

Syllabus
Philosophy 2200H
Honors Introduction to Ethics
Fall 2009
MWF 2:30-3:20 p.m.
Peabody 219

Instructor:

Dr. Ashley Sherman
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Office Hours: MWF 11:15 a.m.-12:15 p.m.
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Text:

Louis P. Pojman, *Ethical Theory: Classic and Contemporary Readings*, Fifth Edition, Wadsworth Publishing, 2002.

Purpose:

One purpose of this course is to introduce you to some of the most important ethical theories in the history of western philosophical thought. We shall begin the course by discussing Ethical Relativism while focusing on the question of whether or not there are any universal moral principles. Next we will turn to a discussion of Ethical Egoism while focusing on the issue of whether or not one has any moral obligations beyond what is in one's own best self-interest. Our third topic is Utilitarianism which holds that the rightness or wrongness of an action depends upon whether it maximizes utility. We shall look at different versions of Utilitarianism as well as critiques of these views. We will then discuss Kant's ethical theory, revisions of his theory, and critiques. Finally we shall assess virtue-based ethical systems where the focus is not on doing good acts but upon being a virtuous person.

Another purpose of this course is to help you develop philosophical skills. Philosophy involves the examination and critique of arguments as well as the construction and development of one's own arguments. Thus, in this course, we shall not simply learn about what philosophers have written in the past; we will also be engaged in philosophical activities ourselves. This means that you will be expected to discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the various arguments we read as well as develop your own arguments in response to the readings.

Attendance:

Attendance is required. Any student whose total number of absences exceeds four, after the conclusion of drop/add, may be administratively withdrawn from the class without notice. Any student who is administratively withdrawn from the class- at *any* time during the semester- will receive a WF for the course. This policy holds for each and every student taking this class.

Punctuality:

You must arrive to class on time. Excessive tardiness will not be tolerated and may result in an administrative withdrawal (WF) for non-attendance.

Classroom Environment:

Please remember that this is a classroom environment, and you are to behave accordingly. This means that you must refrain from private conversation and any other disruptive behavior. Turn your cellphone off before coming to class. If you fail to respect the academic environment, you will be asked to leave the classroom and will be marked absent for that day.

Reading Assignments:

The schedule of reading assignments and exams is given below. A reading should always be completed prior to the class meeting for which it is assigned. Participation is expected, so come to class prepared to ask questions and discuss the material.

Grading:

Dr. Sherman grades according to the standard interpretation of the grading scale: excellent work will merit an A; good work will earn a B; average work will receive a C; below average work will earn a D; and unacceptable work will merit an F.

Your final grade will be averaged according to the following 12-point scale:

A+	12
A	11
A-	10
B+	9
B	8
B-	7
C+	6
C	5
C-	4
D+	3
D	2
D-	1
F	0

Participation:

You will receive a participation grade which will account for 10% of your final grade. Your participation grade will be determined by the frequency and quality of your contribution to class discussion.

Quizzes:

Quizzes may be given periodically during the course of the semester. Quizzes will be factored into your participation grade.

Exams:

There are four scheduled exams. Each of these will account for 20% of your final grade.

Writing Assignments:

You will be expected to write and turn in a short paper during the final weeks of the course. Your grade on this assignment will account for 10% of your final grade. Topics will be announced prior to the assignment.

Optional Final:

You will be given the opportunity to take an optional final. This exam will replace the lowest exam grade of the semester. The optional final will be cumulative.

Make-up Exams:

Make-up exams are given only under the most pressing reasons such as serious illness (which requires a hospital visit) or a death in your immediate family. You must notify the instructor of your intended absence on an exam day no later than the day of the exam. Failure to do so will result in a zero for the missed exam. Furthermore, you will be expected to show appropriate notification validating your excuse. An unexcused absence on an exam day will result in a zero on the missed exam. There will be no exceptions to this policy. No make-up exam will be available for the optional final.

This syllabus provides a general plan for the course; deviations may be necessary.

Schedule:

- 8/17 Introduction
- 8/19 What is Ethics?; Ethical Relativism vs Ethical Objectivism
- 8/21 Benedict "A Defense of Ethical Relativism"

- 8/24 Pojman "A Critique of Ethical Relativism"
- 8/26 Ethical Egoism; Hobbes "The Leviathan" (on WebCT)
- 8/28 No new reading

- 8/31 Feinberg "Psychological Egoism" (on WebCT)
- 9/2 Value
- 9/4 Bentham "Classical Hedonism"

- 9/7 Holiday
- 9/9 Nozick "The Experience Machine"
- 9/11 Review

- 9/14 **First Exam**
- 9/16 Utilitarianism; Mill "Utilitarianism"
- 9/18 No new reading

- 9/21 Smart "Extreme and Restricted Utilitarianism"
- 9/23 Williams "Against Utilitarianism"
- 9/25 Hospers "Rule-Utilitarianism"

- 9/28 No new reading
- 9/30 Foot "Utilitarianism and the Virtues"
- 10/2 Singer "Famine, Affluence, and Morality"

- 10/5 Review
- 10/7 **Second Exam**
- 10/9 Kantian and Deontological Systems; Kant "The Foundation for the Metaphysics of Morals"

- 10/12 No new reading
- 10/14 Ross "What Makes Right Acts Right?"
- 10/16 No new reading

- 10/19 O'Neill "Kantian Formula of the End in Itself and World Hunger"
- 10/21 Nagel "Moral Luck"
- 10/23 Review

- 10/26 **Third Exam**
- 10/28 Virtue-Based Ethical Systems
- 10/30 Fall Break

- 11/2 Aristotle "The Ethics of Virtue"
- 11/4 No new reading
- 11/6 Mayo "Virtue and the Moral Life"

11/9 Frankena “A Critique of Virtue-Based Ethics”
11/11 Wolf “Moral Saints”
11/13 Pojman “In Defense of Moral Saints”

11/16 Review
11/18 **Fourth Exam**
11/20 Discussion of Writing Assignments

11/23 Thanksgiving Break
11/25 Thanksgiving Break
11/27 Thanksgiving Break

11/30 Writing Assignments
12/2 Writing Assignments
12/4 Writing Assignments

12/7 Writing Assignments
12/8 Writing Assignments

Optional Final Exam: Time, date, and location to be announced.

All academic work must meet the standards contained in “A Culture of Honesty.” All students are responsible to inform themselves about those standards before performing any academic work.

Any suspected cases of academic dishonesty will be reported. If a student is suspected of academic dishonesty, the suggested penalty shall be an **F** as the **final grade** for the course.