



PHIL 360: General Ethics COURSE SYLLABUS: Spring 2020

Instructor: Mr. James Berquist (Ph.D. Candidate)

Office Location: Online (On eCollege)

University Email Address: James.Berquist@tamuc.edu

Preferred Form of Communication: Email

Communication Response Time: You will receive a response within 24 hrs, except perhaps on weekends and holidays.

COURSE INFORMATION

Required texts:

- 1) Primary text: *Ethics: The Classic Readings* by David Cooper (ISBN-13: 978-0631206330)

All other required texts will be provided via eCollege.

Course Description:

Ethics is the study of *correct* or *right* human action, and the *principles* thereof in particular. In this course we will be considering the basic and most influential theories of correct human action that have been proposed over the centuries with special emphasis on the foundations for those theories. The goal is twofold. First, we seek to understand the key theories that have been proposed and what they are based upon (hence, indirectly, also what *all* moral theories are based upon). Secondly, we seek to be able to bring that knowledge to bear on our lives, and see the objective character of morality.

Student Learning Outcomes:

Over the course of our study, the student will learn:

1. the key moral/ethical theories that have been argued for over the centuries.
2. the central reasoning *behind* those theories (i.e. what are the principles of moral reasoning).
3. the natural implications implicit in moral theories.
4. the history of the grand *debate* concerning moral/ethical action.
5. how to apply his/her newfound knowledge to present day moral issues.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Lectures: I send out weekly lectures, and it is a requirement that you listen to them. I try to keep them as focused as possible. 30 min. to an hour, but I aim for the shorter side of things. Certainly less than three hours a week!

Exams: There will be a mid-term and a final, each covering roughly half of the semester. These timed open-book, open-note exams will include both objective and essay questions (one essay question each semester).

Response papers: In addition, you'll turn in two written responses (each one 300-400 words) to some of the reading assignments. These responses are not designed to test how well you've read the assigned material. Rather, they serve as opportunities for you to comment on one or two points in the reading, connecting those points to other reading and/or experiences. Each response paper will be evaluated according to the level of detail in your insightful commentary and sensible connections to other reading and/or experiences or observations. Specific assignments are forthcoming in eCollege. These response papers are your main outlet for *doing* philosophy.

Quizzes: You'll take eight quizzes to test your comprehension of some of the reading. These timed, open-book quizzes will have objective questions. The point will be completely geared towards *reading* comprehension, and *attendance* to the weekly lecture.

Discussion Posts: Several weeks, particularly those that do not have an exam or response paper, will include discussion posts. Your posts will be ungraded but will serve both the check your attendance and to allow you space to offer your informed perspectives regarding the subject at hand.

Extra Credit: There will be the option of writing an extra credit essay if you want a chance at raising your grade. Also, those who manifest profound engagement with the text and their peers on the discussion boards will receive extra credit for their participation.

GRADING

Grade scale:

A = 90%-100% (180-200 pts)

B = 80%-89% (160-179 pts)

C = 70%-79% (140-159 pts)

D = 60%-69% (120-139 pts)

F = 59% or Below (119 pts or less)

Assignment percentages:

(30%) EXAMS: (2x30 pts) 60 pts

(30%) RESPONSE PAPERS: (2x30 pts) 60 pts

(40%) QUIZZES: (8x10 pts) 80 pts

ATTENDANCE

Regular attendance, defined as regularly logging into eCollege and participating, is important for several reasons, but it is especially important for you to keep up with the assignments in this class. The tentative calendar below offers only the most general description of activities; more detail will be provided in class as the semester goes on. If you discover you must miss a deadline for an exam or the response paper, you must contact me before the deadline in time to make satisfactory arrangements for submitting the assignment. As per university policy, excessive absences (three weeks' worth) could result in you being dropped from the course.

PLAGIARISM/ACADEMIC DISHONESTY STATEMENT

Instructors in the Department of Literature and Languages do not tolerate plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty. Instructors uphold and support the highest academic standards, and students are expected to do likewise. Penalties for students guilty of academic dishonesty include disciplinary probation, suspension, and expulsion. (Texas A&M University-Commerce Code of Student Conduct 5.b[1,2,3]). Plagiarism on one essay in this course will result in a 0 for that assignment, and thus to loss of at least 15 percent of one's grade.

COURSE OUTLINE / CALENDAR

Note: ***Subject to Change***

Week #	Reading Assignments	Written Assignments
Wk. 1	Text: F. Nietzsche's <i>Use and Abuse of History</i> , and Plato's cave (online) Question: What is a human education?	
Wk. 2	Text: Plato's <i>Gorgias</i> Question: Is pleasure the greatest good?	Quiz 1
Wk. 3	Text: Epicurus' <i>Letter to Menoeceus</i> and <i>Leading Doctrines</i> Question 1: Is tranquility the greatest good? Question 2: What do we mean by the term, "moral?" And, is Epicurus' philosophy a moral philosophy?	Quiz 2
Wk. 4	Text: J.S. Mill's <i>Utilitarianism</i> Question 1: Does Mill present a compelling reason for moral action? (i.e., a compelling reason for seeking the greatest good for the greatest number.) Question 2: Is the greatest happiness principle a moral principle?	Quiz 3
Wk. 5	Text: David Hume's <i>Treatise of Human Nature</i> Question: Is morality really "sentiment?" That is, are our moral convictions just 'feelings?'	Quiz 4
Wk. 6	Text: Immanuel Kant's <i>Fundamental Principles of the Metaphysic of Morals</i> Question: What makes an action <i>good</i> ? Question/activity: Give an example of a 'categorical imperative' in action.	RP 1
Wk. 7	Text: Kierkegaard's <i>Fear and Trembling</i> Question: Faith and Reason: are they compatible or not?	

Wk. 8	Text: Aristotle's <i>Ethics</i> (Book I) Question: Can a thief be "rationally excellent" in the way Aristotle talks about rational excellence?	Midterm
Wk. 9	Text: Aristotle's <i>Ethics</i> (Book II) Question: Is moral virtue a relative quality?	Quiz 5
Wk. 10	Text: Aristotle's <i>Ethics</i> (Books VIII and X: Friendship and Happiness) Question: Is happiness a selfish goal? What would Aristotle say to Kant?	Quiz 6
Wk. 11	Text: Mencius and Hsun Tzu on human nature Question 1: Are the two authors as opposed as they seem? Question 2: Is human nature good, or evil?	Quiz 7
Wk. 12	Text: Aquinas' <i>Treatise on Law</i> : Q. 90 (on Canvas) Question 1: Is an unjust 'law' really a law? Question 2: What is a/the 'common good'?	Quiz 8
Wk. 13	Text: Aquinas' <i>Treatise on Law</i> : Q. 94 (on Canvas) Question: How helpful is it in determining right from wrong?	
Wk. 14	Text: Plato's <i>Republic</i> (Selections) (on Canvas) Question: Is Justice good for the individual, or just the community?	RP2
Wk. 15	Text: Aquinas' <i>SCG</i> , Bk. III, Chapter 129 (on Canvas) Question 1: How do we live up to our rationality? Question 2: What is the supreme common good?	
Wk.16	Review of Semester	Final

Students with Disabilities:

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities.

If you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please contact:

Office of Student Disability Resources and Services

Texas A&M University-Commerce

Gee Library

Room 132

Phone (903) 886-5150 or (903) 886-5835

Fax (903) 468-8148

StudentDisabilityServices@tamuc.edu

Nondiscrimination Notice

Texas A&M University-Commerce will comply in the classroom, and in online courses, with all federal and state laws prohibiting discrimination and related retaliation on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, disability, age, genetic information or veteran status. Further, an environment free from discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression will be maintained.