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100-13-19 Ethics

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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 value of philosophy? What is justice? How should I live? Is the moral life the good life? What are rights? Should wealth be redistributed? We will also examine philosophically a contemporary social issue. 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.

Required Texts
3) 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 the only online source you are permitted to use, and if you do reference or quote it in a paper, it must be cited appropriately.

Course Requirements:
20% Participation and informal writing
20% Quizzes (typically 4-5)
20% Paper #1 (5 pages)
20% Paper #2 (5 pages)
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:
GOAL 1: Students will be effective communicators in writing and orally.
1. Students will organize and express their ideas in writing and orally.
2. Students will formulate clear and arguable theses, supported by evidence drawn from appropriate sources.
3. Students will utilize an effective writing process guided by audience, purpose, cultural context, and disciplinary standards.
GOAL 2: Students will be critical thinkers.
   1. Students will analyze and interpret texts.
   2. Students will evaluate the strength of an argument or claim and its evidence.
   3. Students will discuss fundamental questions that arise from the human condition, such as questions about the grounds of morality, the essence of justice, the nature of reality, the possibility of certainty, the nature of beauty, or the reasonableness of religious faith.

GOAL 3: Students will be creators of new knowledge and expression.
   1. Students will utilize their imagination and creativity, individually and collectively, to innovate and generate new perspectives to problems.

GOAL 4: Students will be able to understand and appreciate the arts, humanities and science disciplines, and reflect on connections among these studies.
   1. Students will articulate and engage with great ideas in the history of Western thought through the writings of great philosophers.

GOAL 5: Students will be integrated individuals who articulate a coherent, ethical perspective on the world and their place in it.
   1. Students will relate their knowledge and skills in a reflective and constructive way to their life experiences and the challenges confronting today’s world.
   2. Students will use information and resources responsibly in their communication and research.

GOAL 7 (E/RS): Students will be intellectually, morally and spiritually educated individuals capable of critical reflection on ethical and/or religious questions of social significance from the perspective of multiple disciplines with unique methods.
   1. Students will analyze rationally competing claims about individual and political justice within foundational philosophical texts

**Participation:** Participation is required. Participation can take place in a number of ways: asking questions, responding to questions, raising objections, and making points. I strongly encourage students to speak up in class. I do recognize that for some students talking in class and discussing philosophy can be intimidating. Discussing the philosophical content of the readings or class discussion by email or during office hours will count toward your participation grade. Participation is not an automatic 20%—you actually have to take part, and I am very aware of who is doing so.

**Quizzes:** If you miss a quiz because of an unexcused absence, then you cannot make it up. If the absence is excused, then I will assign you a writing project or quiz that will be graded and carry the same weight as the missed quiz. Unannounced, or pop quizzes, are a possibility.

**Papers:** You will write two papers. For each paper I will provide a handout detailing the assignment and my expectations. All papers are due at the beginning of class. A late paper will be lowered for each class it is late a +/- . If your paper deserves an A- and you turn it in one class late, then your grade for the paper will be a B+. If your paper deserves a B+ and you turn it in three classes late, then your grade for the paper will be a C+. Papers must be submitted through Turnitin. *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.

**Writing Center:** Everyone needs help with their writing. Even great authors need an editor or second pair of eyes. I strongly suggest that you visit the writing center before you turn in each paper. Your grammar will improve, your prose will become crisper, and your argument stronger. Overall, your writing skills and course grade will very likely increase. There is really nothing to lose, and everything to gain.
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 take a tutorial about how to avoid plagiarism:

http://www.xavier.edu/library/xututor/plagiarism/index.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.

Attendance: You are allowed two unexcused absences. More than two unexcused absences will have a serious effect on your grade. Each unexcused absences after two will result in a lowering of your final grade by a +/- . If your final grade is an A- and you have 4 absences, then your grade for the course will be a B+. If your final grade is a B+ and you have 6 absences, then your grade for the course will be a C+. This policy will be strictly followed. Excused absences require an official note from a doctor or student affairs. If you have more than six absences, whether excused or unexcused, then you will fail the course. If you do miss a class I strongly suggest that you get notes from another student and that you ask me for handouts I might have distributed and instructions for the next class. If you are absent, do not assume that you know where we are in the readings, since we will not always follow the syllabus exactly.

**Students must keep their cell phones off during class, not on vibrate or silence. No texting at all!!**

Tentative Schedule

**Introduction**

1/14 Syllabus, What is Philosophy? Why Ethics?

1/16 The Value of Philosophy

   Reading: Russell, “The Value of Philosophy” (Canvas)

**Plato’s Republic and the Question of Justice**

1/21 Introduction to Plato’s Republic

   Reading: Editor’s “Introduction” (pp. xi-xvii) and Plato, Republic, Book 1 (327a-336e)
1/23  Introduction to Plato’s Republic  
       *Reading:* Plato, Republic, Book 1 (327a-336e, Polemarchus’s Definition)

1/28  Thrasyymachus’s Definition  
       *Reading:* Plato, Republic, Book 1 (337a-349a)

1/30  Plato’s Function Argument  
       *Reading:* Plato, Republic, Book 1 (349a-354c)

2/4   Glaucon’s Challenge  
       *Reading:* Plato, Republic, Book 2 (357a-367e)

2/6   The City in Speech  
       *Reading:* Plato, Republic, Book 2 (368a-383c)

2/11  The Guardians  
       *Reading:* Plato, Republic, Book 3 (386a-417b)

2/13  Soul and City  
       *Reading:* Plato, Republic, Book 4 (419a-434e)

2/18  Soul and City  
       *Reading:* Plato, Republic, Book 4 (435a-445e)

2/20  The Cave  
       *Reading:* Plato, Republic, Selections from Books 6 and 7 (502c-531e)

**Utilitarianism and Justice**

2/25  Bentham’s Utilitarianism  
       *Reading:* Justice: A Reader: Chapters I and II (pp. 3-14 and 35-47)

2/27  Mill’s Utilitarianism  
       *Reading:* Justice: A Reader: Chapter II (pp. 14-27)

3/4   **Spring Break**

3/6   **Spring Break**

3/11  Mill’s Answer to Glaucon’s Challenge  
       *Reading:* Justice: A Reader: Chapter II (pp. 27-31)  
       Moore, “Principia Ethica” (Canvas)

3/13  Mill on Rights  
       *Reading:* Justice: A Reader: Chapter II (pp. 35-47)

3/18  Defending Mill’s Theory of Rights  
       *Reading:* Sumner, “Mill’s Theory of Rights” (Canvas)

3/20  Debating Mill’s Theory of Rights  
       *Reading:* Justice: A Reader: Chapter II (pp. 35-47)
Rawls’s *Theory of Justice*
3/25  Rawls’s Critique of Utilitarianism  
   *Reading: Justice: A Reader*, Chapter 7 (pp. 203, 209-214)

3/27  Rawls’s *Theory of Justice*  
   *Reading: Justice: A Reader*, Chapter 7 (pp. 203-209, 219-221)

4/1   Rawls’s *Theory of Justice*  
   *Reading: Justice: A Reader*, Chapter 7 (pp. 214-219)

4/3   Rawls’s *Theory of Justice* Continued

**The Libertarian Critique**
4/8   Nozick’s *Theory of Justice*  
   *Reading: Justice: A Reader*, Chapter 3 (pp. 60-73)

4/10  Nozick’s Critique of Rawls  
   *Reading: Justice: A Reader*, Chapter 3 (pp. 60-73)

4/15  Nozick’s *Theory of Justice* Continued

4/17  **Easter Holiday**

**Debating a Social Issue**
4/22  TBA
4/24  TBA
4/29  TBA
5/1   TBA

**Final Exam**
Class: 8:30-9:45, TR; Exam: 8:30 - 10:20, Tuesday, May 6

Class: 2:30-3:45, TR; Exam: 1:00 - 2:50, Tuesday, May 6