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331-01 Philosophy and Literature

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Philosophy and Literature

This class will explore the quarrel between philosophy and poetry, a quarrel that was already old when Plato wrote the Republic. As a quarrel between friends over the best approach to moral education, this disagreement raises fundamental questions about human nature, the nature of the human good, and our understanding of that good.

Course Goals: As a result of this class, I hope you will
- Become interested in engaging some of the fundamental questions about human nature, the nature of the human good, and the moral education by which we come to understand that good.
- Become better readers by interpreting important texts by philosophers, 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 human nature and the nature of moral education.
- Explain different alternatives for answering some fundamental questions about human nature and the nature of moral education.
- Evaluate different alternatives for answering some fundamental questions about human nature and the nature of moral education.
- 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 a course studying important philosophical arguments about ethics and moral education, this course fulfills an E/RS requirement and a required course in philosophy. This course will help students achieve the following from the provisional student learning outcomes for the Core Curriculum:
- Recognize and cogently discuss significant questions in the humanities.
- Apply the approaches of multiple disciplines to a significant issue.
- Find, evaluate, and logically convey information and ideas in written and oral presentations.
- Examine the nature of beauty, truth, and virtue as means of gaining a sense of the divine.
- Describe and examine how the inclusion of different perspectives can influence one’s worldview.
- Discuss and evaluate what constitutes human wellness.
Texts: Aristophanes, *The Clouds*
Plato, *Republic* (on Canvas)
Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*
Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*

Grading: Participation: 10%
Exams: 40%
Papers: 50%

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. In addition, since active contributions to the course require being adequately prepared, you will post answers to reading questions that accompany each week’s assignment.

- Your grade for participation will be based primarily on the number of these posts for which you receive full credit: 13 = A, 10 = B, 7 = C, 4 = D.
  - NOTE: Posts will be due at the beginning of the first day of class each week and will not be accepted late. If you miss a post, you can make up the points by doing extra credit (see the extra credit assignment instructions on Canvas).
    - Part A, one-half point extra credit: Post your reading notes for the week.
    - Part B, one-half point extra credit: Post an additional entry for the week, reflecting on class discussion.
- Sleeping, texting, talking to other students and doing work for other classes are disruptive and indicate a deliberate disengagement from the class. *Repeated instances may lower your participation grade as much as a full letter grade.*

Exams: You will have two in-class exams, one over Aristophanes and Plato and one over Aristotle, each worth 20% of your grade in the course. Both will require you to explain arguments and synthesize material discussed in class. Specifics will be given at least a week before each exam.

Papers: You will do a variety of writing for this course, which will ask you to reflect on the material we have discussed in class.

- You will write two papers this semester, each worth 20% of your final grade.
  - The first will require you to explore the interrelations between Aristotle’s account of virtue and vice and Austen’s depiction of character types in *Pride and Prejudice*.
  - The second will require you to explore the interrelations between Aristotle’s account of friendship and the depiction of friendship in a piece of literature of your choice.
  - Specifics will be given at least a week before each paper is due.
- To prepare for your second paper, you will submit a paper proposal and give a brief class presentation on your topic. This preparatory work will be worth 5% of your final grade.
- In addition to your formal papers, you will do frequent informal writing, both in class and as a preparation for class discussion. Your average on these assignments will be worth 5% of your final grade.
CLASS 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:
- Papers must be submitted online by midnight on the day indicated, and they will lose a grade (e.g. from a B to B-) for each day late; weekends count as a single day.
- If you miss an exam, you must contact me by 2:30 on the day of the exam to schedule a make-up exam. I will only allow make-up exams for documented emergencies. I reserve the right to give you a different exam from the rest of the class.
- Weekly reading questions must be submitted by the beginning of the first day of class each week, on the reading we will discuss that week. I will not accept these posts late, but you can do extra credit to make up for a missed post. (See the extra credit assignments on Canvas.)
- Informal writing assignments given as take-home work will be due at the beginning of the following class and will not be accepted late. Assignments done in class cannot be made up.
- 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. You will receive a receipt from Turnitin.com for anything submitted there.

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.
Class Schedule

NB: The weekly reading questions will be due five minutes before class each Tuesday, unless a change is announced for a particular week.

Week 1: Jan. 14, 16  Introduction, Philosophy and literature: discussion

Week 2: Jan. 21, 23  *The Clouds*, ll. 1-889

Week 3: Jan. 28, 30  *The Clouds*, ll. 889-1511

Week 4: Feb. 4, 6  *Republic*, Book 10

Week 5: Feb. 11  *Republic*, Book 10
   Feb. 13  EXAM ONE

Week 6: Feb. 18, 20  *Nic. Ethics*, Book 1 (ch. 1-3, 6, 13), Book 2 (ch. 1-3, 5-7)

Week 7: Feb. 25, 27  *Nic. Ethics*, Book 3 (ch. 13-15), Book 4 (ch. 1-10)
   Mar. 4, 6  SPRING BREAK, NO CLASS

Week 8: Mar. 11, 13  *Nic. Ethics*, Book 4 (ch. 7-15)

Week 9: Mar. 18, 20  *Pride and Prejudice*, chs.1-34

Week 10: Mar. 25, 27  *Pride and Prejudice*, chs. 35-61

Week 11: Apr. 1, 3  *Nic. Ethics*, Book 8
   Apr. 4  Paper One Due

Week 12: Apr. 8, 10  *Nic. Ethics*, Book 8, 9
   Class Presentations

Week 13: Apr. 15  *Nic. Ethics*, Book 9
   Class Presentations
   Apr. 17  EASTER BREAK, NO CLASS

Week 14: Apr. 22, 24  *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book 10 (ch. 6-10)
   Class Presentations

Week 15: Apr. 29  Review
   May 1  Class Presentations
   May 1  EXAM TWO

Thursday, May 8, 10:30 am: Paper Two

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 journal entry. You should always check Canvas to be sure you are doing the correct assignment.
PHILOSOPHY DEPARTMENT GRADING STANDARDS

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