

Philosophy 2200H: Introduction to Ethics, Honors
MWF 2:30
Peabody 219

Dr. Farnham
R 12:15-2:15
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Course Description and Goals.

This course is an introduction to philosophical thinking about ethical issues. We will begin by examining the nature of ethics and the prospects for objective ethical knowledge. Then we will study some of the ethical theories that dominate both philosophical and everyday practice. A major theme of the course will be the nature of happiness and its relation to moral obligation.

The main goal of this course is for you to become fairly adept at ethical thinking and argumentation. To do this you will need to understand the theories and issues we explore, recognize distinct positions and their motivations, analyze and construct arguments, and be attentive to facts of moral salience.

Conduct of the Course

One great advantage of a small class like this is the opportunity it offers for discussion. You will be expected to come prepared to contribute to the class, by raising questions, engaging in the discussion, giving brief presentations, doing group work, and the like. I will do some lecturing, but even then you may chime in with questions. You should also feel free to talk to me after class, during my office hours, etc. In this course you will be evaluated on an individual basis, but I encourage you to work together with other students in preparing for class or exams, or in writing your paper – subject, of course, to the principles of academic honesty (see below). Philosophy at its best is conversation, and there is no reason to restrict it to our class meetings.

Texts

James Rachels, *Elements of Moral Philosophy*, 4th edition
Steven Cahn and Christine Vitrano, *Happiness*
Other readings on WebCT

Requirements

General: You are responsible for the content of both the readings and the in-class discussions. You should complete the reading before the session in which it is discussed and come prepared to talk or write about it. The main things I am looking for are understanding of the arguments and positions and skill in assessing them. That means you can do more than just explain what a certain view is, you can also explain the reasoning behind that view and address the validity and soundness of that reasoning.

Participation: Part of your grade (20%) will be based on your participation. This will be based on your contributions to discussion or group work, short written assignments in and out of class, extra credit work, out of class discussions with me or with others, etc.

Exams: There will be two essay exams (one midterm and one final). These will cover, respectively, the first and second parts of the course, and will consist of three or four essay questions for you to answer. Each exam will be worth 20% of your grade.

Papers: Two short (4-5 page) papers on a topic drawn from the readings or one of your choosing that you OK with me. I will read drafts of papers, (within reason) and encourage you to take advantage of this. I need to receive drafts at least two days before the due date. I will announce explicit deadlines for getting drafts to me as they come up. Each paper will be worth 20% of your grade.

Grading Criteria

- A Thorough understanding and evidence of original thinking. You can explain clearly the reasoning behind the arguments, explain objections and replies, assess them, show implications for other issues or examples, suggest other approaches or considerations.
- B Solid understanding of arguments and positions. You can give a generally accurate and clear explanation of the positions, arguments, objections, and replies. But you need to work on your assessment of them, or on showing you understand implications or alternatives.
- C Partial understanding of arguments and positions. You show a general grasp of what the arguments and positions are, but it is unclear whether you really understand the reasoning behind them or the sorts of objections they are susceptible to and why.
- D Seriously incomplete understanding. You do not show that you grasp the positions and arguments.
- F

Policies

Late work and make-ups: Late papers will be penalized one-third of a grade for each day the paper is late. I will not give a make-up exam, quiz, or in-class assignment without either an excuse I have approved in advance or concrete evidence of an emergency which kept you from attending.

Grade complaints: I will discuss your grade in the course at any time. If you want a grade *changed*, you must provide me with a detailed written argument for why the change is justified.

Academic honesty: You are responsible for knowing UGA's policies on academic honesty (see http://www.uga.edu/ovpi/honesty/culture_honesty.htm). Talk to me if you have any questions or concerns. Be especially aware of plagiarism, which consists in passing off someone else's ideas or words as your own, with or without that person's consent. I will push for the strongest available punishment if you are found guilty of such an offense.

Resources

I am available to talk with you about specific issues relating to this class. The University has a Learning Center that provides help with writing assignments, time management issues,

reading and studying strategies, and general academic counseling (<http://www.uga.edu/dae>). (There is no shame in feeling not fully prepared to handle the various challenges of University life, since it is a notorious feature of our educational system that many students do not get the preparation they should.) If you have a disability requiring special accommodations, please contact the Disability Resource Center (<http://www.drc.uga.edu/>).

Schedule

This schedule is tentative and subject to change. *H* stands for the *Happiness* volume.

- 8/17 Introduction

- 8/20 Morality and Moral Theory - Rachels Ch. 1
- 8/22 Are morals relative? Are they subjective? – Rachels Chs. 2-3
- 8/24 More on subjectivity and objectivity

- 8/27 Does morality depend on religion? – Rachels Ch. 4
- 8/29 Are people inherently selfish? Should we be egoists? – Rachels Ch. 5
- 8/31 Utilitarianism: Rachels, Ch. 6; Bentham, *H* p. 99-103

- 9/3 Utilitarianism: Singer (WebCT)
- 9/5 Utilitarianism: Steinbock (WebCT)
- 9/7 Utilitarianism: Mill, *H* p. 121-129

- 9/10 Utilitarianism: Mill, *H* p. 129-141
- 9/12 Utilitarianism: Rachels, Ch. 7; Nozick, *H* p. 236-7
- 9/14 Kantianism: Rachels, Ch. 8; Kant, *H* p. 103-112

- 9/17 Kantianism: Rachels, Ch. 9; Kant, *H* p. 103-114
- 9/19 Duty and Sentiment: Annas on *Effi Briest* (WebCT)
- 9/21 Duty and Sentiment: Baron on *Effi Briest* (WebCT)

- 9/24 Social Contract: Rachels, Ch. 10; Hobbes, *H* p. 68-77
- 9/26 More on Hobbes
- 9/28 **Exam**

- 10/1 Feminism and Virtue: Rachels, Ch. 11
- 10/3 Virtue Theory: Rachels, Ch. 12
- 10/5 Virtue and Happiness: Plato, *H* p. 3-11

- 10/8 More Plato *H*, p. 11-18
- 10/10 Virtue and Happiness: Aristotle, *H* p. 19-23
- 10/12 More Aristotle, *H* p. 23-30

- 10/15 Even More Aristotle, *H* p. 30-34; Kraut, *H* p. 201-216
- 10/17 Pleasure: Epicurus, *H* p. 34-40
- 10/19 More Pleasure: Epicurus, *H* p. 34-40

10/22 Stoicism: Seneca, *H* p. 41-51

First Paper Due

10/24 Stoicism: Epictetus (WebCT)

10/26 Fall Break: No Class

10/29 Theism: Augustine, *H* p. 51-60

10/31 Theism: Aquinas, *H* p. 60-68

11/2 Suffering: Schopenhauer, *H* p. 114-121

11/5 Self-Creation: Nietzsche and Sartre, *H* p. 152-160

11/7 Virtue and Happiness: Annas, *H* p. 238-259

11/9 Virtue and Happiness: Cahn and Murphy, *H* p. 261-266

11/12 Movie: *Crimes and Misdemeanors*

11/14- TBA

12/4 **Second Paper Due** in here somewhere

12/5 Last Day of Class: Review

12/10 **Final Exam** 3:30 - 6:30 pm in Peabody 219