

Course Syllabus
Ethics
PHIL 330, Fall, 2009

Instructor: Dr. Matt Zwolinski
Office Hours: MW: 12:00-2:00; F: 11:15-12:15
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Required Books:

Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*
Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*
David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*
Immanuel Kant, *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*
John Stuart Mill, *Utilitarianism*
Plus selected readings on Electronic Reserve

Core Requirements: This course fulfills the Core Curriculum requirement in Ethics

Content:

How should you live your life? What goals are worth striving for, and what constraints are there on the ways we can pursue those goals? Moral theories attempt to give us answers to these questions. This course will explore some of those answers.

This course is a study of the nature, history, and application of moral thought. The plan of study is organized around 6 moral philosophers – Aristotle (384-322 BC), Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679), David Hume (1711-1776), Adam Smith (1723 – 1790), Immanuel Kant (1724-1804), and John Stuart Mill (1806-1873). These are some of the greatest moral philosophers in the history of Western Philosophy. We will be reading their works as they wrote them and as others have read them for hundreds of years before you. This means the reading will be considerably more difficult than your standard college textbook. But it is also, I believe, considerably more rewarding.

In this course, you will learn both philosophic content and philosophic methodology. In terms of content, we will be primarily concerned with the connection between *reason and morality*, the connection between *morality and self-interest*, and the nature of *happiness*. Ethics is a practical discipline, insofar as it is concerned to tell us what we ought to do. This raises the question of what it is for an action to be rational, and whether it will be in all or most cases rational for us to be moral. What if doing the morally right thing conflicts with my self interest? Do we have to do it anyway ('have to' in what sense)? And finally, what, if anything, does morality have to do with happiness? Is happiness the *goal* of morality? Whose happiness? And just what *is* happiness, anyway?

Apart from the content, you will also learn various skills in philosophic methodology in this course.

- First, you will learn how to read difficult philosophic texts. The primary sources we will cover in this course can be trying. To help you with this, we will spend most of our class periods with the text close at hand, going over it line-by-line in many cases.

- Second, you will learn the skills of conceptual analysis and philosophic argumentation. Much time will be spent in this course getting clear about subtle distinctions between closely related concepts (justice, fairness, desert, etc.), and you will be expected both to be able to analyze the arguments of other philosophers, and to forge new arguments of your own. These are skills that will serve you well in life, from reading the op-ed page of your newspaper to convincing others to see your point of view.
- Finally, you will learn how to write. Specifically, you will learn how to write analytic, argumentative essays which accurately represent philosophic positions and clearly articulate the reasons behind those positions. Again, this is a skill that will serve you well not only in this course, but in almost any endeavor you take on in life (from writing a cover letter to a resume, to getting yourself out of a parking ticket!).

As with any course on ethics, however, the ultimate goal of this course is to help you lead more thoughtful, reflective and worthwhile lives. The questions we study are all ones I find theoretically interesting, but I think the even greater value lies in their practical interest. These are real-world issues, and some of the most important and perennial ones around. Take it personally!

Course Requirements:

Philosophical readings are dense and difficult. It will probably take longer than you expect to read them once, and it will probably be necessary to re-read most pieces at least once in order to come to an adequate understanding of the material. You should expect to spend at least **six hours per week** outside of class time reading and re-reading the material. Use the study questions on WebCT for help.

The requirements set out in this syllabus are subject to revision at the instructor's discretion.

- **Quizzes** – I will give 5-10 unannounced, multiple-choice quizzes over the course of the semester. The purpose of these quizzes is to test your completion and comprehension of the day's reading assignment or class discussion, and to encourage attendance at class. They will cover either the reading material assigned for that day or the material and discussion from the previous day's class. You will not be excused from quizzes missed due to absences *unless* you either a) notify me *at least 24 hours in advance and in writing* (email is fine) that you will be absent, or b) provide me with a *documented medical excuse* after your absence. These are the *only* acceptable excuses for missing a quiz, and you may only be excused from two quizzes over the course of the semester. These quizzes are difficult, so it is vital that you read the material carefully and in advance of class.
- **Study Questions** – On the dates indicated on the syllabus, I will collect your answers to the study questions for the readings assigned up to and including that date. For example, on September 25th, I will collect your answers to the study questions for all readings up to and including book 3 of Aristotle. Your answers to these questions will be graded on a check/check-plus/check-minus basis, depending on their thoroughness and accuracy. A passing set of study questions will *replace your lowest quiz score* with a "3," a "4," or a "5," respectively. Therefore, if you turn in check-plus responses to all three sets of study questions, your three lowest quiz scores will all be converted to 5s.
- **Exams:** You will have two in-class exams – a mid-term and a final. Each exam will consist of multiple-choice questions (drawn from your earlier quizzes), short-answer questions, and a longer essay. The final exam will be cumulative, but will emphasize material covered in the second half of the course.

- **Participation** – Philosophy is best learned through active conversation with others. It is therefore important that you be a regular participant in classroom discussions. Ideally, you will be sufficiently engaged with the material to contribute to these discussions spontaneously and voluntarily. As an additional stimulus, however, I will call randomly on students to answer questions in class. If you cannot answer a question satisfactorily (due to lack of preparation or absence), your class participation grade will be affected. Well thought-out contributions to the website will also count toward your participation grade.

Your Grade

Each activity in this class is worth a certain number of points. Your grade will be determined based on a straight (un-curved) analysis of percentage of points earned vs. total points.

Quizzes 5-10 @ 5 points each	25-50
Midterm Exam	40
Final Exam	60
Participation	10
Total Points:	135-160

A+	97 - 100%
A	93 - 96.9
A-	90 - 92.9
B+	87 - 89.9
B	83 - 86.9
B-	80 - 82.9
C+	77 - 79.9
C	73 - 76.9
C-	70 - 72.9
D+	67 - 67.9
D	63 - 66.9
D-	60 - 62.9
F	59.9 or below

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this course...

- Students should be able to describe the main tenets of the major ethical theories (e.g. Utilitarianism, Kantianism) in essay form.
- Students should be able to identify specific moral problems and apply these theories to them.

Respect

This is a course in ethics, and one of the fundamental ethical values we will study is *respect*. I will treat you with respect in this course, and expect you to do the same for me and your fellow students. What this means in practice is (at a minimum):

For me:

- I will arrive on time and prepared for each class meeting scheduled on the syllabus.
- I will take student questions seriously and attempt to address them as helpfully as I can within the constraints of class time.
- I will keep my scheduled office hours, or provide advance notice if this is not possible.
- I will return written assignments within a reasonable time and provide you with ample constructive criticism and an adequate explanation of your grade.
- I will treat you as an adult. Part of what this means is taking your philosophical opinions seriously. But taking your views seriously does not mean treating you with kid gloves. It means that I will assume that you have put some thought into your position and that I will hold you accountable for it, and challenge you when appropriate. I expect the same from you.
- I will respect your time and not give you “busy work.”

For you:

- You will respect the opinions of your classmates, and respond to them with seriousness, courtesy, and charity.
- You will show up to class on time.
- You will read the material assigned for class prior to the meeting at which we are scheduled to discuss it.
- You will take responsibility for turning showing up to scheduled exams.
- You will respect my time and the time of your fellow students by helping to make our time together as productive and conducive to learning as possible.

Integrity

Doing your own work is part of what it means to have respect for me, for your fellow students, and for yourself.

As above, my treating you with respect involves treating you like an adult. As an adult, you are responsible for knowing the University’s regulations concerning Academic Integrity. **“I didn’t know it was cheating” is not an excuse.** Any violation of the Code of Academic Integrity is grounds for failure from the class in addition to any further penalties deemed appropriate by the Academic Integrity Committee.

KEY DATES AT A GLANCE

Sept 7	-	No class: Labor Day
Oct 2	-	No class: this course only
Sept 25	-	Study Questions #1 Due
Oct 16	-	Midterm Exam
Oct 23	-	No class: Fall Holiday
Nov 6	-	Study Questions #2 Due
Nov 25-27	-	No classes: Thanksgiving
Dec 14	-	Study Questions #3 Due
Dec 16	-	Final Exam, Section 2 (8:00 AM – 10:00 AM)
Dec 21	-	Final Exam, Section 4 (11:00 AM – 1:00 PM)

Schedule of Readings for PHIL 330: Ethics Fall, 2009 Professor Matt Zwolinski

Week 1 (Sept 2 – 4)	<u>Introduction to Moral Philosophy</u>
Required Reading:	- Rand: "Philosophy: Who Needs It?" - Plato: "The Ring of Gyges" (Reserve)
Week 2 (Sept 7 - 11)	<u>Plato Continued; Hobbes on Morality and Self-Interest</u> <i>No class Monday, September 7th (Labor Day)</i>
Required Reading:	- Hobbes, <i>Leviathan</i> , Chapter XI, paragraphs 1-4; Chapter XIII
Recommended Reading:	- Stanford Encyclopedia Entry on "Hobbes's Moral and Political Philosophy": http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/hobbes-moral/
Week 3 (Sept 14 - 18)	<u>Hobbes continued; Game Theory</u>
Required Reading:	- Hobbes, <i>Leviathan</i> , Chapter XIV, paragraphs 1-5, 18-20; Chapter XV, paragraphs 1-5 - Robert Axelrod, <i>The Evolution of Cooperation</i> , Chapters 1, 2, and 4 (Reserve)
Recommended Reading:	- Stanford Encyclopedia entry on "Game Theory": http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/game-theory/ - Stanford Encyclopedia entry on "Game Theory and Ethics": http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/game-ethics/
Week 4 (Sept 21 - 25)	<u>Aristotle on Happiness as the Final End</u> <i>Study Questions #1 Due Sept 25</i>
Required Reading:	- Aristotle, <i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> , Book 1 (1-5, 7-11, 13)
Recommended Reading:	- Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy on "Aristotle's Ethics": http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/aristotle-ethics/ - Julia Annas, "Making Sense of My Life as a Whole," in her <i>Morality and Happiness</i> - David Bostock, <i>Aristotle's Ethics</i> , chapter 1 - Thomas Nagel, "Aristotle on <i>Eudaimonia</i> ," <i>Phronesis</i> 1972; 17; 252-59

- Week 5 (Sept 28 – Oct 2)** Aristotle on Moral Virtue, Courage and Temperance
No class Friday, October 2nd (Instructor Away)
- Required Reading:** - Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Books 2 and 3
- Recommended Reading:** - Rosalind Hursthouse, “Moral Habituation,” *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* 6 (1988), pp. 201-19
 - Julia Annas, “The Virtues,” in her *Morality and Happiness*
 - Myles Burnyeat, “Aristotle on Learning to be Good,” in *Essays on Aristotle’s Ethics*, Rorty, Amelie Oksenberg, ed.
- Week 6 (Oct 5 - 9)** Aristotle on Friendship and Happiness
- Required Reading:** - Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book 8 (1-8, 13-14), Book 9 (3-4, 8-9), and Book 10 (6-8)
- Recommended Reading:** - David Bostock, *Aristotle’s Ethics*, chapters 8-9
 - Sarah Broadie, *Ethics with Aristotle*, chapter 7
 - John Cooper, “Aristotle on the Forms of Friendship,” *Review of Metaphysics*, JE 77; 30: 619-648
- Week 7 (Oct 12 - 16)** Hume on Reason and Morality
- Required Reading:** - Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature* Book 2, Part 3, Section 3, and Book 3, Part 1, Section 1
- Recommended Reading:** - Stanford Encyclopedia Entry on the Humean Theory of Motivation, <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/moral-motivation/#MorJudMot>
 - Stanford Encyclopedia Entry on “Hume’s Moral Philosophy,” <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/hume-moral/>
- Week 8 (Oct 19 - 23)** Hume on Sympathy + Midterm Review/Exam
Midterm Exam: Wednesday October 21st
No class Friday, October 23rd (Fall Holiday)
- Required Reading:** - Hume, *Treatise*, Book 3, Part 1, Section 2; “Why Utility Pleases” (Reserve), “Concerning Moral Sentiment” (Reserve)
- Week 9 (Oct 26 - 30)** Introduction to Kant
- Required Reading:** - Immanuel Kant, *Groundwork*, Preface and Section 1
- Recommended Reading:** - Christine Korsgaard, “Introduction to Kant’s *Groundwork*”
 - Stanford Encyclopedia Entry on “Kant’s Moral Philosophy”: <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/kant-moral/>
- Week 10 (Nov 2 - 6)** Kant on the Categorical Imperative
Study Questions #2 Due Nov 6
- Required Reading:** - Immanuel Kant, *Groundwork*, Section 2
- Recommended Reading:** - Joshua Glasgow, “Kant’s Principle of Universal Law” (Reserve)
 - Christine Korsgaard, *Creating the Kingdom of Ends*, chapters 1-4
 - Thomas Hill, “Humanity as an End in Itself,” *Ethics* Oct 1980, vol. 91, pp. 84-99

- Week 11(Nov 9 - 13)** Introduction to Utilitarianism and Mill's Theory of the Good
Required Reading: - John Stuart Mill, *Utilitarianism*, Chapters 1 and 2
Recommended Reading: - Roger Crisp, *Mill on Utilitarianism*, chapter 2
 - Stanford Encyclopedia Entry on "Mill's Moral and Political Philosophy," by David Brink.
<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/mill-moral-political/>.
 - Stanford Encyclopedia Entry on "Consequentialism"
<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/consequentialism/>
 - Mill's Essay on "Bentham" in Mary Warnock, ed.,
Utilitarianism and On Liberty
- Week 12 (Nov 16 - 20)** Mill's Theory of the Right
Required Reading: - John Stuart Mill, *Utilitarianism*, chapter 2
Recommended Reading: - JJC Smart and Bernard Williams, *Utilitarianism: For and Against* (Cambridge, 1973)
 - Roger Crisp, *Mill on Utilitarianism*, chapter 5
- Week 13(Nov 23 - 27)** Mill's Theory of the Right, continued
No classes Wednesday, November 25 – Friday, November 27 (Thanksgiving)
Required Reading: - John Stuart Mill, *Utilitarianism*, Chapter 2
- Week 14 (Nov 30 – Dec 4)** Adam Smith's Theory of Moral Sentiments
Required Reading: - Adam Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* Part I, Section I; Part I Section II, Chapters I-III (Reserve)
Recommended Reading: - Stanford Encyclopedia Entry on "18th Century Scottish Philosophy"
<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/scottish-18th/#SmiMorSen>
 - Jim Otteson, *Adam Smith's Marketplace of Life* (Cambridge, 2002)
 - Charles Griswold, *Adam Smith and the Virtues of Enlightenment* (Cambridge, 1999)
- Week 15 (Dec 7 -- 11)** Adam Smith's Theory of Moral Sentiments
Required Reading: - Adam Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* Part II, Section I and II (Reserve)
- Week 16 (Dec 14)** Final Exam Review
Study Questions #3 Due Dec 14