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Office Hrs: M 4:00-5:00 and T 3:00-4:00

P140 M/W 2:30-3:45 SY 103

Tentative Syllabus: P140 Introduction to Ethics

Welcome to Introduction to Ethics. In this class, we will study Western philosophical approaches to the following fundamental questions of ethics: What ought I do to be a good person? What is a moral life? Are there objective rights and wrongs about how to live or is all morality simply relative to a culture or to the individual? We will also put these theories to work in addressing several contested contemporary “applied” moral issues like abortion. The last two weeks of class will also focus on student group presentations on applied ethical issues of the student’s choosing.

This course has three major aims:

- (1) To familiarize you with the major classic and contemporary ethical theories.
- (2) To challenge you to examine critically your own pre-conceived ideas about what is right and wrong.
- (3) To develop your critical thinking abilities especially with respect to arguments about matters of value, and to hone your ability to develop and defend well-reasoned positions on ethical issues both orally and in writing.

After taking this class, students should be able better to (1) understand, analyze, and evaluate moral claims and arguments, and (2) construct moral positions and defend them in writing. These skills are vital for leading an examined life and should serve you in your public and private lives well beyond the walls of this classroom.

Warning: This class is fun but difficult. Although the assigned readings are often brief, you will be expected to read and re-read the selections carefully, and to think deeply and critically about them. Philosophy courses in general are not the kinds of courses in which you can memorize the material and simply reproduce it on a test; rather, philosophy is about coming to see things in new ways, grappling with “the big” questions (How ought I to live? What do I owe others? What is a good or just society?) that have vexed people for millennia, and working to understand and evaluate complex arguments and positions. All of this will take a good bit of careful, critical reflection and creative energy on your part. We will also be reading many original, historical texts which are challenging (keep a dictionary handy!).

Required Text:

Ethics: History, Theory, and Contemporary Issues eds. Steven M. Cahn & Peter Markie 3rd edition (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006). All other reading assignments will be made available through the class’s Oncourse site <http://oncourse.iu.edu> .

Course Requirements:

- 1) **Keep up with course readings:** All course readings are expected to be completed by the day they are listed on the schedule. Review each reading carefully several times!
- 2) **Weekly quizzes and/or homework assignments:** All homework assignments will be posted on the course page on ONCOURSE in advance. The homework (short writing assignments,

reading questions) and Oncourse electronic quizzes are designed to make sure you are keeping up with the readings and are thinking about them critically. Oncourse quizzes are due at the precise time specified, and written assignments are due at the beginning of class the day they are due. Sometimes homework will be graded with a check plus (95), check (85), check minus (75), or zero (0), and at other times I will simply check simply to see whether you have completed the assignment and will assign it a grade of 95 or 0.

- 3) **Two medium-sized papers** (paper 1 = 2-3 pages, paper 2=3-5 pages) addressing topics presented in prompts to be handed out in class. For the second paper, you must complete a pre-writing assignment (1-2 pages) stating the thesis of your paper and providing an outline of the arguments you will use to support it. Both papers will be submitted through www.turnitin.com (more information on this later).
- 4) Two in-class, closed-book, closed-notes, closed-laptop, cell phone etc. etc. **tests** (short answer and essay question format).
- 5) **A group project on an applied ethics issue.** The group project will consist of an “issue brief” which will be turned in to me (5-6 pages) and a class presentation. Each group will choose an issue in applied ethics, such as animal welfare, stem cell research, same-sex marriage, environmental issues, etc. After thoroughly researching the issue, each group will turn in one the brief, a document which should summarize the issue (including relevant scientific and legal facts) and compellingly present at least two competing stances taken towards the issue (special emphasis should be placed on the application of theoretical frameworks discussed earlier in class to the particular issue), as well as summarizing the group’s “verdict” on the issue (supplied with philosophically-defensible reasons). The last few class periods will be devoted to group presentations, where each group will give a 15-20 minute presentation summarizing their research and presenting their verdict.
- 6) **Attendance and active participation:** I have no explicit attendance policy, but 10% of your final grade will be comprised of discussion and group participation. If you aren’t in class, naturally, you didn’t participate. While I don’t mind if you miss a couple of classes for extenuating circumstances, if you are habitually truant (without talking to me privately) you should expect a low participation grade.

One thing I will not tolerate is coming to class habitually late or leaving class in the middle of lecture. **If you plan to attend class, show up on time and stay for the duration of class.**

Special Note on Academic Dishonesty:

Indiana University takes plagiarism and other forms of cheating very seriously. If you are caught handing in work as your own that is, in fact, not your own (e.g. if you have someone else write a paper for you, or you copy off of someone’s homework assignment, or use a paper on file in a fraternity, or you do not properly credit sources you have used, be they internet, print or other sources) you will receive an F for this course and will be reported to the Dean of Students. Perhaps the most classic form of plagiarism in the internet era is the “cutting and pasting” of sentences and even full paragraphs from internet sites with neither quotation nor citation. I catch a couple of students doing this every semester, and it’s not pretty. Consult the website <http://dsa.indiana.edu/Code/index1.html> for a detailed description of what constitutes plagiarism. Feel free to speak with me about how to document your sources properly.

Tentative Grade Breakdown:

Weekly Oncourse quizzes: 10%

Other homework assignments: 10%

Papers: 25% (paper 1 = 5%, paper 2 pre-writing assignment 5%, paper 2 = 15%)

Tests (2): 20% (10% each)

Group Project: 25% (presentation 15%, group paper 10%)

Active discussion participation and group participation: 10%

Schedule of Classes

Week 1. Critical Thinking about Ethical Issues

M. 8/27 Introductory class: Overview of course; issues concerning facts vs. values; moral arguments.

W. 8/29 Critical thinking; informal logical fallacies; evaluating arguments. Reading: on Oncourse, "Moral Reasoning".

Homework due Monday 9/3, 6:00 AM: Oncourse quiz on critical thinking

Week 2. Socrates asks "what is holy?" The beginning of philosophical ethics

M. 9/3 Plato's *Euthyphro* pp. 5-16.

Homework due Wednesday 9/5, 6:00 AM : Oncourse Euthyphro quiz

W. 9/5 Plato's *Euthyphro* pp. 5-16 continued.

Week 3. Morality, Philosophy, and Religion

M. 9/10 Divine Command Theory (Phillip Quinn reading). Also Dostoyevsky "Grand Inquisitor". Both on Oncourse.

Homework Due Wednesday 9/12, 6:00 AM: Oncourse quiz on Quinn, Dostoyevsky, Sartre, Nietzsche.

W. 9/12 Nietzsche selections pp. 352-358 and Jean-Paul Sartre atheistic ethics: "Existentialism is a Humanism" pp. 396-402.

Homework due Wednesday 9/19, 2:30 PM: Paper 1 on Euthyphro, Nietzsche, or Grand Inquisitor.

Week 4. Is "right" only "right for"?: Cultural and other Relativisms

M. 9/17 Ruth Benedict *The Case for Moral Relativism* from *The Moral Life: An Introductory Reader in Ethics and Literature* ed. Louis Pojman. pp. 157-165 and James Rachels "The Challenge of Cultural Relativism" pp. 651-658 in textbook. Start film screening.

W. 9/19 **Film screening: "Crimes and Misdemeanors".**

Homework assignment due Monday 2:30: Pick one question and type out a 2 page, double-spaced, thoughtful essay response to one from a list of prompt questions to be handed out in class.

Week 5. Virtue Ethics

M. 9/24 Aristotle Book I. *Nicomachean Ethics* pp. 124-134.

Homework due Wednesday 9/26 6:00 AM: Oncourse reading quiz on Aristotle and Rachels

W. 9/26 Aristotle Book II pp. 134-140 and James Rachels “The Ethics of Virtue” pp. 695-706. Review for test 1.

Homework: Study for Test 1

Week 6. Utilitarianism

M. 10/1 Test 1.

W. 10/3 Jeremy Bentham selections from *An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation* pp. 309-317.

Homework due Monday 10/8, 6:00 AM—Oncourse reading quiz on Bentham and Mill

Week 7. Utilitarianism in action and its Critics

M. 10/8 John Stuart Mill selections from *Utilitarianism* pp. 317-330.

W. 10/10 John Stuart Mill selections from *Utilitarianism* pp. 330-338 and Bernard Williams “A Critique of Utilitarianism” pp. 585-601.

Homework due Monday 10/15, 2:30 PM: Write a 1-2 page answer to one of the following questions: 1. Does Mill argue persuasively that Utilitarianism is not a doctrine worthy only of swine (you’ll need to discuss Mill’s decided preference criterion argument for the higher/lower pleasures distinction)? 2. How are Aristotle’s ethics and Utilitarian ethics similar and how do they differ?

Week 8. Utilitarianism in action, Kantianism.

M. 10/15-- Peter Singer “Famine, Affluence and Morality” pp. 789-796 .

W. 10/17— Selections from Kant’s *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals* pp. 270-289. And James Rachels on Kantian ethics (Oncourse).

Homework due Monday, 10/22, 6:00 AM: Oncourse reading quiz on Kant

Week 9. Kantian deontology

M. 10/22 Kant pp. 289-308.

W. 10/24 Kant discussion continued.

Homework due Monday 10/29, 2:30 PM: Teach the categorical imperative assignment (handout in class).

Week 10. Kantians and Critics of Modern Moral Theories

M.10/29 W.D. Ross “The Right and the Good” pp. 429-438.

W. 10/31 Elizabeth Anscombe “Modern Moral Philosophy” pp. 481-493, and Phillipa Foot: ‘Morality as a System of Hypothetical Imperatives’ pp. 535-540.

Homework for Monday: Find a newspaper or other clipping where *prima facie* duties seem to conflict. Bring the clipping to class along with a 1-2 page summary of the case discussing the ethical issues involved, and be prepared to offer an ethical analysis of your case to the class.

Week 11. Practical Ethics: Abortion

M.11/5 Read selections from *Roe v. Wade* on Oncourse and John T. Noonan “An Almost Absolute Value in History” which can be found at: <http://faculty.mc3.edu/barmstro/noonan.html> .

W. 11/7 Judith Jarvis Thomson “A Defense of Abortion” pp. 733-743.

Homework due Monday 11/12 at 2:30 PM: Type out answers to the following questions: 1. With what inference of Noonan’s does Thomson take issue? 2. Explain, as clearly as you can, Thomson’s argument by analogy in the violinist case: What is the conclusion for which she argues in the case of pregnancy by rape and how exactly does she argue for that conclusion? 3. Are there any situations for Thomson where abortion would not be morally permissible? Explain.

Week 12. Practical Ethics: Abortion continued

M. 11/12 Mary Anne Warren “On the Moral and Legal Status of Abortion” pp. 744-754.

W. 11/14 Marquis pp. 754-764 and English reading on Oncourse. Choose issues for group presentations. Review for test 2.

Homework: Study for test on Monday!

Week 13. Test 2 and Thanksgiving

M. 11/19 Test 2.

Homework due 11/28 at 2:30 PM: Pre-writing assignment for final paper

W. 11/21 Thanksgiving Break, no class.

Homework: Prepare for group presentations and work on papers. Bring a list of your sources for your presentation to class on Monday 11/26.

Week 14. Practical Ethics

M. 11/26 Group work on presentations in class; I will consult with each group to make sure things are on track.

W. 11/28 Group Presentations. **Pre-writing assignment due.**

Homework: No additional homework this week—work on your final paper and presentations!

Week 15. Group Presentations

M. 12/3 Group Presentations.

W. 12/5 Group Presentations.

Homework: No additional homework this week—work on your final paper!

Final Paper due: 12:00 p.m., Fri., December 14