PHIL 100-20 Ethics as an Introduction to Philosophy

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Syllabus for Philosophy 100, Section 20 – Ethics as an Introduction to Philosophy – Fall 2015
Xavier University

Days/Time: Tues/Thurs 11:30 a.m.-12:45 a.m. Office: Tues/Thurs 10-11 or by appointment
Classroom: CLC 308 Telephone: 513-745-3538
Instructor: Dr. Tim Furlan Email: furlant@xavier.edu
Office: Hinkle 229 Web:

Course description

As long as there have been human beings, justice has been a question—its nature, its forms, and its very possibility. By studying classic works of philosophy, especially Plato’s Republic, you will examine different views on justice and human goodness, tracing them back to the principles on which they depend, and reflect critically on these principles. You will also develop your ability to identify, understand and critique a variety of ethical issues. Finally, you will be introduced to other basic human questions and philosophical ways of thinking about them.

The course is part of the Ethics/Religion and Society sequence. Consistent with the mission of Xavier University as a Jesuit, Catholic university rooted in the liberal arts tradition, the Ethics/Religion and Society (E/RS) sequence of courses provides a basis for you to become intellectually, morally and spiritually educated individuals capable of critical reflection on ethical and religious questions of social significance from the perspective of multiple disciplines with unique methods. Through the E/RS elective, you will develop a more proficient and durable ability to reflect critically on ethical and/or religious questions of social significance.

This course is part of the Xavier Core Curriculum, which aims to develop people of learning and reflection, integrity and achievement, in solidarity for and with others. The course addresses the following core learning objectives at the introductory level:

1a: Students recognize and cogently discuss significant questions in the humanities, arts, and the natural and social sciences.

3a: Students identify and critically assess multiple dimensions of an ethical issue in an attempt to reach a conclusion.
Course objective

Knowledge is “a kind of good we like for its own sake and also for the sake of what comes from it.” (Plato, *Republic*, 357b, trans. Reeve). The main objective of this course is to learn the answers by some of the finest thinkers of mankind to the most fundamental questions that we still ask today, such as: “which whole way of life would make living most worthwhile for each of us?” (*Republic* 344e). A further goal is to increase our capacity for critical thinking and for good writing and to develop the moral and intellectual virtues of empathy, integrity, and humility.

2a: Students find, evaluate, and logically convey information and ideas in written and oral presentations.

4a: Students describe and examine the multifaceted character of society and how the inclusion of different perspectives can influence one’s worldview.

4b: Students discuss and evaluate what constitutes human wellness.

5a: Students examine the diverse, complex, and interdependent nature of people in the world.

6a: Students investigate the root causes of injustice with compassion and academic rigor.

Required texts


**Requirements for Course Credit**

To earn credit in this class it is fundamental to come prepared to each lesson. Your seriousness with the assigned readings affects your ability to participate in the discussions during class, your understanding of the course material, and your grades on exams and papers. Several quizzes will particularly aim at testing your knowledge of the texts.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Overview of course requirements</th>
<th>Grading scale</th>
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<tr>
<td>Quizzes &amp; class participation</td>
<td>A  95–100%</td>
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<td>A– 92–95%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Short paper</td>
<td>B+ 88–91%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Midterm exam (cumulative)</td>
<td>B– 80–83%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final exam (cumulative)</td>
<td>C+ 76–79%</td>
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<td></td>
<td>C  72–75%</td>
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<td></td>
<td>C– 68–71%</td>
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<td>F  0–59%</td>
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**Attendance Policy**

Attendance is required and will be checked on a daily basis. Attendance counts toward the assessment of the final grade in the following way: for classes meeting three days per week, six absences will be tolerated without academic penalty. Each absence after the fourth will result in a reduction of one point of the total 100 points for the course up until the tenth absence, which results in failure for the course. For such a course, a maximum of ten absences will be allowed without failure for the course due to absences.

Students who are late (i.e. who show up during or after attendance is being checked) are to see me after class so that they are marked as present. Three late appearances count as one absence.

**Missed and late assignments**

You are required to take tests and exams and to hand in your papers at the scheduled time. Late papers are penalized.

**Plagiarism**

Any unacknowledged use of another’s ideas constitutes plagiarism, including the use of papers written by other students, interviews, radio or TV broadcasts, and any published or unpublished materials (including web-based materials, letters,
pamphlets, leaflets, notes or other electronic or print documents). The normal sanction for the dishonesty will be failure for the course.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Reading</th>
<th>Study questions</th>
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</thead>
</table>
| 1.   | Syllabus  
    Plato’s life |        |                 |
| 2.   | What is justice?  
    Cephalus, Simonides, and Polemarchus | Plato, *Republic* 1.327a–35a (pp. 1–10) | – What do Cephalus, Simonides, Polemarchus think justice is?  
  – How does Socrates refute Cephalus’s idea of justice?  
  – How did Socrates show that if Polemarchus’s account of justice is correct, then a just person is a kind of thief? |
| 3.   | What is justice?  
    Polemarchus and Thrasymachus | *Rep.* 1.335b–39a (pp. 10–15) | – Why, according to Socrates, is justice neither to harm unjust people and to benefit just ones, nor to give benefits to friends and harm to enemies?  
  – What is justice, according to Thrasymachus? |
| 4.   | Thrasymachus vs. Socrates on justice;  
    justice and the advantage of the stronger | *Rep.* 1.338b–47e (pp. 14–23)  
    *Suggestion: read all of book I* | – Is there an advantage in being just?  
  – Is justice the advantage of the stronger?  
  – What is a good motive for being a ruler?  
  – Is the life of an unjust person better than that of a just one? (What is the advantage of being just?)  
  – What is justice, according to Socrates? |
| 5.   | Three kinds of good – which one is justice? | *Rep.* 1.347e–54c (pp. 23–31) | – What are Glaucon’s three descriptions of the good?  
  – Why do most people think that justice is burdensome? (Does Glaucon agree?) |
| 6.   | The ideal city (kallipolis):  
    its foundation; | *Rep.* 2.357a–68b (pp. 33–43) | – Why does Socrates discuss the ideal city?  
  – Why do people live in a city? |
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Reference</th>
<th>Questions</th>
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</table>
| 8.    | craftsmen and guardians; philosophy (= love of wisdom); education (literature etc.); nature of the gods | *Rep. 3.401d–3c; 412b–7b* (pp. 88–93) | - What are the major steps in creating the city?  
- Why does Socrates discuss education?  
- What is the nature of the gods?  
- What is the aim of education in music and poetry?  
- How should the guardians and rulers be persuaded to care for the city and to consider it as their own?  
- What justifies separating three classes?  
- What is the lifestyle of the guardians and rulers? |
| 9.    | Education in music & poetry; Myth of the metals; a new class: rulers or “complete guardians”; description of their lifestyle | *Rep. 4.419a–27e* (pp. 95–103) | - Given the severe lifestyle of the guardians, can they be happy in the kallipolis?  
- Why should guardians avoid poverty and wealth?  
- What are the four virtues of the kallipolis? |
| 10.   | Quiz 1 Happiness in the city; legislation; the virtues of the city | *Rep. 4.427e–45e* (pp. 103–21) | - What are the different parts of the soul?  
- What is the rationale for their distinction (i.e. what leads Socrates to distinguish them)?  
- How is each virtue defined? How does each relate to the classes of the city and to the parts of the soul?  
- How does the comparison between the virtues of the city and the virtues of the soul answer the question of book 2: Is it better to be just than unjust? |
| 11.   | Where is justice in the city, and where is justice in the soul? | *Rep. 7.514a–21b* (pp. 186–93) | - Be able to sketch a drawing of the cave  
- What is Socrates trying to express in this analogy? |
| 12.   | Paper due | | |
| 13.   | The cave analogy | | |
| 14. | Philosopher kings; the beautiful itself and the many beautiful things (the form of the beautiful); knowledge and opinion | *Rep.* 5.471c–80a (pp. 146–56) | – Can the ideal city of Socrates exist in reality? If so, how can it come into being?  
– What is the meaning of “the beautiful itself”?  
– What is the difference between “the many beautiful things” and “the beautiful itself”? |
| 15. | Discussion of Plato’s theory of the forms | | – How do knowledge and opinion differ?  
– What is the benefit of seeing the “beautiful in itself” over seeing the many beautiful things? What is the benefit of seeing “justice itself” etc.?  
– What is the point of the sun analogy?  
– What is the point of the line analogy?  
– What is the difference between the intelligible realm and the visible realm? |
| 16. | The sun analogy; the line analogy; the cave analogy (again) | *Rep.* 6.504d–11e (pp. 178–85) | |
| 17. | Review for Midterm exam | Go through study questions! | |
| 18. | Midterm exam | | |
| 19. | Immortality of the Soul; Myth of Er | *Rep.* 10.608c–21d (pp. 279–92) | – How does Socrates argue for the immortality of the soul?  
– (Again:) Why should we care to be just persons?  
– Why does Socrates tell the “Myth of Er” (614b ff.) and what is its meaning? |
| 20. | Discussion of the Midterm | Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* (= *EN*) 1.1–2; 1.7 (pp. 3–5; 14–9) | – How does Aristotle describe the term “good”?  
– Why is it necessary to postulate a highest good?  
– On what three grounds does Aristotle establish that happiness is the highest good?  
– How does he show that happiness consists in “activity of soul in conformity with virtue”? |
<p>| 21. | Aristotle’s life. Human beings act for the sake of the “good”; happiness as the highest good; its definition | | |</p>
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<th></th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Pages Referenced</th>
<th>Questions</th>
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<td>22.</td>
<td>Definition of virtue</td>
<td>EN 2.1, 2.4–6 (pp. 33–5; 38–44)</td>
<td>- How does Aristotle define virtue? &lt;br&gt;- What is the mean or median relative to us? &lt;br&gt;- Does ethics concern mostly what we accomplish? &lt;br&gt;- How do we obtain and lose the virtues?</td>
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<tr>
<td>23.</td>
<td>Courage and self-control</td>
<td>EN 3.6–7; 3.9–12 (pp. 68–72; 76–82)</td>
<td>- What is the description of a courageous person? &lt;br&gt;- Is a reckless person “too courageous”? &lt;br&gt;- What is the description of a self-controlled person? &lt;br&gt;- Why is self-indulgence bad?</td>
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<td>24.</td>
<td>Justice and friendship</td>
<td>EN 5.1–2;EN 8.1–3 (pp. 111–7; 214–21)</td>
<td>- What is justice? What is its mean? &lt;br&gt;- Why is justice called “complete virtue”? &lt;br&gt;- How do justice as distribution and justice as rectification differ? &lt;br&gt;- What are the three kinds of goods (“things worthy of affection”) and what are the three kinds of friendship? &lt;br&gt;- What are the “conditions” for friendship?</td>
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<td>25.</td>
<td>Practical wisdom and theoretical wisdom</td>
<td>EN 6.1; 6.5; 6.7; 6.12–3; 10.7 (pp. 146–7; 152–4; 155–8; 167–73; 288–91)</td>
<td>- What is practical wisdom? &lt;br&gt;- Why is it central to Aristotle’s virtue ethics? &lt;br&gt;- How does someone who has practical wisdom differ from someone who is merely clever? &lt;br&gt;- What is theoretical wisdom and how does it differ from practical wisdom?</td>
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<td>26.</td>
<td>Quiz 2</td>
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<td>27.</td>
<td>JS Mill and the Question of Utilitarianism</td>
<td>Mill, <em>On Utilitarianism</em>, The greatest happiness principle; motive vs consequences of action; the connection between justice and utility</td>
<td>What is Mill’s understanding of happiness? &lt;br&gt;How does it differ from Plato and Aristotle? &lt;br&gt;What distinguishes lower from higher pleasures? &lt;br&gt;Does Mill advocate selfishness? &lt;br&gt;What is the moral value of motivation? &lt;br&gt;Does utilitarianism acknowledge absolute claims about right and</td>
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<td>28.</td>
<td>Motive vs consequences of action; the connection between justice and utility</td>
<td>wrong? What is justice, according to Mill? Does Mill advocate selfishness? What is the moral value of motivation? Does utilitarianism acknowledge absolute claims about right and wrong? What is justice, according to Mill?</td>
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<td>29.</td>
<td>Contemporary Consequentialism: Its Nature and Attractions</td>
<td>Why are some people drawn towards consequentialism? What are its principal attractions/strengths?</td>
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<td>30.</td>
<td>Consequentialism: Its Difficulties</td>
<td>Why are some people concerned about consequentialism? What are some of the fundamental difficulties with consequentialism?</td>
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<tr>
<td>31.</td>
<td>Difficulties Continued</td>
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<td>32.</td>
<td>Quiz 3</td>
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<td>33.</td>
<td>The Kantian Perspective</td>
<td>Kant, <em>Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals</em> 388-390 Why does Kant insist on the need for a pure moral philosophy? How do a practical rule and a moral law differ? What is the highest good and why?</td>
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<td>34.</td>
<td>Kant continued</td>
<td>What is the distinction between a hypothetical and a categorical imperative? What is the value of effects of action?</td>
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<td>35.</td>
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<td>What is the role of happiness and inclinations in moral assessment? What is Kant’s critique of virtue ethics?</td>
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<tr>
<td>36.</td>
<td>Contemporary Kantianism</td>
<td>Consistency and Fairness The Principle of Universalizability Morality and Rationality Absolute Moral Duties</td>
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<tr>
<td>37.</td>
<td>Criticisms of Contemporary Kantian Approaches</td>
<td>What are the fundamental difficulties with deontological approaches?</td>
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<td>38.</td>
<td>Quiz 4</td>
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| 39. | Nietzsche  
*Genealogy of Morals* | What is N’s Critique of morality/Why does he adopt a genealogical approach? |
| 40. | | What is N’s conception of virtue and flourishing?  
What is his critique of Plato and Aristotle? |
| 41. | | What is his critique of Mill and Kant? What are some of the fundamental difficulties with N’s approach? |
| 42. | Review for Final | |