

PHI 102 Sec. 02
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Ethics

MWF 10:00-10:50, MAK B-1-114
Office Hours: MW: 11-12
F: 11-12, 2-3, and by appointment
(616) 331-3158

Course Texts:

Plato, *Gorgias* (Hackett)
Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* (Hackett)
Confucius, *Analects* (Hackett)
Kant *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals* (Hackett)

Course Description:

No questions are more important than these: How should we live our lives? and What kind of person should we be? These are the central questions of ethics. We will look at a variety of ways philosophers have sought a general answer to these questions. What makes their answers philosophical rather than personal is their appeal to reasons as evidence for their conclusions. In this class we are interested both in their conclusions and their reasoning. We will read two ancient Greek philosophers—Plato and Aristotle—one ancient Chinese philosopher—Confucius—and one modern European philosopher—Immanuel Kant. The material covered the final week will be chosen by a class vote held on March 16th.

Course Method:

Philosophy is best done in conversation. The greater variety of ideas we can draw on the better we will be able as a class to come to some reliable insights on philosophical questions. Therefore although there will be some lectures to set the stage for the discussion, the majority of the class time should be spent in discussion. This means that students must come to class ready to discuss—having read carefully the material, at least once, and being prepared to raise and address issues found in the text. Since discussions cannot be made up, attendance and participation are important parts of the grade. The daily attendance/participation grade is: F-not in class; D-in class unprepared; C-in class, prepared, not participating in discussion; B-in class, prepared, participating in discussion; A-in class, prepared, significantly contributing to the discussion. It is assumed all absences are excused absences; over six absences will result in the final grade divided in half (so the highest final grade would be a C). Computers are not allowed in the classroom as they tend to take attention away from the focus of the discussion.

Course Assignments:

In addition to the reading and participation requirements, there will be four tests and a comprehensive final exam. The tests will be in-class essay tests, with one longer essay (one page) and three quotation comprehension questions. Three possible questions for the longer essay will be given out the class period before the test and students will be allowed not only to work on the questions before class, but to bring a typed copy of a written answer to class to be handed in at the time of the test. Students are free to work together in preparing for the test, though all writing handed in must be the student's own work and all references used must be cited. Failure to cite references is plagiarism—a sign that the student has lost his or her sense for the point of going to college. A plagiarizing student is expected to drop the class and the Dean of Student's Office will be notified.

Ethics Case Debates:

Eight times during the term we will debate an ethics case. These cases will be handed out beforehand and a range of positions that might be taken established. Students need to write a one-page position paper providing reasons for one of the positions and reasons against one of the rival positions. The positions papers will be handed in and graded A, B, C, F based solely on the strength of the arguments.

Grade Breakdown:

Attendance and Participation:	25%
Tests/Final Exam:	50% (10% each)
Ethics Case Position Papers:	25%

If you have disabilities that require special accommodation you should speak to Prof. Vessey as soon as possible at the start of the term.

Foundation: Philosophy and Literature

This course fulfills a foundation general education requirement for the philosophy and literature. Here is what the catalogue says about such classes:

Literary and philosophical works represent an ongoing conversation about the fundamental ideas and values that shape cultures and civilization. To participate fully in this conversation requires knowledge both of those works that are recognized as defining the history of the conversation, and of works that offer original or critical additions to it in the present. Through the study of great works of Philosophy and Literature, students will come to understand more clearly their own response to the world and to the ideas that give it form and comprehensibility.

Courses in this category will introduce students to the interpretation of a significant body of literary or philosophical work, and assist them in the careful reading, discussion, and analysis of primary texts.

Content Goals

All courses in the Philosophy and Literature category include the following content:

1. The introduction of philosophy or literature as a "way of knowing"; an examination of principles and questions that define the field and its contributions to human knowledge and civilization;
2. A consideration of the relationship between the works discussed, the cultures in which they were created, and the human concerns they illuminate;
3. The critical analysis and interpretation of one or more primary texts as a major portion of course content.

Skills Goals

All courses in a Foundation use teaching methods that help students become more proficient in the following skills:

1. To engage in articulate expression through effective speaking or writing;
2. To think critically and creatively;
3. To locate, evaluate, and use information effectively.

1. Mon. Jan. 9 Introductions
2. Wed. Jan. 11 Background to Socrates and Plato
Reading: Plato's *Apology*, 17a-26b (on Blackboard)
3. Fri. Jan. 13 The Unexamined Life
Reading: Plato's *Apology*, 26b-42a (on Blackboard)
4. Mon. Jan. 16 Divine Command Theory
Reading: Plato's *Euthyphro* (on Blackboard)
5. Wed. Jan. 18 Teaching Moral Skills
Reading: Plato's *Gorgias* 447a-461b
6. Fri. Jan. 20 Ethics Case #1
7. Mon. Jan. 23 The Unhappiness of Immorality
Reading: Plato's *Gorgias* 461b-481b
8. Wed. Jan. 15 Philosophically Honest Self-examination
Reading: Plato's *Gorgias* 481b-527e
9. Fri. Jan. 27 Ethics Case #2
10. Mon. Jan. 30 Review Test #1
11. Wed. Feb. 1 Test #1
12. Fri. Feb. 3 Introduction to Aristotle
Reading: *Nicomachean Ethics*,
13. Mon. Feb. 6 The Life of *Eudaimonia*
Reading: *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1094a1-1097b21
14. Wed. Feb. 8 Do Humans have a natural purpose?
Reading: *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1097b22-1102a4
15. Fri. Feb. 10 Ethics Case #3

16. Mon. Feb. 13 The nature of the virtues
Reading: *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1102a5-1109b27
17. Wed. Feb. 15 Friendship as Part of the Best Life
Reading: *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1155a1-1159b24 and 1166a1-1170b18
18. Fri. Feb. 17 No Class
Listening/Viewing assignment:
19. Mon. Feb. 20 Review Test #2
20. Wed. Feb. 22 Test #2
21. Fri. Feb. 24 Ethics Case #4
22. Mon. Feb. 27 Intro to Ancient Chinese Philosophy
Reading: *Confucius Analects*, I-IV
23. Wed. Feb. 29 Cultivating Humanity
Reading: *Confucius Analects*, V-IX
24. Fri. March 2 Ethics Case #5
- March 4th-11th Spring Break
25. Mon. March 12 Ethics as a Rejection of Pettiness
Reading: *Confucius Analects*, X-XIV
26. Wed. March 14 Confucius as Role Model
Reading: *Confucius Analects*, XV-XX
27. Fri. March 16 Review Test #3/ Vote for final week topic
28. Mon. March 19 Test #3
29. Wed. March 21 Introduction to Kant's Ethics
Reading: Kant's *Grounding*, pp. 7-9 (AT393-AT396)

30. Fri. March 23 Ethics Case #6
31. Mon. March 26 A Moral Duty
Reading: Kant's *Grounding*, pp. 9-14 (AT397-AT401)
32. Wed. March 28 The Categorical Imperative,
Reading: Kant's *Grounding*, pp. 14-21 (AT402-AT410)
33. Fri. March 30 Ethics Case #7
34. Mon. April 2 Acting on principle
Reading: Kant's *Grounding*, pp. 21-29 (AT410-AT420)
35. Wed. April 4 The Categorical Imperative
Reading: Kant's *Grounding*, pp. 30-30 (AT421-434)
36. Fri. April 6 Review Test #4
37. Mon. April 9 Test #4
38. Wed. April 11 TBD
39. Fri. April 13 Ethics Case #8
40. Mon. April 16 TBD
41. Wed. April 18 TBD
42. Fri. April 20 Review and Course Evaluations
- Tue. April 24th, 12:00 FINAL EXAM