100-09 Ethics as an Introduction to Philosophy

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I. Course Description
As long as there have been human beings, justice has been a central 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 causes on which they depend, and reflect critically on these causes. By so doing, you will 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.

II. Learning objectives
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:

1) Students recognize and cogently discuss significant questions in the humanities, arts, and the natural and social sciences.
2) Students identify and critically assess multiple dimensions of an ethical issue in an attempt to reach a conclusion.
3) Students find, evaluate, and logically convey information and ideas in written and oral presentations.
4) Students describe and examine the multifaceted character of society and how the inclusion of different perspectives can influence one’s worldview.
5) Students discuss and evaluate what constitutes human wellness.
6) Students examine the diverse, complex, and interdependent nature of people in the world.
7) Students investigate the root causes of injustice with compassion and academic rigor.

In addition to Xavier core learning objectives, this course includes these other key learning objectives:

1) Students will become conversant with basic themes, concepts, questions, problems, and methods that belong to the treatment of ethics within the Western philosophical tradition.
2) Students will practice and improve facility with understanding and interpreting argumentative texts.
3) Students will practice and improve facility with constructing arguments that articulate explanatory causes.

III. Required Texts
The exact editions listed below are required. Alternate translation or editions are not advised. E-texts & e-readers are NOT ALLOWED in class except in cases of documented medical need.

IV. Graded Assignments & Performance
The final grade is derived from two essays, several quizzes, participation, and a final exam. Note that the contribution of assignments to the final grade is provided. Since you have all that you need to estimate your grade, requests for grade calculations are not accepted.

A. Two Essays (55% of final grade)
There are two required essays, 92 to 115 lines each (4 to 5 pages, double spaced). The first essay is worth 25% of the final grade, the second 30%. Students have the option to co-author papers with anyone in the class or another of my ethics sections this semester. Co-authored papers must be a minimum of 115 lines, but not exceed 138 (6 pages). The instructor reserves the right to interview both authors to verify collaboration.

It is extremely tempting to go online for help in writing papers, but this also greatly increases the chances of plagiarizing, intentional or not. Also, there is much information that is bad, facile, wrong, or some combination of these (SparkNotes and Wikipedia are always facile and sometimes flat wrong). Therefore, I encourage you to resist the temptation to go online. *Philosophize* with each other instead. Come talk to me instead. The best way to avoid the temptation is to start your paper early so that you have time adequately to think through your topic. However, if you simply cannot resist, I insist that you use the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (SEP). And if you do utilize SEP, you must (1) clearly cite when you do and (2) provide argumentation for why the SEP author is right or wrong to interpret the text as she or he does. This (2) is much harder than just writing the paper without outside aid!

Requests for help are very much encouraged, but must be accompanied by articulate, specific points of concern. I do not “pre-grade” essays or read entire drafts merely to check whether they are ok, but I will discuss any specific concern you may have. If a quick point of clarification is desired on something specific, asking by email is fine. Otherwise, make an appointment to discuss your work.

Students must submit electronic copies of papers to TURNITIN on Canvas prior to handing in a hard copy on the due date. Writing guidelines, expectations, and rubric are provided on Canvas and will be discussed well in advance of the due date for the first paper.

B. Quizzes (20% of the final grade)
There will be approximately 8 scheduled quizzes and as many pop quizzes as seem fitting. Quizzes are graded on a 100-point scale. Scheduled quizzes are time-limited and administered through Canvas. Pop quizzes consist of a single, obvious reading questions. Pop quizzes may be made-up only when missed due to official university obligations, documentable medical appointments, or family emergencies.

C. Final Exam (15% of the final grade)
Cumulative. Format to be determined.
D. Class Participation (10%)

Discussion participation (5%)

Students must arrive on time with a physical copy of the assigned reading in hand. Participation means being attentive and making constructive contributions to class discussions and group work. Prepare for class by carefully reading the assigned text. Students are expected to give thoughtful answers when called upon and to volunteer commentary on a regular basis. In all exchanges we will seek to justify our positions and examine the basis of their validity. Do not worry about giving the right answer. Worry about giving thoughtful, careful answers based on close, reflective reading of the assigned text. Read the assigned text once through quickly and then reread a second time slowly, taking notes and jotting down any questions or reactions that strike you as important.

Argument analysis journal (5%)

All students must keep and bring to class a separate argument analysis journal. Often I will assign an argument to analyze. If I have not, pick out at least one argument per assigned reading and fully analyze it: write down the conclusion and then pick out the supporting evidence and premises used to secure the conclusion and briefly assess how and how well the premises work together to secure the conclusion. Be sure to date each entry. If you have time, analyze fully another argument. This is good practice for writing the essays. If I have assigned a particular argument, I will call on someone to present their analysis if no one volunteers.

Periodically I will collect the journals to ensure you are doing the argument analyses on a regular basis. Those who make an effort consistently to do more than one argument analysis per reading will be rewarded with extra credit (TBD).

V. Course Policies (The syllabus *may be altered* in accordance with class needs.)

A. Email

In the subject line, include your last name, course and section number. Any email that does not include this information in the subject line may not be noticed or deleted! Email is fine for quick questions. Complicated philosophy questions should be discussed in class or in office hours.

B. No computers or electronic devices may be used in class.

No computer, smartphone, or electronic device may be used in class unless there is a documented, medical need. When class begins, all electronic devices must be closed, turned off, and put away. Students who use electronic devices without permission will be marked absent.

C. Attendance

Students must arrive on time with a physical copy of the assigned reading in hand. Students who do not have a physical copy of the assigned reading will be marked absent. A sign-in sheet will be provided at the start of each class, which will be collected once class begins. Sign in as soon as you enter class. Any student caught signing in for others will lose all participation credit both for themselves and those for whom they sign in.

Subtracting the first and last day of class, there are 28 class meetings. Five (5) absences (approximately 20% of class meetings), no matter what the reason, will result in automatic failure for the course. This includes absences due to poor health and family emergency. If official university responsibilities, e.g., athletics, have you missing more than 5 classes, you must withdraw.
from the course immediately. *Students are responsible for keeping track of how many classes are missed.* Requests for absence tallies will not be accepted.

D. Office Hours: Mondays 9 to 10am and by appointment.
I wish for every student to enjoy and get as much out of class as possible. Never hesitate to stop by my office for extra help or further discussion or to voice concerns. Office hours may not be used to make up class time missed without just cause.

E. Academic Honesty
Read Xavier’s policy on academic honesty here: [http://www.xavier.edu/library/xu-tutor/Xaviers-Policy-on-Academic-Honesty.cfm](http://www.xavier.edu/library/xu-tutor/Xaviers-Policy-on-Academic-Honesty.cfm)

All students must:
(1) Complete the library’s plagiarism tutorial on the library’s web site [http://www.xavier.edu/library/xu-tutor/Xu-tutor-use.cfm](http://www.xavier.edu/library/xu-tutor/Xu-tutor-use.cfm) and
(2) Attain a perfect score on the XU Tutor plagiarism quiz, also on the library’s website [http://www.xavier.edu/library/xu-tutor/USE-Quiz.cfm](http://www.xavier.edu/library/xu-tutor/USE-Quiz.cfm) before handing in their first assignment.

It is the student’s responsibility to understand what constitutes plagiarism. Ignorance does not exempt a student from the consequences of any violation of academic honesty. If you have any uncertainty whether inclusion of an idea constitutes plagiarism, *ask before you turn in an assignment.* No leeway will be given. Plagiarism, no matter how minimal, on a paper will result in loss of all credit for the paper, i.e., a zero will be recorded. Cheating on quizzes will result in loss of all quiz credit, i.e., a zero will be recorded for every quiz. Any two instances of cheating will result in failure for the course.

VI. Student Resources
A. Writing Center
If your writing or grammar is not clear, your arguments will not be clear. If your arguments are not clear, your essay grade will suffer. Good writing is a skill and clear writing really does take practice. The Writing Center can help you make your writing better.
Location: 400 Conaton Learning Commons
Phone: 513-745-2875
Email: writingcenter@xavier.edu

B. Peer Philosophy Tutor
If you would like help beyond meeting and talking with me, you can sign up for philosophy tutoring through the Learning Assistance Center. Philosophy tutors are vetted undergraduate philosophy majors. Of course, I am your best resource and you should never hesitate to reach out.
Read more: [http://www.xavier.edu/lac/Peer-Tutoring.cfm](http://www.xavier.edu/lac/Peer-Tutoring.cfm)
Sign up: [http://www.xavier.edu/lac/get-a-tutor.cfm](http://www.xavier.edu/lac/get-a-tutor.cfm)

C. Students with special needs
Students with special needs should contact the Student Learning Center (513-745-3280 or [http://www.xavier.edu/lac/student-disability-services.cfm](http://www.xavier.edu/lac/student-disability-services.cfm)). Please approach me by the end of the first full week with any needs or condition that you feel may affect your performance. I cannot help if I am unaware! Any reasonable accommodation will be made.
The Staff in the Office of Student Success is available to assist students to make the most of their Xavier experience. Personal staff consultations, success coaching, referrals to on-campus Solution Centers, and guiding students to effectively navigate their college experience are central to our work. Please visit www.xavier.edu/student-success to learn more or visit us in the Conaton Learning Commons.