

Philosophy 2200: Introduction to Ethics

“The major philosophical positions concerning right and wrong, ethical values, and moral responsibility. The relevance of moral philosophy to current issues of personal and social ethics.”¹

M, W, F, 12:20-1:10, (or) 1:25-2:15, Peabody 105

Instructor: Matt Schneider

Office Hours: Mon and Weds 2:20-3:20 and by appointment

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Text: Sterba, James. *Ethics: The Big Questions*. Oxford:

Blackwell Publishing, 1998. Available at various campus and off campus bookstores.

Course Description and Goals:

Ethics and morality infiltrate nearly every aspect of life from the mundane to the profound. Sometimes this is obvious, whether it be in your own personal decision-making or in national and global moral/political debates. The philosophical study of ethics provides analysis of a broad range of moral and ethical problems. Some of these problems are very abstract. For example, *meta*-ethicists ask questions about how moral language operates, what it means to *value* something and whether there is a difference between *moral* value and ordinary value. *Normative ethical theorists* try to explain how morality operates, and in so doing, provide a rational schema for moral deliberation. Political philosophers ask ethical questions regarding how persons ought to be governed (or even *if* they ought to be ‘governed’ at all!) while applied ethics focuses on specific moral problems in a wide variety of public and private spheres. Some well-discussed applied ethical issues include abortion and stem cell research, while others focus on the moral rights of animals, plants and ecosystems and a person’s right (or lack thereof) to assist in the termination of another’s life. We will touch on many of these spheres of moral/ethical philosophy in this course.

This course is designed for the student with little or no formal training in philosophy, and covers a broad range of topics in ethical theory, political philosophy and applied ethics. Students should gain a mastery of historical and contemporary moral issues and the debates therein. Critical reading, discussion and writing skills will be emphasized as part of this course.

What I expect from you:

You will most likely find this course challenging. The readings are not written for the purpose of easy digestibility for new students. Rather, they are written by professional philosophers, actively engaged in their field. As a result, you will have to commit a good deal of time to each of the readings. I strongly recommend reading all of them at least twice. You must take notes, mark up your book, and refer to secondary resources when applicable (i.e. dictionaries, online reference pages, etc). Students unwilling or unable to commit a significant amount

of time to course readings and assignments are strongly encouraged to consider a different, less demanding course.

Attendance:

This is NOT a correspondence course. We cannot have a class without students, so attendance is mandatory. **You will be allowed four (4) absences over the course of the semester.** No questions asked. These absences are allotted to deal with unavoidable situations, which may inevitably come up; don’t use them to just ‘take a day-off.’ *Students with more than four absences may be withdrawn from the course without notice at the instructor’s discretion.*

Assignments and Grading:

Quizzes: Expect regular (usually at least one a week) quizzes over the assigned reading material and/or previous lectures at the beginning of the class period. You may use your class notes and reading notes for these quizzes. In-class assignments may occasionally take the place of a quiz. 20% of course grade. *Students cannot ‘make-up’ in-class reading quizzes. I will drop your two lowest quiz grades at the end of the semester.*

Reading Questions: In advance of each Friday’s class, you should prepare a type-written answer to one of several questions posted on the WebCT page for the course. These questions will be over recent and current readings, and will serve as the foundation for classroom discussions. Questions will be posted on the WebCT calendar under the date they are due. Successful completion of these questions will count for part of your quiz grade. *You must be present in-class to receive credit for the reading questions. No electronic submissions.*

Essay Exams: You will have two in-class exams and one final exam over the course of the semester. No exams are ‘cumulative’ though the final exam will be longer than the two mid-term exams. Exam 1: 20%, Exam 2: 25%, Final Exam: 35%. *Make-up exams will only be administered for unavoidable emergencies. Students faced with such a situation must contact the instructor as soon as possible. ‘Sleeping in,’ personal commitments, vacations, etc, do not count, and students who miss an exam for such reasons will receive no credit.*

Academic Honesty – *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.*² More information is available online at: http://www.uga.edu/ovpi/honesty/culture_honesty.htm

Disclaimer: *The course syllabus is a general plan for the course; deviations announced to the class by the instructor may be necessary.*³

¹ <http://www.bulletin.uga.edu/bulletin/courses/descript/phil.html>

² “Course Syllabus Policy,”

<http://www.curriculumsystems.uga.edu/Policies/CourseSyllabusPolicy.pdf>

³ *Ibid.*

Disclaimer: The instructor reserves the right to change any and all information contained in this syllabus at his discretion. I will notify students of any changes to the syllabus, and the changes will be documented on the WebCT page for this course.

Readings and Course Calendar:

Monday, August 17, 2008

Introduction to course.

Metaethics: What are we even talking about?

Wednesday, August 19

Plato, "Morality as Good in Itself"

Thursday, August 20: last day to drop a course

Friday, August 21 – *Last day to add a course*

Hume, "On Reason and the Emotions"

Monday, August 24 and Wednesday, August 26

Ayer, "The Emotive Theory of Morality"

Friday, August 28 and Monday, August 31

Searle, "How to Derive an 'Ought' from an 'Is'"

Wednesday, Sept. 2

Flew, "On Not Deriving 'Ought' from 'Is'"

Friday, Sept. 4

Baier, "The Rational and the Moral Order"

Wednesday, Sept. 9

Gert, "Moral Theory and Rationality"

Friday, Sept. 11

Foot, "Moral Beliefs"

Monday, Sept. 14

MacIntyre, "Moral Disagreement Today and the Claims of Emotivism"

Wednesday, Sept. 16 – **Review for First Essay Exam**

Friday, Sept. 18 – **First Essay Exam**

Ethical Praxis: Environmental Ethics

Monday, Sept. 21

De Waal, "Chimpanzee Justice"

Singer, "All Animals are Equal"

Wednesday, Sept. 23

Sterba, "Environmental Justice"

Friday, Sept. 25

Warren, "The Power and Promise of Ecological Feminism"

Normative Ethics: Deontological Theory

Monday, Sept. 28 and Wednesday, Sept. 30

Kant, "Duty and Categorical Rules"

Friday, Oct. 2

Feldman, "Kantian Ethics"

Monday, Oct. 5 and Wednesday, Oct. 7

Korsgaard, "Kant on Dealing with Evil"

Friday, Oct. 9

Foot, "Morality as a System of Hypothetical Imperatives"

Political Philosophy: What does Justice Require?

Monday, Oct. 12 and Wednesday, Oct. 14

Rawls, "Welfare Liberalism"

Friday, Oct. 16 and Monday, Oct. 19

Hospers, "Libertarianism"

Wednesday, Oct. 21

Sterba, "From Liberty to Welfare"

Friday, Oct. 23 – **Review for Second Essay Exam**

Monday, Oct. 26 – **Second Essay Exam**

Normative Ethics: Consequentialism

Wednesday, Oct. 28 and Monday, Nov. 2

Mill, "Utilitarianism"

Wednesday, Nov. 4

Williams, "Against Utilitarianism"

Friday, Nov. 6

Nielsen, "Traditional Morality and Utilitarianism"

Monday, Nov. 9

Railton, "Alienation, Consequentialism, and the Demands of Morality"

Wednesday, Nov. 11

Stocker, "The Schizophrenia of Modern Ethical Theories"

Normative Ethics – Virtue Theory

Friday, Nov. 13 and Monday, Nov. 16

Aristotle, "The Virtuous Life"

Wednesday, Nov. 18

Nussbaum, "Non-Relative Virtues: An Aristotelian Approach"

Friday, Nov. 20

MacIntyre, "The Nature of Virtues"

Monday, Nov. 30

Frankena, "A Critique of Virtue-Based Ethical Systems"

Wednesday Dec. 2

Schaller, "Are Virtues No More than dispositions to Obey Moral Rules?"

Friday, Dec. 4

Annas, "Ancient Ethics and Modern Morality"

Monday, Dec. 7

Course Recap – Reading TBA

Tuesday, Dec. 8 (Friday schedule)

Review for Final Exam

Monday, Dec. 14: **Final exam for 12:20 class, 12-3pm**

Wednesday, Dec. 16: **Final exam for 1:25 class, 12-3pm**