2014

100-20A Ethics as an Introduction to Philosophy

Cheryl McKinley

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Welcome to Ethics!
The ancient philosopher Socrates once said, “The unexamined life is not worth living.”
An examination of one’s life begins with the pursuit of wisdom. Your journey in ethics
will begin with a few fundamental questions: Is there such thing as a moral life? Isn’t
morality just someone’s opinion? What is a good life? Why not just be selfish? Who
decides what is right and wrong? This course will continue your quest for wisdom but
will not offer you the answer; instead, you will be introduced to the thoughts of others
who have asked the same questions throughout the history of Western philosophy. You
will find that philosophy is more than mere opinion. The science of philosophy consists
of structured arguments and the use of logically coherent premises and conclusions. At
the end of this course, you will have discovered a diversity of views and the rigor of
argumentation, as well as the ideas of virtue, utilitarianism, deontological ethics and
various ways philosophy can apply to practical current issues.

GOALS FOR PHIL 100

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.

2. 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.

2. Students will relate their knowledge and skills in a reflective and constructive way to their life experiences and the challenges confronting today’s world.

3. 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.

**Course grade**: determined by exam scores, papers, and group work (must attend for group work points).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course grade details</th>
<th>Points</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Exams = (total possible points 300)</td>
<td>300</td>
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<tr>
<td>Exam I = 80 points</td>
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<tr>
<td>Exam II = 80 points</td>
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<tr>
<td>Exam III = 140 points (comprehensive)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Papers = 1 @ 400 points</td>
<td>400</td>
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<tr>
<td>(Refer to the handout for instructions)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Group work = 5 @ 40 points each (total possible points 200)</td>
<td>200</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total possible points for the course</strong></td>
<td><strong>900</strong></td>
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</table>
Academic Honesty

The pursuit of truth demands high standards of personal honesty. Academic and professional life requires a trust based upon integrity of the written and spoken word. Accordingly, violations of certain standards of ethical behavior will not be tolerated at Xavier University. These include theft, cheating, plagiarism, unauthorized assistance in assignments and tests, unauthorized copying of computer software, the falsification of results and material submitted in reports or admission and registration documents, and the falsification of any academic record including letters of recommendation.

All work submitted for academic evaluation must be the student’s own. Certainly, the activities of other scholars will influence all students. However, the direct and unattributed use of another’s efforts is prohibited as is the use of any work untruthfully submitted as one’s own.

Penalties for violations of this policy may include one or more of the following: a zero for that assignment or test, an “F” in the course, and expulsion from the University. The dean of the college in which the student is enrolled is to be informed in writing of all such incidents, though the teacher has full authority to assign the grade for the assignment, test, or course. If disputes of interpretation arise, the student, faculty member, and chair should attempt to resolve the difficulty. If this is unsatisfactory, the dean will rule in the matter. As a final appeal, the academic vice president will call a committee of tenured faculty for the purpose of making a final determination.

Students with disabilities

Any student who feels s/he may need an accommodation based on the impact of a documented disability should contact the Learning Assistance Center at 513-745-3280 on the Fifth Floor of the Conaton Learning Commons, Room 514, to coordinate reasonable accommodations.

Policies

Attendance is taken each class meeting.

Handouts are considered part of the day’s lecture. Should you miss a class, you are responsible for obtaining handouts that you have missed.

Turn off (or silence) and put away all cell phones and technological devices. Laptops, phones, iPods, and similar devices may not be used in class without permission.

There will be frequent group work sessions in class, so it is important that you respect the viewpoints of others.

Group work is worth 40 points as noted on the syllabus. Groups will assemble at the beginning, middle or end of class. Therefore, in order to receive group work points, you must arrive on time and stay the entire class period.

Papers must be turned in on-time. Late papers will result in an automatic twenty-five point reduction.
If you **miss the midterm exam**, you must contact me for a paper topic. You will write a paper instead and a paper topic will be provided. Note: There is no make up exam for the final on the last day of class.

**Note on the Paper:** You must turn in a paper thesis (and approved) before you continue writing your paper. You will be lowered one letter grade without prior thesis approval for your paper.

**Incompletes** - Refer to the university catalog for the policy on incomPLETES.

**Grading Scale:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Score Range</th>
<th>Grade</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>837 – 900</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>810 – 836</td>
<td>A-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>783 – 809</td>
<td>B+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>747 – 782</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>720 – 746</td>
<td>B-</td>
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<tr>
<td>693 – 719</td>
<td>C+</td>
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<tr>
<td>657 – 692</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>630 – 656</td>
<td>C-</td>
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<tr>
<td>603 – 629</td>
<td>D+</td>
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<tr>
<td>567 – 602</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>540 – 566</td>
<td>D-</td>
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<tr>
<td>0 – 539</td>
<td>F</td>
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**Tentative reading assignments (subject to change at the instructor’s discretion)**

*Note:* Read assignments **before** coming to class

**Sun 1/12:** Preassignment Sunday – 12:00 – 1:55 pm
Brief introduction to the course: Plato – Kant – Mill / Go over syllabus

**Sat 1/18:** Introduction to Plato’s *Republic* (read all assignments on Plato)
What is justice? Read *Republic* 327a-331d (pp. 1-5).
(The marginal numbers and letters are called “Stephanus numbers” and are based on an early printed edition of Plato’s works.)

Justice as what is advantageous for the stronger: Read *Republic* 336b-344d (pp. 12-22)
(Throughout our study of Plato, I recommend checking the translator’s synopsis (pp. xxx-xxxiii) to review and fill in gaps between assigned readings.)

Is justice good in itself? Read *Republic* 357a-362c (pp. 36-40)
A city comes into being: Read *Republic* 367e-376c (pp. 45-56)
The guardians of the city and the noble lie: Read *Republic* 412b-421c (pp. 96-104)
The virtues of the city: Read *Republic* 427d-435a (pp. 112-121)

**Topic for Paper 1**
**Group 1**
Sat 1/25: Plato (continue)  (read all assignments on Plato)
The parts of the soul: Read Republic 439a-441c (pp. 126-129)
The virtues of the soul: Read Republic 441c-445d (pp. 129-135)
The first wave: Read Republic 449a-457c (pp. 136-146)
The second wave: Read Republic 457c-466d (pp. 147-158)
The third wave: Read Republic 472a-480a (pp. 164-175)
Philosophers as rulers: Read Republic 487b-489a, 496a-501c (pp. 180-182, 190-195)

Thesis due for Paper 1: Turn in at the beginning of class
Group 2
Review for Exam I

Sat 2/1: Plato (continue)  (read all assignments on Plato)
The form of the good: Read Republic 502d-511e (pp. 197-207)
The allegory of the cave: Read Republic 514a-521c (pp. 208-215)
Founding the just city: Read Republic 540a-541b (pp. 236-237)
Democracy: Read Republic 543a-545c, 557a-558c (pp. 238-240, 253-255)
The tyrannical soul: Read Republic 571a-578c (pp. 270-278)
The myth of Er: Read Republic 611b-621c (pp. 316-326) Focus on pp. 323-4

Exam I: Beginning of class

Sat 2/8: Introduction to Kant’s Grounding  (read all assignments on Kant)
Good will and duty: Read Grounding, First Section, pp. 7-12
Maxims and universality: Read Grounding, First Section, pp. 13-17
The concept of a categorical imperative: Read Grounding, Second Section, page 19 to the top of page 27.

Paper 1 Due: Turn in at the beginning of class
Group 3

Sat 2/15: Kant (continue)  (read all assignments on Kant)
Exploring the categorical imperative: Read Grounding, Second Section, page 27 to the top of page 39.
The kingdom of ends; heteronomy and autonomy: Read Grounding, finish Second Section, pp. 39-48.

Exam II: beginning of class
Sat 2/22: Introduction to Mill’s *Utilitarianism* *(read all assignments on Mill)*
The utilitarian principle: Read *Utilitarianism*, Chapter I, Chapter II, and Chapter III.

Group 4

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Sat 3/1: Mill (continue) *(read all assignments on Mill)*
The basis and proof of utilitarianism: Read *Utilitarianism*, Chapter IV, and Chapter V.

Group 5
Review for final exam (Exam III)

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Sat 3/8: Review and Final Exam (Exam III) Comprehensive

Exam III