

Introduction to Ethics
Philosophy 2320 – 002
Summer I, 2010
M-F 12:00-1:50
Eng/Phil 304

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Course Syllabus

“We do not investigate virtue in order to know what it is, but in order to become good, since it would not be worthwhile otherwise.”

– Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*

Course Description and Purpose Statement

In this course we will learn to think about ethics. Morality is something that many people think about a lot. But philosophers think about ethics in a special way. What most interests philosophers are the theories behind our moral beliefs. Philosophers ask questions like: What sorts of things are good and bad, and why? What reasons do I have for behaving morally? What do ‘right’ and ‘wrong’ mean? Is there really any such thing? In this course we will learn to ask these questions, as well as learn what sorts of answers these questions have.

The class is divided into four units, covering the dominant moral theories in the Western philosophical tradition. We will investigate the moral theories of four of philosophy’s most influential ethicists: Mill, Kant, Aristotle, and Hobbes. In each of these units, we will be concerned with answering a specific set of questions. There will be three central questions that we seek to answer for each unit:

- (1) What are we?
- (2) What should we do?
- (3) Why should we care?

We will spend the first day of each unit learning how each theory answers the first question, the second day on the second question, and the third day on the third question. But to answer these questions, we will have to ask many others. Among these are: Who or what makes an action right or wrong? What is the proper subject of a moral theory? Why should we act morally? In comparing each theory’s answers to these questions, we should develop a more thorough understanding of each theory and of the history of ethics more generally.

This course satisfies the Texas Tech University core curriculum requirement in humanities. The objective of the humanities in a core curriculum is to expand the student’s knowledge of the human condition and human cultures, especially in relation to behaviors, ideas, and values (*sic*) expressed in works of human imagination and thought. Through study in disciplines such as literature and philosophy, students will engage in critical analysis and develop an appreciation of the humanities as fundamental to the health and survival of any society. **Students graduating from Texas Tech University should be able to: think critically, demonstrate an understanding of the possibility of multiple interpretations, cultural contexts, and values.**

Expected Learning Outcomes

- Students will develop critical thinking skills, by, *inter alia*, recognizing and questioning assumptions, and recognizing and producing sound arguments.
- Students will develop their reading skills, by engaging with difficult texts from a variety of times and cultures.
- Students will become familiar with the history behind the ideas influencing their ethical beliefs and the beliefs of others.
- Students will learn the ethical theories proposed by Mill, Kant, Aristotle, and Hobbes

Course Requirements

Philosophy is not the sort of thing you can learn passively. Student participation is absolutely requisite for a successful course. I've tried to keep the amount of reading low, but the difficulty of the reading cannot be avoided. This means that all students *must* have completed the day's readings before class, and *must* participate in class discussion. This also means coming to class regularly. Attendance is counted as part of the participation grade, and I am fairly hard-lined about it. When you also take into account the impact that absences have on your other grades (i.e., quiz and exam scores), absences can really hurt your grade.

Assessment Methods and Grading

The majority of your grade will be determined by four exams, one for each of the four theories we'll study. Each exam will have two components: (i) A series of short answer questions which test your knowledge of the nuts and bolts of each theory (what the terms and major concepts are, what the important premises and conclusions of the arguments are, etc); (ii) A few long answer questions testing your understanding of the abstract aspects of each theory (how the theory is applied, how to adjudicate conflicts in the theory, how plausible the theory is, etc). Each exam will count for 20% of your final grade. A further 10% will come from a short answer quiz the first week.

There will also be a 10% participation grade. Come to class and talk and you'll get the points (see *Course Requirements*). Fail to do either of these things and you won't get the points. Two unexcused absences will be allowed without penalty; each additional absence will deduct 1% from your participation grade.

There will be extra credit available (Limit 5), in the following form only. There are several suggested readings for each unit posted on Blackboard. Write a one page summary and critique of the article. What is the author's main point? What argument does the author use to make that point? Do you find that argument persuasive?

Grades are distributed according to the following rubric:

- A = 90-100: *exceeds* expectations with regard to material and execution
- B = 80-89 : *meets* expectations with regard to material and execution
- C = 70-79 : *fails* to meet expectations with regard to *either* material *or* execution
- D = 60-69 : *fails* to meet expectations with regard to *both* material *and* execution
- F = ≤ 59 : assignment not completed; prompt not addressed; assignment not submitted

Additional Comments

Any student who, because of a disabling condition, may require some special arrangements in order to meet course requirements should contact me as soon as possible so that accommodations can be made. Students should present appropriate verification from AccessTECH in the Student Counseling Center.

Students committing an incident of cheating, plagiarism, or other failures of academic integrity are in violation of class policy and university policy, and will be treated accordingly. *No such behavior will be tolerated.* Any student violating these policies will receive a failing grade for the course and will be referred to the office of the student's Dean for further disciplinary action. Please ask me if you have *any* questions about what counts as violating academic integrity. Ignorance is not an excuse.

The university's policy may be found at:

<http://www.depts.ttu.edu/studentjudicialprograms/AcademicIntegrity.htm>

See also the university's statement of ethical principles, "Do the Right Thing" at

<http://www.depts.ttu.edu/communications/ethics.php>

Projected Schedule

<u>Date</u>	<u>Topic</u>	<u>Primary Reading</u>	<u>Assignment</u>
6.2	Introduction	Bloom (2010)	
6.3		Korsgaard (1996)	
6.4		Mackie (1971) §1-2, 8-9, 12 Daniels (1984), §1-3	Quiz 1
<u>Unit 1 - Utilitarianism</u>			
6.7	Consequentialism; hedonism	Bentham (1791) Ch.1 Mill (1863), Ch.2	
6.8	Act-U and Rule –U	Smart (1973) §2&6 Urmson (1953)	
6.9	Value and Valuing	Mill (1863), Ch.3&4 Sidgwick (1907) IV.1-2	
6.10	Evaluation	Nozick (1974) Parfit (1984)	
6.11			Exam 1
<u>Unit 2 - Deontology</u>			
6.14	Autonomy; Good Will	Kant (1785), G:440-448, 393-405	
6.15	The Categorical Imperative	Kant (1785), G: 412-435	
6.16	Normativity of Reason	Korsgaard (2002)	
6.17	Evaluation	Langton (1992), pp.481-84, 492-505 Hume (1740)	
6.18			Exam 2
<u>Unit 3 – Virtue Ethics</u>			
6.21	Human Function	Aristotle, NE I.13-II.3, EE II.1 Hursthouse (1999)	
6.22	WWVD?	NE III.6-12, VII.1-10 Hursthouse (2007)	
6.23	Eudaimonism	NE.I.1-4, 8-9; X.9	
6.24	Evaluation	Louden (1984) Copp & Sobel (2004), pp. 532-543	
6.25			Exam 3
<u>Unit 4 – Egoism & Constructivism</u>			
6.28	Rational Egoism	Hobbes (1651), Ch. 13	
6.29	Laws of Nature	Hobbes (1651), Ch. 14-15, 17	
6.30	The Foole	Hobbes (1651), Ch. 15, 17	
7.1	Evaluation	Newey (2008), pp. 82-91, 141-46 Kavka (1984) §1-2, 5	
7.2			Exam 4 (Final) 11:00-1:30 ENG 304