**Phil 107 – Ethics**

Russell Hamer

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Phil 107 HJ9, 12:30-2:10, A209 (12 week class)

Office hours L222, 2:15-3:15

**Course Description**

Why should I live ethically? What constitutes the good life? How ought I decide what to do? In this course, we will study these questions by means of the major ethical schools in Western philosophy: virtue ethics, natural law theory, utilitarianism, and deontology. We will also consider challenges and insights from a variety of critiques and alternatives to these approaches such as feminist care ethics. The course has two major aims: 1) to interact critically with major views and thinkers within the discipline of ethics, and 2) to work towards formulating our own coherent views of ethics and applying these views in practical engagement with contemporary ethical issues.

**Course Objectives**

* Develop the ability to read philosophical texts and to understand them by identifying the key ideas and arguments contained therein.
* Develop the ability to write concise, accurate essays about ideas, using proper citation and a logical structure.
* Develop the ability to talk in class about readings, expressing yourself cogently and articulately.
* Develop the ability to critically analyze philosophical concepts that have shaped our contemporary world.
* Develop the ability to present original arguments about complex philosophical topics.
* Develop an understanding of the complexity of ethical thought and ethical theories as applies to one’s own actions.

**Required Texts**

Conduct and Character, Mark Timmons, ISBN 978-0-495-50237-1

All other texts will be available on Blackboard as PDFs

**Requirements**

2 tests - each worth 25% of your final grade

4 papers – each worth 10% of your final grade

Participation is worth 10% of your final grade

**Grading Scale**

100-90=A, 89-80=B, 79-70=C, 69-60=D, 59 and below=F

**Policy on Late Work**

I do not accept late work for any credit whatsoever. As a general rule of thumb, the old adage “It’s easier to ask for forgiveness than to get permission” is never going to be true in my classes. If you can foresee a difficulty, let me know and we can work something out. If you come to me after the fact, I am likely to be much less amenable.

**Academic Dishonesty**

Academic dishonesty will not be tolerated, and any assignment or exam on which cheating occurred will be minimally given an F, maximally you will get an F for the course. If you are unsure as to what counts as cheating, dishonesty, or plagiarism you may consult the Student Policy Manual at http://www.ccc.edu/menu/Documents/studentpolicymanual.pdf

**Special Needs**

I encourage students with disabilities, including non-visible disabilities such as chronic diseases, learning disabilities, head injuries and ADD/ADHD, to discuss with me, after class or by email, appropriate accommodations that might be helpful. Students with documented disabilities should visit the Disability Access Center who can then provide me the proper accommodation guidelines.

**Papers**

Throughout the semester, students will be responsible for submitting 4 papers. These are to be 2-3 pages, double spaced, Times New Roman 12-point font, with 1-inch margins. The prompts for each of these papers will be distributed approximately two weeks before the papers are due. These papers are going to ask you to explain a central idea to one of the moral philosophies that will be studying and then to either criticize or defend that idea. You can find a sample paper as well as a rubric on Blackboard. These papers should all be submitted online through Blackboard.

**Participation**

In class we will often have discussion over the ideas that are presented in our readings. Participation in this discussion is part of your grade. However, I realize that not all students are comfortable presenting their own thoughts in class. To that end, any form of participation that I can access will count towards this. For instance, emailing me with questions related to the readings (and not just questions about assignments), stopping by my office hours to chat, talking to me before or after class, etc, will all count towards your participation grade. Amongst all participation you are to respect your classmates. You will most likely disagree with others on different topics, and I encourage you to voice your disagreement. However, you must always be respectful of others. No disrespectful or hateful language will be tolerated.

**Tardiness and Attendance**

I do not have an attendance policy for this class. Sometimes students are unable to attend class due to other obligations and I understand that. Students are always responsible for all of the material that was covered in class, regardless of attendance record. However, if a student is excessively late to class and disruptive in doing so on multiple occasions, I will withdraw the student from the class. An example of this kind of behavior would be showing up to class 30 minutes late and proceeding to ask questions about the material that was covered in the first 30 minutes. This kind of behavior is disruptive to the class and harmful to the learning environment of the other students.

**Electronic Devices**

The use of cell phones is prohibited in the classroom. The use of laptops is also prohibited unless there is some important reason, eg. disability, that requires such use and all such situations must be discussed with me.

**Schedule**

Unless otherwise noted, all page numbers refer to our textbook.

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Date | Topic | Reading | Due |
| Feb 14 | Introduction |  |  |
| Feb 16 | Who receives moral consideration? | Moral consideration PDF |  |
| Feb 21 | Moral Relativism | Rachels 61-68 |  |
| Feb 23 | Utilitarianism | Bentham 110-115 |  |
| Feb 28 |  | Mill 115-121 |  |
| March 2 | Criticism of Utilitarianism | Nozick 122-124 |  |
| March 7 | Deontology | Kant 141-146 |  |
| March 9 |  | Kant 146-148 | Paper 1 Due |
| March 14 |  | Kant 148-152 |  |
| March 16 | Criticism of Deontology | O’Neil 167-171 |  |
| March 21 | Review | Review |  |
| March 23 | MIDTERM | MIDTERM |  |
| March 28 | Virtue Ethics | Aristotle 232-237 |  |
| March 30 |  | Aristotle 238-242 | Paper 2 Due |
| April 4 | Criticism of Virtue Ethics | Johnson 254-258 |  |
| April 6 | Feminist Care Ethics | Gilligan 277-283 |  |
| April 11 | SPRING BREAK | SPRING BREAK |  |
| April 13 | SPRING BREAK | SPRING BREAK |  |
| April 18 |  | Noddings 285-294 |  |
| April 20 | Criticism of Care Ethics | Card 295-298 | Paper 3 Due |
| April 25 | What is a just state? | Selections from the Republic (PDF) |  |
| April 27 | Violence in a just state | When is Police Violence Justified 1146-1159 (PDF) |  |
| May 2 | Nahuatl (Aztec) Moral Philosophy | Selections from Book 6 of the Florentine Codex 1 (PDF) |  |
| May 4 |  | Selections from Book 6 of the Florentine Codex 2 (PDF) | Paper 4 Due |
| May 9 | Review | Review |  |
| May 11 | FINAL EXAM | FINAL EXAM |  |

If you have any questions about the schedule or the syllabus at large, please feel free to ask.