

Philosophy 2200: Introduction to Ethics
Spring 2008
3MWF
SLC Rm. 251

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Hours: Tue 11-12, Fri 12-1

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Course Description: The theme of this course is, “The Good Life.” We will be considering how several different philosophers have attempted to answer the question, “What is the best life for a human being to live?” In doing so we will also attempt to answer subsidiary questions such as: Is the good, moral life necessarily the happy life? Is the life of duty good? Is living a good life good for oneself or for others?

Ethics is concerned with questions of right and wrong. When we ask ourselves what the correct thing to do in some particular circumstance is, we are asking ourselves a question that has ethical significance. However, the way we answer these questions may depend upon more fundamental concerns. To make the right decision in a given situation requires an ability to determine what makes a decision right or wrong. Knowing what the good life is will aid us in making these decisions in much the same way as knowing what health is might aid us in eating properly or seeing the target clearly might aid us in hitting the bull’s-eye.

All of the philosophers that we will be reading for this course are struggling with these questions and others such as these. Their answers are often surprisingly divergent. For example, some may hold that ethics is concerned primarily with the character or the state of the soul of an individual while others consider goodness to be a quality of particular actions and not the people doing those actions. In considering the views of others I hope that you will be inspired to give further consideration to what you believe the answer to this question is. It is a question that has immediate relevance for how you live your life. Until we know what it is that is important to us we have little chance of attaining it.

This is a philosophy course and, consequently, we will focus on each thinker’s *reasons* for holding the views that they do. This will entail learning the *arguments* of the respective thinkers. The emphasis of this course will not be on memorizing the views of each philosopher but on understanding and thinking about how each philosopher arrived at the view that he did. This process can be very rewarding and, at times, enjoyable. However, it can also be frustrating and difficult. Philosophy, like any activity, requires regular practice to develop the skills necessary to engage in the activity. Consequently, proficiency will not come immediately. Attaining and keeping a level of proficiency, as in any activity, will require regular practice.

The focus of this course is the readings. You will be expected to come to class having done the assigned reading and being prepared to discuss it. *Borderline grades may be decided based on the quantity and quality of your class attendance.* The readings will form the content of the class discussions, your papers and the examinations.

Readings: The quantity of reading assigned is quite low. Please do not be deceived by this. Reading a philosophical text is not the same as reading other material. You will need to read each text several times to get at the author's arguments. Please keep in mind at all times that the reasons why the authors hold the views they do is as important as what those views are. Two people who arrive at the same conclusion in different ways do not necessarily think the same thing.

Plato: *Phaedo*; Aristotle: *Nicomachean Ethics*; Meister Eckhart: "On Detachment"*;
Immanuel Kant: *Grounding For the Metaphysics of Morals*; John Stuart Mill: *Utilitarianism*;
Soren Kierkegaard: *Either/Or*; Albert Camus: *The Myth of Sisyphus**

*These works will be available in a course pack from Bel-Jean Copy/Print Center. They are not on order at the campus or off campus bookstores.

Assignments and Grading: You will be given a list of all the assigned readings and a tentative schedule of when they will be discussed in class. *You are responsible for assigned reading material not explicitly covered in class.* The graded assignments are as follows:

Short Assignments	5%
Written Critique I	15%
Midterm Exam	20%
Written Critique II	25%
Final Exam	35%

Attendance: Class attendance and participation are essential components of this course. You are expected to come to class prepared to engage in a discussion about the assigned reading for that day. *More than six unexcused absences may result in an automatic administrative withdrawal from the class.* After the midpoint of the semester this will mean an automatic WF.

Schedule: A list of the assigned readings and a tentative schedule of the dates on which they will be discussed in class will be provided by the instructor.