**Philosophical Ethics**

PHIL 3000

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Office Hours: TW 11-1230; Other times by appointment.

**Purpose of the Course**

How should I live? What does it mean to be a “good person”? Is this the same thing as doing what’s right? And why does it matter to be a good person or to do what’s right?

These questions might sound abstract. But we all answer them every day by the way we live our lives. It is therefore crucial to think about them and answer them well. In this class, we will work to unearth each of our own preconceptions about what it is to live well, and to subject those preconceptions to careful scrutiny. Along the way we will study texts both classical and contemporary. Students will also write texts of their own, we will view films and do some in class activities, and we will engage in careful, thoughtful, and patient discussion.

**Texts**

It is important that you buy or rent this text in the edition listed; we all need to be using the same edition.


**Course Outcomes**

Students will be able to explain the questions that Aristotle, Kant, and John Stuart Mill asked about ethics, and the answers that they gave.

Students will be able to explain why these questions are important and apply them to their own lives.

Students will develop a deeper understanding of their own commitments about morality, ethics, and the good life, and subject these commitments to careful scrutiny.

Students will develop their abilities to write, think, and speak clearly and precisely.

Students will improve as careful, critical, and charitable readers.
**Course Policies**

**Attendance**

Participation is mandatory. Unexcused absence from a class will result in a deduction of one letter grade from the final average. Given the intensive nature of the course, missing 2 or more days will result in missing the equivalent of 2 or more weeks of a semester. Therefore a second absence—excused or unexcused—will result in failure of (or withdrawal from) the course.

**Technology**

The use of outside technology is prohibited. This means that electronic devices may not be used for the readings. If I see you using a phone or other electronic device this will negatively affect your grade. If this is a persistent problem, you may be asked to leave. If asked to leave, you will be considered absent for that day.

If you have a special reason that you need to use an electronic device, speak to me.

**Late Assignments**

Late assignments will be penalized 1 letter grade for every day late (e.g. A to B, etc). This means an assignment that is more than 3 days late will receive an F. If you require an extension, please let me know ahead of time what your reason is, and we will work something out. No extensions will be given by email the day before an assignment is due.

**Plagiarism**

Plagiarism of any kind will not be permitted, and any student caught plagiarizing will receive a 0 on the paper or assignment and may be subject to automatic failure of the course. Plagiarism occurs when a person presents someone else’s work or ideas as his or her own, whether or not the person does so intentionally. Students are required to familiarize themselves with Fordham’s policies on plagiarism and academic misconduct. Ignorance of the law is not a defense against the law.

**Grading**

**Reading Quiz (25%)**

There will be a daily reading quiz, to test that you completed the reading for that day. They are designed to ensure that you are doing reading, and also to be sparknotes-proof. Since there are 13 days with quizzes, each quiz will be worth approximately 1.5 points.
toward your final average. If the class is uniformly performing well on quizzes, there may be some days when we do not have reading quizzes. (On these days everyone will receive full credit for the reading quiz.)

Notice: Readings vary by length. No assignment requires you to read more than about 20 pages per day. Normally, reading assignments would be much shorter. But the readings we are covering are the bare essentials for anyone who has passed a course in philosophical ethics. Therefore, it is imperative that you do the readings not only for the sake of your reading quiz grade but also because if you miss any readings you are missing something absolutely essential to a basic understanding of philosophical ethics.

**Participation (20%)**

Large portions of the class are discussion-based. Other parts involve in-class activities. Productive participation should wrestle with the texts and exhibit openness to the material. Any occasional homework assignments (besides reading) will factor into either your participation or your reading quiz grade.

**Interview and Reflection (5%)**

**First Paper Draft (5%)**

**First Paper Rewrite (10%)**

**Final Paper (20%)**

**Final Exam (20%)**

**Advice for Reading and Writing**

Here is a useful link for a description of different types of reading, and tips on how to read well: [http://www61.homepage.villanova.edu/kevin.hughes/Reading%20Well.htm](http://www61.homepage.villanova.edu/kevin.hughes/Reading%20Well.htm)

**Important Dates**

- **Interview and Reflection:** 7/9
- **First Essay due:** 7/17
- **First Essay rewrite due:** 7/25
- **Final Exam:** 8/6
- **Final Paper due:** 8/6

**Students with Special Needs or Disabilities:**

If you are a student with a documented disability and require academic accommodations, you need to register with the Office of Disability Services for Students (ODS) in order to request academic accommodations for your courses. Please contact the main ODS office at Rose Hill at 718-817-0655 to arrange services. Staff at ODS can walk you through the
process and arrange appointments depending on which campus you take courses at. Accommodations are not retroactive, so you need to register with ODS prior to receiving your accommodations. Please see me after class or during office hours if you have questions or would like to submit your academic accommodation letter to me.

**Course Schedule**

7/2  What is ethics?

7/3  How do we think about ethics? What makes ethical claims true or false?
     Plato’s *Euthyphro*

7/4  University Closed (Independence Day)

7/9  Kant, *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*
     HW due: Preface and Section 1
     HW due: Interview and Reflection
     HW Assigned

7/10 Kant, *Groundwork*
     HW due: Section 2
     **First Paper Assignment will be handed out today. Also available on BB**

7/11 Kant, *Groundwork*
     HW due: Section 3

7/16 John Stuart Mill, *Utilitarianism*
     HW due: Sections 1 and 2

7/17 Mill, *Utilitarianism*
     HW due: rest of book
     Essay 1 due
     **Also print and bring “The Ones Who Walk Away From Omelas” Available on BB**

7/18 Peter Singer, “Famine, Affluence, and Morality”
     HW due: Singer’s essay
     **Also bring Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics***

7/23 Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*
     HW due: books 1-3

7/24 Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*
     HW due: book 4
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| 7/25 | Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*  
HW due: book 5  
**Essay 1 rewrite due**  
**Essay 2 assigned** |
| 7/30 | Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*  
HW due: books 6-8 |
| 7/31 | Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*  
HW due: book 9  
HW due: Wendell Berry, “Economy and Pleasure” |
| 8/1  | Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*  
HW due: book 10 |