Course Description

What does it mean to be a good person? Most of us have an intuitive answer to this question, but often an event or situation will challenge our preconceived intuitions to such a degree that a kind of moral vertigo ensues. Indeed, sometimes the world offers situations that push the boundaries of our ethical presuppositions so greatly that it’s hard to tell what the right thing to do actually is. In this course, we will study a number of the greatest philosophical solutions to such moral predicaments (i.e. Utilitarianism, Deontology, Virtue Theory, and Existentialism), in an effort to not only understand how and why they believed as they did but to help us understand why we believe what we do. In modeling the thinkers who have come before us, we will be learning to articulate many of the ethical intuitions we have held, and likely discarding others. The goal of this philosophical investigation is then not simply to understand the ethical sphere as Aristotle, Kant, Mill, and Nietzsche understood it, but primarily to provide us with the practice of addressing ethical dilemmas carefully and critically. While the course readings will be largely theoretical, consistent use of real-world case studies will anchor our study in the applied side of ethics as well.

Objectives

- Identify and articulate the major philosophical normative constructs as first set forth by Aristotle, Kant, and Mill
- Utilize the tools of logic to critically analyze ethical claims and prescriptions as encountered in everyday life
- Construct and defend personal views of morality in both spoken and written form
- Carefully balance the need for critical rigor with the importance of charity when encountering opposing viewpoints

Required Texts


Strongly Recommended


- All subsequent texts will be made available on ARES (password “socrates”)
Course Requirements

- **Notecard Assignments:** You are required to come to class prepared and having done the assigned reading. After reading, write down three or four major question(s) that you have taken away from the text (alternately you might briefly point to a problem that you think you see in the reading). These are to be recorded on 4x6 notecards and handed in at the beginning of class. Three to four sentences *minimum* please, and feel free to fill the card front and back. This assignment is meant to place you in constant conversation with the material and to help stimulate class discussion. In this exercise, clarity and independent thought are required. If you’re having trouble with this assignment, please contact me or stop by in office hours.
  - Notecard Assignments are graded in the following way:
    - 3 = stands out as excellent
    - 2 = satisfactory
    - 1 = stands out as unsatisfactory
    - 0 = no participation and/or notecard
  - Because Notecards are partially used to calculate daily participation, they can only be turned in on the day they are due. If you missed class, you miss the opportunity to earn participation credit.

- **Participation: (20%)** One of our primary objectives is to articulate philosophical concepts with critical rigor, both when dealing with the texts and when voicing personal beliefs. As such, interaction and class discussion is mandatory. Your willingness to contribute to this project will be reflected in an overall participation grade which combines Notecard grades, attendance, and overall classroom discussion.

- **Writing Assignments:**
  All writing assignments are to be turned in hard-copy, stapled, and at the beginning of class. They also must be turned in digitally via Safe-Assign by the beginning of class on the day they are due (instructions will follow). Formatting should always be Times New Roman, Double-Spaced, 1-inch Margins. Note: If you miss a class, it is your responsibility to get your assignment to me via e-mail or a friend by the beginning of class on the day it is due. Late work is not accepted.
  1. **Response Paper 1:** (5%) (4-6 Pages)
     - You will choose between two writing prompts based upon the readings and in-class discussion and be asked to respond. This paper will test not only how well you can articulate the arguments at play but will also give you a chance to voice and defend your own opinion on the given matter.
  2. **Response Paper 2:** (10%) (4-6 pages)
  3. **Response Paper 3:** (15%) (4-6 pages)
  4. **Final Paper:** (20%) (6-8 pages)
     - For this paper you will be permitted to choose a topic of interest that you will then develop, first as a presentation and then as a paper submitted to me on the last day of class. Similar to the prior essays, this paper will be argument-based, defending one position against counterarguments. However, the topic and the philosopher(s) you utilize are completely up to you.
Presentations (10%)
1. In the final days of the semester, we will be holding presentations to give each student the chance to discuss the research and views on his or her chosen final paper topic. These presentations will be around fifteen minutes long, divided evenly between presenting and Q&A. Your grade for this assignment is a combination of two things:
   1) How well your actual presentation is made, including how well you field the constructive criticism of Q&A
   2) How well you are able to constructively (and generously) provide in-class Q&A for the other presenters. This means two things:
      a. you will be filling out and submitting constructive criticism of your fellow classmate (first to me and then I will pass it along), and
      b. attendance on these days is vital. Please be on time and ready to go, even if you’re not first. Failure to attend every presentation will hurt your own presentation grade.

Final Examination (20%),
- The Final will be cumulative throughout the course, but emphasis will be given to more recent material. A review guide will be provided at least a week prior.

Course Policies

Technology:
- No laptops or I-gadgetry. If you require the technology because of a documented disability, please visit Disabilities Services.
- Please turn all cell-phones and assorted communicative bric-a-brac off during class time. Curious what time it is? It’s Philosophy Time! No need to look at your phone to see that. So please, keep it out of sight.

Absences:
- You are responsible for attending every class. If you are absent your participation grade will suffer as a result (i.e. you will receive a zero for the day). If this is an excused absence, your participation grade will not suffer. Nevertheless, please be aware: because of the nature of summer courses, the total number of absences that the university allows is two (excused and unexcused combined). Beyond that you fail the course. If you are interested in having an absence count as excused, please speak with your class dean.

Lateness:
- Make every effort to be in class on time. Notecards and papers are collected at the beginning of class. If you come in late it is your responsibility to turn them in before you leave, otherwise they will not be accepted.

Missed Examinations or Assignments:
- Late assignments will not be accepted. If you fail to turn in your assignment – both in hard-copy and on Safe-Assign – by the beginning of class on the due date, you have failed that assignment. If you think you need an extension on an
assigned paper, you must discuss your reasons with me *in advance* (and be prepared that I might say no).

- The final exam works similarly. The exam will be held on August 5th during normal class hours. Please plan accordingly.

- **Academic Integrity:**
  - You violate the University’s code of academic integrity any time you partake in plagiarism, cheating, falsification, collaboration without permission, etc. It is your responsibility to familiarize yourself with the student handbook on these matters.
  - The first violation of Academic Integrity will result in Failure of the assignment at best and at worst you will fail the course. If this is the second violation of Academic Integrity, you will fail the course at best, and at worst will be subject to university expulsion. This is the university’s policy which I will uphold stringently. Please do not risk your education by attempting to cheat and/or plagiarize. The possible ills far, far outweigh the possible benefits.
  - Plagiarism is probably the most common violation of Academic Integrity, so it deserves special attention. Plagiarism is defined as *any* attempt to pass off as one’s own the work of another. This can be intentional or accidental; but be aware, the university does not discriminate. To quote the University Academic Integrity Handbook, “It is no defense to claim that one has ‘forgotten’ to document ideas or material taken from another source.” The following list of examples comes from that same Handbook and is worth reviewing carefully:

Examples of plagiarism include, but are not limited to:

i. Using the ideas of another person, whether or not such ideas are paraphrased, from whatever source including oral, print, broadcast, or computer-mediated communication;

ii. Rewriting borrowed material by simply dropping a word here and there, substituting a few words for others, or moving around words or sentence;

iii. Presenting borrowed material, whether a phrase, sentence, or whole paragraphs without placing quotation marks around the borrowed material in the approved style;

iv. Presenting, as one’s own an assignment, paper, or computer program partially or wholly prepared by another person, whether by another student, friend, or by a business or on-line service that sells or distributes such papers and programs;

v. Failing to use proper citation for information obtained from print sources or the internet, according to citation criteria specified by the instructor or in cases where instructor guidance is not given, by standard manuals of style (e.g. The Chicago Manual of Style).

For more information, visit: [http://69.7.74.46/section8/section97/section99/index.html](http://69.7.74.46/section8/section97/section99/index.html)

- The university is committed to ensuring equal access to education regardless of individual difference. This is a standard that I wholeheartedly support and strive to guarantee in my class as well. If you have – or suspect you may have – a disability that requires accommodation in this class, it is your obligation to report this to the Office of Disabilities Services (Lower Level of O’Hare Hall, Rose Hill). Then, in conjunction with ODS, we will work together to meet whatever documented needs you may have.
Grade Percentages Summary:

- Participation: 20
- Response Paper 1: 5
  - RP2: 10
  - RP3: 15
- Presentation: 10
- Final Paper: 20
- Final Exam: 20

Course Calendar

Wed. July 5: Organization, Introduction / Relativism and the Appeal to God(s)
  Reading: (On ARES) Rachels, “The Challenge of Cultural Relativism”
  (On ARES) Plato’s “Euthyphro”
  Assignment: Notecard

Thurs. July 6: Intro to Consequentialism
  Reading: Utilitarianism, (pgs. 1-34)
  (On ARES) On Liberty, Ch. I
  Assignment: Notecard

Tues. July 11: Contemporary Consequentialism, Peter Singer
  Reading: (On ARES) Singer, Kuhse, “On Letting Handicapped Babies Die”
  Harris, “The Survival Lottery”
  Le Guin, “The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas”
  Assignment: Notecard

Wed. July 12: July 9: Intro to Deontology, Kant
  Reading: Grounding, (pgs. 7-37)
  Assignment: Response Paper 1 Due, Notecard

Thurs. July 13: Contemporary Deontology
  Reading: (On ARES) Yost, “Kant’s Justification of the Death Penalty Reconsidered”
  Langton, “Duty and Desolation”
  Assignment: Notecard

Tues. July 18: Utilitarianism and Deontology in film (movie screening and discussion)
  Reading: No assigned reading

Wed. July 19: Intro to Virtue Theory
  Reading: Nicomachean Ethics: (pg. 1-40, 86-99)
  Assignment: Response Paper 2 Due, Notecard
Thurs. July 20: Virtue Theory Continued
   Reading: Nicomachean Ethics: (pg. 99-123, 153-71)
   Assignment: Notecard

Tues. July 25: Contemporary Virtue Theory
   Reading: (On ARES) Hursthouse, “Virtue Theory and Abortion”
               Louden, “Some Vices of Virtue Ethics”
   Assignment: Notecard

Wed. July 26: Existential Ethics / Final Paper Case Studies Workshop
   Reading: (On ARES) Nietzsche, Genealogy, first Treatise
   Assignment: Response Paper 3 Due, Notecard

Thurs. July 27: Existential Ethics, Beauvoir
   Reading: (On ARES) Beauvoir, The Ethics of Ambiguity (74-159)
   Assignment: Notecard

Tues. Aug 1: Contemporary Existential Ethics
   Reading: (On ARES) Camus, “Neither Victims nor Executioners”
               Kieran, “Existential Ethics and the Creation of Value”
   Assignment: Notecard

Wed. Aug. 2: Presentations, Day 1

Thurs. Aug. 3: Presentations, Day 2 / Final Exam Review

Tues. August 8: Final Exam
   Final Paper Due