

Philosophy 2200: Introduction to Ethics

Tuesday/Thursday 9:30-10:45, Chemistry 551; 11-12:15, Peabody 219a

Instructor: Matt Schneider

Office Hours: Tues, Thurs, 1-3 PM and by appointment

Office: Peabody 126

Email: SCHNEIML@uga.edu

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 does it mean 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. As an introductory course, we will touch on many of these spheres of moral/ethical philosophy.

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).

Attendance:

This is NOT a correspondence course. We cannot have a class without students, so attendance is mandatory. **You will be allowed three (3) absences over the course of the semester.** No questions asked. These absences are allotted to deal with unavoidable situations which may inevitably come up, so don’t use them to just ‘take an off-day.’ Absences beyond four will likely affect your course grade.

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.

Take-home essay exams: You will have three take-home essay exams over the course of the semester. Part of these assignments will be to give peer-review to fellow students’ work in an effort to improve on each other’s work.

Academic Honesty – I expect all students to abide by the University guidelines for academic honesty. More information is available online at: http://www.uga.edu/ovpi/honesty/culture_honesty.htm Failure to do so will result in corrective action.

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:

Tuesday, Jan 8, 2007

Introduction to course.

Metaethics: What are we even talking about?

Thursday, Jan 10, 2007 – Last day of Drop/Add

Plato, “Morality as Good in Itself”

Tuesday, Jan 15

Hume, “On Reason and the Emotions”

Thursday, Jan 17

Ayer, “The Emotive Theory of Morality”

Tuesday, Jan 22

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

Thursday, Jan 24

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

Tuesday, Jan 29

Baier, "The Rational and the Moral Order"

Thursday, Jan 31

Gert, "Moral Theory and Rationality"

Tuesday, Feb 6

Foot, "Moral Beliefs"

Thursday, Feb 8

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

Normative Ethics: Deontological Theory and Political Philosophy

Tuesday, Feb 12 – **First take-home essay exam due**

Kant, "Duty and Categorical Rules"

Thursday, Feb 14

Kant, "Duty and Categorical Rules"

Tuesday, Feb 19

Feldman, "Kantian Ethics"

Thursday, Feb 21

Korsgaard, "Kant on Dealing with Evil"

Tuesday, Feb 26

Foot, "Morality as a System of Hypothetical Imperatives"

Thursday, Feb 28

Rawls, "Welfare Liberalism"

Tuesday, March 4 - **Midpoint Withdrawal Deadline**

Hospers, "Libertarianism"

Thursday, March 6

Sterba, "From Liberty to Welfare"

Tuesday and Thursday, March 11 and 13

Spring Break: No class

Normative Ethics: Consequentialism

Tuesday, March 18

Mill, "Utilitarianism"

Thursday, March 20

Mill, "Utilitarianism"

Tuesday, March 25

Williams, "Against Utilitarianism"

Nielsen, "Traditional Morality and Utilitarianism"

Thursday, March 27

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

Stocker, "The Schizophrenia of Modern Ethical Theories"

Normative Ethics – Virtue Theory

Tuesday, April 1 – **Second Essay Exam Due**

Aristotle, "The Virtuous Life"

Thursday, April 3

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

Tuesday, April 8

MacIntyre, "The Nature of Virtues"

Thursday, April 10

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

Tuesday, April 15

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

Ethical Praxis: Environmental Ethics

Thursday, April 17

De Waal, "Chimpanzee Justice"

Singer, "All Animals are Equal"

Tuesday, April 22

Taylor, "The Ethics of Respect for Nature"

Thursday, April 24

Warren, "The Power and Promise of Ecological Feminism"

Tuesday, April 29

No class, Reading Day

Wednesday, April 30 – **Final Essay Exam Due by 12pm, hard-copies only.**