PHIL3000: Philosophical Ethics  
Summer 2020  
Session III (Online)

Professor Kate Bresee  
Email: kbresee@fordham.edu

Course Description

This course seeks to initiate and enliven in its participants a philosophical manner of asking questions. These questions include, but are not limited to: Is happiness a life of virtue? Is right action that which promotes the greatest good for the great number of people? Do the ends justify the means? Is it more virtuous to do the right thing when it is difficult or when it is easy? Can we make universal moral claims, and, if so, to what extent? How do we arrive at moral precepts?

In this course we will examine and critically evaluate these questions through a detailed reading of philosophical texts that are both contemporary and classical. Because our aim is to ask these questions legitimately, that is, out of a genuine recognition that they are worth asking, the focus of our discussion will not be directed simply towards how various authors have answered these questions but will be ultimately directed towards how we ourselves want to answer these questions in light of our reflections.

Course Objectives

1. To think deeply and seriously about topics related to philosophical ethics, as arising in the questions and claims of those authors surveyed in the course.
2. To develop the critical thinking skills as well as the oral and written communication skills that are conducive to productive philosophical discourse.
3. To evaluate critically one’s own beliefs about topics related to philosophical ethics and so to consider the authors surveyed as serious resources for one’s own beliefs and worldview.

Required Texts

Please purchase the particular editions listed here, as other editions will have different translations and different pagination, making lecture and discussion more difficult. Any course readings not listed here will be posted to Blackboard or sent out via email:


Grading

Paper #1 = 22.5%
Paper #2 = 22.5%
Participation = 20%
Final Exam = 20%
Reading Questions = 15%

Grading Scale

93–100% = A
90–93% = A-
87–90% = B+
83–87% = B
80–83% = B-
77–80% = C+
73–77% = C
70–73% = C-
65–70% = D
65% or below = F

Requirements for the Course

Readings

Students are expected to read all assigned material. Completion of readings involves not only reading the text in its entirety, but also having a grasp of the overall meaning of the text or questions for clarification where the meaning of the text is not clear.

Debate Paper

Each student will complete a paper that philosophically engages with some contemporary ethical issue. My expectations for this will be discussed in detail prior to the paper deadline. Papers are to be submitted via Blackboard.

Late Papers: Late papers will be penalized a third of a letter grade per day, including weekends (i.e. an A paper that is one day late becomes an A-, two days late a B+, etc.). For example, if a paper is due at 1:00pm, any paper turned in after 1:00pm on the date it is due is considered one day late and is docked a third of a letter grade up until 1:00pm the next day, at which time it is two days late and is docked two thirds of a letter grade (and so on).

Participation

The participation of every student (each of whom has completed the assigned reading) is essential to productive class discussion. For each module, students will be required to make contributions
to the discussion board. Students will receive points towards their participation grade for each time they make contributions to the discussion. Failure to contribute will result in a grade deduction.

**Quizzes:** At various points throughout the semester, there will be quizzes testing students’ understanding of course material. Performance on these quizzes will be factored into the student’s participation grade.

**Final Exam**

There will be a cumulative exam at the end of the semester. Further details concerning the content and format of the exam will be given closer to the date of the exam.

**Reading Questions**

Three times over the course of the semester you will be assigned a reading question for one class’s assigned reading. You must type up a response to each reading question and submit it via Blackboard before beginning the corresponding unit. Each response is worth 5% of your grade. Reading question responses must be: (1) at least 2 pages long; (2) complete and thorough (they answer all parts of the question); (3) show good use of critical thinking; and (4) make use of any relevant terms/questions we have discussed so far in the course so as to draw connections to material covered over the course of the term. Reading questions that do not meet these expectations will not receive full credit. Additionally, reading responses submitted after the student has completed the corresponding unit will not be accepted.

**Classroom Policies**

**Email Policy**

I welcome you to email me with any questions or concerns you have throughout the course of the semester. My guarantee is that you will get a response from me within 24 hours if you email me during the week OR by the end of the day on Monday if you email me after 5pm on Friday.

**Academic Integrity**

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 responsible for familiarizing themselves with Fordham’s policies on plagiarism and academic misconduct. If you are not sure about whether or not something is plagiarism, you should ask me.

**Disability Services**

As a member of an academic community, each Fordham student is owed whatever tools and accommodations they need in order to succeed in the classroom. If you are a student in need of certain academic accommodations, please contact the Office of Disability Services for Students
(ODS) 718-817-0655 in order to request academic accommodations for your courses. If you have questions about registering with the ODS or about finding effective accommodations in my class, please feel free to see me after class or visit me during my office hours. Please also note that certain accommodations cannot be provided unless you’ve first registered with ODS, so you should contact them as close to the start of the semester as possible.

Course Schedule

Module #1: Utilitarianism
Module #2: Deontology
Module #3: Virtue Ethics
Module #4: Care Ethics

Module #1: Utilitarianism

John Stuart Mill, *Utilitarianism*, Ch. 1
John Stuart Mill, *Utilitarianism*, Ch. 2
John Harris, “The Survival Lottery”
Peter Singer, “Famine Affluence, and Morality”
Ursula Le Guin, “The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas”
Harriet McBryde Johnson: “Unspeakable Conversations”

Module #2: Deontology

Debate Reading #1: Euthanasia
Fred Feldman, “Kant” & Kant, *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Moral*, Section I
Kant, *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Moral*, Section II (up to pg. 36)
Carol Hay, “Feminist Kant”
Rae Langton, “Maria von Herbert’s Challenge to Kant”
Debate Reading #2: Torture

Module #3: Virtue Ethics

Neil Garrett, “Dishonesty Gets Easier on the Brain”
Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book I (skip chs. 3, 6, & 12)
Aristotle, Book II
Aristotle, Book III (Chs. 6-12) & Book IV (Chs. 1-5)
Pascal-Emmanuel Gobry, “Morality is a Muscle. Get to the Gym”
Julia Annas, “Being Virtuous and Doing the Right Thing”

Module #4: Care Ethics

Susan Glaspell, “A Jury of Her Peers”
Carol Gilligan, “Moral Orientation”
Marilyn Friedman, “The De-Moralization of Gender”
Sarah Ruddick, “Maternal Thinking”
Patricia Collins, “Black Women and Motherhood”
Debate Reading #3: “Pigs, Puppies, and People”