Xavier University

2020

100-08 Ethics

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Hours: W 12-2, F 11-12

Ethics
(PHIL 100)

This course is an introduction to ethics and philosophy in general. We will read the works of important philosophers who have shaped the way we think about right, wrong, the good, justice, virtue, happiness, and morality. We will address perennial philosophical questions: What is the source of moral obligation? What is justice? How should I live? Is the moral life the good life? What are rights? We will also examine contemporary social issues, including affirmative action, the debate about removing statues, the politics of rioting, ethical issues related to COVID-19, and the ethics of moral grandstanding on social media (and IRL). The objectives of the course are to gain some sophistication in thinking about these questions and to acquire the critical reasoning and writing skills needed to do philosophical work both inside and outside the classroom.

Readings
1) Plato, *Republic*, C.D.C Reeve (translator), Hackett. (Canvas)
2) Essays available through Canvas.

Online resources: There are few reliable online resources for philosophy, but I do recommend the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (http://plato.stanford.edu/contents.html), which is reliable, clear, and scholarly. This is best online resource for philosophy. I will direct you to other online resources as the course unfolds, but I strongly recommend that you contact me about questions you are having about the material we are reading or raise them on the discussion boards. You should avoid searching online for answers, since much of the philosophical content that you will find online is not of a high quality or not reliable. At times, I will provide other useful online content through the modules.

Course Requirements:
20% Quizzes
10% Discussion Boards
10% Informal Writings Assignments (and Study Questions)
20% Plato Paper
20% Second Paper
20% Final Exam

All papers and exams must be completed to pass the course.

E/RS: This course is an E/RS course. What is E/RS? Ethics/Religion and Society, or E/RS for short, is part of Xavier's core curriculum, which focuses on the ethical and/or religious analysis of socially significant issues. Each student must take four E/RS courses, Ethics as Introduction to Philosophy, Theological Foundations, Literature and the Moral Imagination, and an elective course that has been approved as an E/RS course. As stated on the program's website, "the goal of this carefully structured sequence of courses is to foster students' understanding of socially significant issues from the perspectives of the humanities."

Course Goals:

After completing this course, you will be able to:
·   Identify multiple dimensions of an ethical issue.
·   Evaluate multiple dimensions of an ethical issue.
·   Apply ethical theories to contemporary social issues.
·   Formulate an argument using ethical concepts and canonical ethical positions.
·   Formulate an argument that defends a position in contemporary social debates.

Quizzes: You will take a number of quizzes online. The quizzes will generally take you 15-20 minutes to take and will consist of true/false and multiple-choice questions, fill in the blank and possibly other kinds of questions.

Discussion Boards: Discussion boards will make up the meat of our course and participation in them is absolutely required. It is expected that you follow the directions of the discussion board the netiquette rules below. You will be given a grade of 0-10 for each discussion board. Your grade will be based on the quality of your contribution to the discussion.

       Discussion Board Grade Scale

0-6	Did not meet the requirements. Some effort may have been put it in or the requirements may have partially been met.
7	The basic requirements of the discussion assignment were met.
8	The basic requirements were met, but the student made a good contribution.
9	The basic requirements were met, and the student made an excellent contribution.
10	The student met the basic requirements, made an excellent contribution, and in some way exceeded expectations.

Study Questions and Other Informal Writings Assignments (IWA): You will be required to answer study questions that will assist you in comprehending and thinking about the material more deeply. In some cases, to change things, instead of study questions, I will ask you to complete a short and informal writing assignment.

       SQ and IWA Board Grade Scale

0-6	Did not meet the requirements. Some effort may have been put in or the requirements may have partially been met.
7	The basic requirements of the assignment were met.
8	The basic requirements were met, but the student made a good contribution.
9	The basic requirements were met, and the student made an excellent contribution.
10	The student met the basic requirements, made an excellent contribution, and in some way exceeded expectations.

Paper: You will write two papers. I will provide details about the paper in the module. A late paper will be lowered for each class it is late a +/- for each day it is late. Papers must be submitted through Canvas. *All papers should be double spaced in Times New Roman (12pt font).*

Exams: The final exam will be cumulative and will consist of short answer, essay questions, and possibly a few multiple-choice questions. You will submit it online and it will be due the last day of class (June 27).

Plagiarism: Plagiarism will result in the failing of the assignment, and it may result in the failing of the course. The following statement on plagiarism is from Xavier University's website on plagiarism, where you can read more about how to prevent plagiarism:

http://www.xavier.edu/library/xu-tutor/Preventing-Plagiarism.cfm

- Plagiarism is using the work of another as if it were your own, without enclosing the words of others in quotations.
- Plagiarism is copying from the Internet, from a web page, or from another person without giving credit.
- Plagiarism is using ideas which are not your own without citing those ideas.
- Plagiarism can be applied to ideas, research, art, music, graphs, diagrams, websites, data, books, newspapers, magazines, plays, movies, photos, and speeches.

Technical Requirements:
- Internet connection (DSL, LAN, or cable connection desirable)
- Access to Canvas through a supported Web browser (Internet Explorer, Firefox, Safari). To ensure that you are using a supported browser and have required plug-ins please run the Check Browser Tool from the Technology Services Web site.
- Check your computer against Xavier's suggested minimum computer requirements: http://www.xavier.edu/ts/students/Computer-Recommendations.cfm

Technical Assistance: If you need technical assistance at any time during the course or to report a problem with Canvas, contact the HELP Desk at (513) 745-HELP/4357 or visit the HELP Desk Web site.

Grading: I will try to return grades on discussion boards and informal writings assignments as quickly as I can, but you should expect at least a week turnaround. For papers, I will try to have them graded within three weeks. Given the unpredictability of this semester due to COVID-19, grade delays may be more likely – I hope you understand and I am thankful for your patience.

Assignment Submission: All assignments for this course will be submitted electronically through Canvas unless otherwise instructed.

Incomplete Policy: You must complete the two papers and the final exam to complete this course. If you do not complete these assignments, even if you do well on everything else, you will not pass the course.

Attendance: Attendance is required. If you miss a Zoom session, your attendance grade may be affected. If you are sick and cannot attend the Zoom session, please let me know that you will not be present. Given the current circumstances due to the COVID-19 pandemic, I expect you to make wise judgments about your health and ability to remain on top of your class work. I am happy to work with you and will aim to be flexible.

Netiquette
The discussion boards are created to provide an opportunity for students to actively engage in meaningful conversation on a particular topic or issue. You are encouraged to provide your honest viewpoint, but be respectful of the views of your classmates.

Do's

1. Do use correct grammar and spelling.
2. Do read the prompt, reflect on what you would like to say, and review what you've written before posting!
3. Do respect the privacy, beliefs, and opinions of your classmates.
4. Do challenge each other's ideas but not each other personally.
5. Do remember to treat others as you would want to be treated.
6. Do stick to the discussion prompt at hand when posting to a forum.
7. Do use humor and sarcasm carefully. Students cannot see your facial expressions or hear any voice inflections.

Don'ts

1. Don't type in ALL CAPS. This is regarded as shouting.
2. Don't rant or flame. This is not the place to vent your anger or start a fight.
3. Don't make inappropriate comments. Objectionable, sexist, or racist language will not be tolerated.

In the discussion forums you will post assignments and discuss your work with others in the class or in your groups. These are public forums, so whatever is posted can be seen by everyone in the course, including the instructors. If you want to send a private message, use individual email. The Class Lounge discussion forum is a public space for conversation with your classmates on any topic or question.

Zoom: We will be meeting online via Zoom. Here are my expectations:

- Attendance is required. If you miss a Zoom session, your attendance grade may be affected. If you are sick and cannot attend the Zoom session, please let me know that you will not be present. Given the current circumstances due to the COVID-19 pandemic, I expect you to make wise judgments about your health and ability to remain on top of your class work. I am happy to work with you and will aim to be flexible.
- You should have your camera on so I can see your face.
- You should sign in using your first name (or nickname) and last name.
- You should have the reading easily available. My suggestion is that you print the readings when possible, or that you use a PDF program (Adobe Reader) to highlight important sections of the readings.
- Be early or on time.
- Keep yourself muted and unmute yourself when you are ready to talk.
- You may use the chat function to raise questions or make points.
- Zoom sessions will be recorded.
- Use the hand function to raise your hand.

Students with Disabilities: Any student who feels he/she may need an accommodation based on the impact of a documented disability should notify the course instructor and contact Cassandra Jones in the Learning Assistance Center at 513-745-3280 or e-mail jonesc20@xavier.edu to coordinate reasonable accommodations.

Modules and Readings

Module 1: Introduction and Divine Command Theory (One Week: 8/17 – 8/23)
    Craig and Sinnott-Armstrong, "God and Objective Morality: A Debate" (pp. 225-229)

Module 2: Utilitarianism as a Theory of Justice (Two Weeks: 8/24 – 9/6)
    Bentham, *An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation* (Selections)
    Mill, *Utilitarianism* (Selections)
    Singer, "Famine, Affluence, and Morality" (pp. 466-473)

Module 3: Kantian Ethics (Two Weeks: 9/7 – 9/20)
    Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals* (Selections)
    O'Neill, "Kantian Approaches to Some Famine Problems" (pp. 510-520)

Module 4: Justice as Virtue: Plato's Republic (Three Weeks: 9/21 – 10/11)
    Plato, *Republic* (Selections from Books 1–4)
    Hursthouse, "Normative Virtue Ethics"

Module 5: Contemporary Theories of Justice (Two Weeks: 10/12 – 10/25)
    Rawls's *A Theory of Justice* (Selections)
    Nozick, *Anarchy, State, and Utopia* (Selections)

Module 6: Justice and Affirmative Action (Two Weeks: 10/26 – 11/8)
    Pojman, "The Case Against Affirmative Action"
    Dworkin, "Bakke's Case: Are Quotas Unfair?"
    Alexander, *The New Jim Crow* (Selection on affirmative action)

Module 7: Justice 2020 (Three Weeks: 11/9 – 11/29)
    Statues: Lim, "Vandalizing Tainted Commemorations"
    Rioting: Pasternak, "Political Rioting - A Moral Assessment"
    COVID-19: Jamrozik and Selgelid, "Covid-19 Human Challenge Studies - Ethical Issues"
    Social Media: Tosi and Warmke, "Moral Grandstanding"