2013

100-05 Ethics as an Introduction to Philosophy

Ferit Guven

guvenf@xavier.edu

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PHIL 100.05: Ethics as an Introduction to Philosophy

Xavier University, Fall Semester 2013
Monday, Wednesday, Friday 10:00-10:50, Hailstones Hall 2
Instructor: Prof. Ferit Güven
Office: Hinkle Hall, 207
Office Hours: MWF 11:00-11:50
Office Phone: 745-2023
e-mail: guvenf@xavier.edu

Course Description: The aim of this course is to introduce you to philosophy by examining several important texts from the history of philosophy. We will approach philosophy in terms of the question of ethics. Our general aim will be to investigate and understand the philosophical foundations of human life within a society. We will raise several questions concerning these foundations: What is the relationship between the individual and society? What are the basic presuppositions of living in a society? What do we take for granted concerning the functioning of human interactions? What is the role of justice in organizing human society? Is it possible to be a moral individual if one lives in an unjust society? As is clear from these questions, philosophy is concerned with our existence in a concrete context, and thereby affects our lives and shapes our thinking. Therefore, this class will not simply discuss the ideas or opinions of philosophers in an abstract fashion. We will see that philosophy is not abstract at all, but rather has important implications for our lives. This notion does not mean, however, that we will reduce philosophy to our already formed ideas and opinions. Instead we will try to rethink our lives in terms of philosophical questions.

Course Goals and Learning Outcomes:
To analyze and interpret texts;
To evaluate the strength of an argument or claim and its evidence;
To be effective communicators in writing and orally;
To be able discuss fundamental questions that arise from the human condition, such as questions about the grounds of morality, the essence of justice, or the nature of reality;
To be imaginative and creative in our thinking;
To be able to understand and appreciate different disciplines and modes of knowing, and reflect on the connections among these studies;
To engage with the ideas in the history of Western thought through the writings of philosophers;
To try to articulate a coherent, ethical perspective on the world;
To apply knowledge and skills in a reflective and constructive way to life experiences and the challenges confronting today’s world.

Required Texts: (available in the Xavier University bookstore)
Descartes, Discourse on Method and Meditations on First Philosophy, (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1999)

In addition to these texts, there will be reading material placed on Blackboard. This material is also required reading for the course, and you are expected to photocopy it.

Course Requirement and Evaluation:
You are expected to take two papers: I will provide paper topics for these papers. Your papers must be double-spaced and typed in 12-point font (There should be approximately 250-300 words per page). In order to be fair to students who pass in their papers on time, late papers will be graded down one letter grade (e.g. B to C) for each day late (including weekends).
Since you will be writing your paper on the texts we read in this course, there is no need to do additional research beyond these texts, that is, you do not need to use secondary sources. Plagiarism, [i.e., copying or paraphrasing the ideas and language of others (without acknowledging the source) from a book, from an article, from the Internet, etc., and thus implicitly presenting them as one's own] will not be tolerated. You will receive an F for that assignment, and may be subject to academic disciplinary action. For further clarifications on plagiarism, visit http://www.xavier.edu/library/xututor/plagiarism/index.cfm. Plagiarism can be deliberate or accidental. It is your responsibility to know what plagiarism is and avoid it. If you are not clear about plagiarism you should discuss it with me.

For each week, two students will work together in order to prepare a two paged (single-spaced) protocol of the material discussed during the previous week. A protocol is a carefully edited summary of the previous class sessions written in full sentences. Protocols will be photocopied by the student who wrote it and handed out to all students at the beginning of each Monday to be read aloud, and will serve as a cumulative record of the course. The students who prepare the protocol should come to class a couple of minutes early, so that the protocols will have been distributed at the beginning of the class (i.e., by 10:00). In addition to reviewing the material covered in the previous class, the protocol should include questions raised in class, and future questions for the material to come. The best protocols will be those that do not simply reproduce word-for-word everything that was said during class, but those that rearrange the material thematically, editing out what was unimportant, and emphasizing what was significant. The point of this is not only to get you to work together, but also to allow you to think during class, and not just take notes; because someone will be taking notes for you, you can concentrate on the ideas being presented, and participate without having to write frantically. Also you will have a summary of every class, which will help you with writing papers and studying for exams.

There will be announced or unannounced short exams throughout the semester. There will be no make-ups for these exams. Your grade will be calculated according to the following distribution: Paper I (3-5 pages): 20%, Final Paper II (5-6 pages): 30%, Protocol: 10%, Exams 30% Class Participation and Attendance: 10%.

Participation and Attendance:
Even though participation counts for only 10% of your grade, it may still mean a lot if you are between two grades, e.g., A and A-. However, I expect you to participate not simply for the sake of your grade, but hopefully because you will be interested in what will be discussed in class. The success of this course depends on your contribution. You need to come to class prepared (having read the assigned readings, and ready to answer questions) and ready to participate in the discussions. There are few official rules in this course. These are:
If you miss more than three classes you will lose 10% of your grade (i.e., your entire attendance grade).
If you miss more than six classes you will fail this course regardless of your grade.
You must bring your book to every class.
Our sessions will start at 10:00 am. Students are expected to come on time. Walking into (and out of) the classroom while the session is in progress is very disruptive for everybody. For every two late attendance or early exit you will be marked as absent for one class session.

Calendar:
There may be some modifications to this calendar. It is your responsibility to be aware of these changes. These changes will be announced in class. If you miss a class you should make sure that you are informed about the assignments for the next session.
Week 1:
August 26: Introduction
August 28: Plato, *Republic*, Book 1
August 30: Plato, *Republic*, Book 2

Week 2:
September 2: No Class
September 4: Plato, *Republic*, Book 3
September 6: Plato, *Republic*, Book 4

Week 3:
September 11: No Class: Conference. Reading: *Republic*, Book 6
September 13: No Class: Conference. Reading: *Republic*, Book 7

Week 4:
September 16: Plato, *Republic*, Book 6
September 18: Plato, *Republic*, Book 7
September 20: Descartes: Discourse Part One and Part Two

Week 5:
September 23: Descartes: Discourse Part One and Part Two
September 25: Descartes, Meditation I
September 27: Descartes, Meditation II

Week 6:
September 30: Descartes Meditations I and II
October 2: Descartes, Discourse Part Three
October 4: Descartes, Meditation III

Week 7:
October 7: No Class: Fall Holiday
October 9: Kant, *Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals*, Preface and First Section
October 11: No Class: Conference: Reading: Kant, *Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals*

Week 8:
October 14: Kant, *Grounding*, First Section
October 16: Kant, *Grounding*, First Section
October 18: Kant, *Grounding*, Second Section

Week 9:
October 21: Kant, *Grounding*, Second Section
October 23: Kant, *Grounding*, Third Section
October 25: Kant, *Grounding*, Third Section

Week 10:
October 28: Arendt, *On Violence*, pp. 3-31
October 30: Arendt, *On Violence*, pp. 3-31
November 1: Arendt, *On Violence*, pp. 3-31
Week 11:
November 4: Arendt, *On Violence*, pp. 35-87
November 6: Arendt, *On Violence*, pp. 35-87
November 8: Arendt, *On Violence*, pp. 35-87

Week 12:
November 11: Marx, *The Communist Manifesto*
November 13: Marx, *The Communist Manifesto*
November 15: Marx, *The Communist Manifesto*

Week 13:
November 18: Marx, *The Communist Manifesto*
November 20: Marx, *The Communist Manifesto*
November 22: Marx, *The Communist Manifesto*

Week 14
November 25: Fanon, “Concerning Violence”
November 27-29: No Class. Thanksgiving Break

Week 15:
December 2: Fanon, “Concerning Violence”
December 4: Fanon, “Concerning Violence”
December 6: Fanon, “Concerning Violence”

Week 16:
December 9: Review
December 11: Review and Evaluation
December 13: No Class. Study Day