reading assignment accompanied by study questions. Both the reading and the study questions must be completed before class time.

You are not required to turn in the study questions, but you will need to be prepared both to discuss them in class and to complete a short in-class writing assignment based on them. You can also turn in the study questions for extra credit toward your course grade.

In addition to the reading assignments, I will occasionally ask you to prepare a short writing assignment to turn in at the beginning of class. These assignments will always be posted on the Calendar in Canvas.

A number of assignments will be due on days when we do not have class. These assignments are due at 11:59 pm on the date listed (unless otherwise indicated). You should submit them through Canvas, which will include a submission to Turnitin.com.

Aug. 27 Writing Assignment, Reflection: How should I live?
Aug. 29 Writing Assignment: Reading the Republic
Sep. 2 Paper Prep, Response to Glaucon
Sep. 12 Paper Prep, Revising your reading of Glaucon
Sep. 14 Writing Assignment, Reflection: How should I live? (Glaucon)
Sep. 17 Paper Prep, Response to Hume
Sep. 26 Paper Prep, Revising your reading of Hume
Oct. 1 Paper Prep, Topic Proposal
Oct. 3 Writing Assignment, Reflection: How should I live? (Hume)
Oct. 8 Paper One Due
Oct. 24 Writing Assignment, Reflection: How should I live? (Nietzsche)
Nov. 19 Writing Assignment, Paper Two Topic Proposal
Nov. 21 Writing Assignment, Reflection: How should I live? (Socrates)
Dec. 5 Paper Two Due
According to the Xavier University 2000-02 Catalog, the undergraduate grades of A, B, C, D, F signify the following:

A = Exceptional  
B = Good  
C = Satisfactory  
D = Minimum Passing  
F = Failure  

On exams or work in which numerical grading is used the Philosophy Department agrees that these grades are equivalent to the following:

A = 90-100  
B = 80-89  
C = 70-79  
D = 60-69  
F = 59 and below  

The Philosophy Department further agrees that these letter grades signify the following level of accomplishment by students when given for discursive, written work:

A = work that not merely fully and accurately reproduces class discussion, the main thread in an argument or the main philosophical significance of a text under discussion, but which, having considered arguments and counter-arguments, goes beyond these and indicates a contribution of the student herself or himself, giving evidence of an individual and hence 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 without going beyond such explanations.  
C = work that shows basic understanding of the material but with errors, omissions and confusions of either a formal or material nature.  
D = work that shows a minimal acquaintance with the material or serious logical and conceptual flaws in formulating responses to the question raised, the argument at issue, or to the philosophical text under discussion.  
F = work that shows inadequate acquaintance with texts, issues, or ideas with little or no valid logical argumentation; or, the work is a plagiarism. Cases of plagiarism, which involve the use of published or others’ written work without giving credit, must be given F.  

The department does not mandate grade distributions or curves. The final goal of all of our grading must be fairness to all students and the encouragement of the highest level of achievement possible in each student.

Approved by Philosophy Department  
April 15, 2002  
Revised, January 12, 2005