

## **Ethical Theory, PHI 246 Fall Semester, 2006**

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Class hour: 2:30 MWF  
Class Room: OM 06  
Office hours: MWF, 3:30 –4:20

### **Course Description**

This is a middle level course in ethical theory. Although it has no prerequisites, it is designed primarily for students who have already had an introduction to major philosophical theories and history. Ancient and Modern philosophy are especially helpful. This course satisfies the ethics requirement for the philosophy major.

In addition, the course is also offered to satisfy requirements in other majors, such as nursing and criminal justice. I will make every effort to explain the texts and ideas clearly, and to show how important ideas in ethical theory connect to issues in those majors.

The course has two complementary goals. The first is to introduce you to the most important ethical theories in a systematic way. We will consider Aristotelian virtue ethics, Hobbesian social contract theory, Hume's theory of the moral sentiments, utilitarianism, Kantian deontology, Nietzsche's genealogy of morality, and the feminist ethic of care. Second, although the primary focus of the course is on ethical theory, we will constantly be testing these theories against real world examples. Taken cumulatively, I hope the course will have practical value in the ways we think about important ethical issues.

### **Texts**

- Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Terence Irwin, trans.
- Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, Edwin Curley, ed.
- David Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning The Principles Of Morals*, J. B. Schneewind, ed.
- Immanuel Kant, *Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals*, James Ellington, trans.
- Jeremy Bentham and John Stuart Mill, *The Classical Utilitarians*, John Troyer, ed.
- Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morality*, Clark and Swensen, trans.

### **Requirements**

Three papers: Everyone will write a paper on Aristotle. After that, you may choose Hobbes, Hume, or Kant for your second paper. For the third paper you may choose Bentham/Mill, or Nietzsche. (That is, you must hand in your second paper by the time we finish Kant, and the third paper by the time we finish Nietzsche.) Papers will be due one week to the day from the time we finish an author. They will be approximately five pages in length. No late papers will be accepted. When the time to write the first paper arrives you will receive a handout describing how to write a philosophy paper, and we will discuss possible topics in detail.

Two tests. There will be two essay tests in this class. The midterm will be one hour long; the final will be two hours long and will cover the entire semester.

Class contribution and informal writing: As Socrates understood, philosophy is inherently conversational. It is a public art in the sense that the only way to determine the worth of an idea is to test it against others' opinions. Philosophy goes on in class, therefore, not just in your dorm room as you read class assignments. Class attendance and participation are expected of everyone. Participation in class includes everything from informed conversation to the look on your face as others speak.

I will often ask you to write short summaries and responses to class material to be handed in before class begins. The informal writing assignments are not graded, since they are meant to be "free thinking" responses that help prepare for class and formal papers. However, you must hand them in. Failure to do so will count against your contribution to class, and will affect your final grade.

Attendance, contribution to class, and informal writing will be taken into account in determining your final grade. These three factors may influence your final grade by as much as 2/3 of a full grade.

Philosophy Majors: In addition to these requirements, all philosophy majors will choose to specialize in one of the authors we read and take responsibility of one day of class. The responsibilities include: designing the focus of the day's class, preparing handouts and overheads to facilitate understanding, and leadership of class discussion. We will choose authors early in the semester. You should make arrangements to talk with me early and often as the semester progresses.

Grading. The two tests and three papers will each count as one fifth of your final grade. I reserve the right to adjust your final grade by as much as two thirds of a grade depending on class contribution and informal writing. If you are a philosophy major, your class presentation will count as a sixth factor, so your final grade will be equally divided among the six factors with the additional components of informal writing and class contribution.

## TENTATIVE SCHEDULE

### Aristotle:

- 9/6 Introduction to the course  
9/8 *Nicomachean Ethics*, editor's Introduction, Books I and II  
9/11 – 9/13 Books III, IV, and V  
9/15 Book VI  
9/18 Book VII  
9/20 Book VII  
9/22 Discussion on how to write a philosophy paper.  
9/29 Paper on Aristotle is due

### Hobbes:

- 9/25 *Leviathan*, Chronology of the Life of Hobbes, Letter Dedicatory, The Introduction, Part I, Chapters i-vi.  
9/27 Chapters xiii, xiv, xv, and xvi  
9/29 Chapters xvii – xxii  
10/2 Chapters xxiii, xxvi, xxx and xxxi  
10/9 Paper on Hobbes is due  
  
10/4 Class cancelled due to Nobel Conference

### Hume:

- 10/6 Editor's Introduction  
10/9 *Enquiry*, Sections 1 – 3  
10/ 11 Sections IV- VI  
10/13 Sections VII – IX  
10/16 Appendix, "Concerning Moral Sentiment"  
10/27 Paper on Hume is due  
  
10/18 Review for the midterm examination  
10/20 Midterm examination

### Kant:

- 10/25 Editor's Introduction, *Grounding* Preface and First Section  
10/27 Second Section  
10/30 Third Section  
11/1 Supplement: "On the Supposed Right to Lie..."  
11/8 Paper on Kant due

### Bentham/Mill:

11/3 Editor's Introduction  
11/6 Bentham: *Principles of Morals and Legislation*, Chapter IV, "The Greatest Good for the Greatest Number" (pp. 92-93), "Push-Pin vs. Poetry" (p. 94)  
11/8 Mill: *Utilitarianism*, Chapters I and II  
11/10 Chapters III and IV  
11/13 Chapter V, *On Liberty*, Chapter I  
11/20 Paper on Bentham/Mill due

Nietzsche:

11/22 Editor's Introduction  
11/24 No class due to Thanksgiving  
11/27 First Treatise  
11/29 Second Treatise  
12/ 1 Third Treatise  
12/8 Paper on Nietzsche due (final paper opportunity)

12/3 – 12/6 Selections from Alasdair MacIntyre's, *After Virtue* (on library electronic reserve)

12/8 – 12 –10 Selections from Carol Gilligan's *In a Different Voice Virtue* (on library electronic reserve)

12/13 Class wrap up and review for final examination

**Final examination: Friday, December 15, 10:30 – 12:20. (Note this time. No adjustments will be made for early flights home, near death experiences, encounters with St. Peter's finest etc.)**