Philosophy 3100: Ethics

Course Description and Goals
A study of the major approaches to ethical thought and the applicability of these approaches to selected issues in the humanities, sciences, and professional areas including business, medicine and law. We will consider the challenges to Morality by discussing Moral Theories, from selections of some of the most influential ethical theories of the past, along with commentary by contemporary thinkers. In the third part, Moral Problems, the readings will present us current debates over abortion, euthanasia, famine relief, terrorism, torture, affirmative action, animal rights, and the environment, concluding with essays on death and the meaning of life. This course aims to create and maintain an atmosphere conducive to rigorous intellectual dialogue, analysis & critique; with professionalism and respectability. Think of these as ground rules or guidelines for our time together.

- We shall listen to one another – patiently, carefully – assuming that each of us is doing the best that she or he can. *And because we assume this about each other, each of us shall do the best that she or he can.*
- We will speak thoughtfully by: speaking in the first person; not engaging in foul language; refraining from remarks showing a lack of respect for the feelings and thoughts of others; refusing to make comments that disparage any person or group on the basis of race, gender, ethnicity, national origin, religion, social class, or sexual orientation; and remembering that the social locations of persons, whether present in the class or not, are to be respected at all times.
- We will address our colleagues in our classroom by name in recognition of their humanity and individuality. We will claim ownership of our own assumptions, our conclusions, and their implications for moral development and social change.
- We will be open to each other’s intellectual growth and change.
- We cannot be blamed for the misinformation we have been taught and have absorbed from our societies and cultures, but we shall be held responsible for repeating and acting out on misinformation after we have learned otherwise.

Course Requirements
Each student’s grade will be based upon:

1) Active and well prepared class participation, including the completion of all readings before the class for which they are assigned. Attendance is a requirement, and students are responsible for all assignments. For every two (2) recorded class absences, there will be a deduction of one (1) letter grade from the Class Participation grade – 10% of overall grade. Since attendance is crucial to the success of the student, you are responsible for all materials missed.

2) Your grade will also be based on the completion and quality of four (4) short “Thought Papers.” These are position papers, 3-5 pages in length, in which you must state an opinion on a debate topic assigned by the instructor (10% each) totaling 40% of the overall grade. Your “Thought Papers” are due in-class & stapled on the dates assigned. Late papers will be assessed a penalty of one letter grade deducted for each additional class session.
3) Two, in-class, essay examinations (25% each) totaling 50% of overall grade. You are required to supply a large BLUE BOOK (or GREEN = recycled) for both exams, which will be collected and redistributed the day of the exam. BLUE BOOKS can be purchased from the Bookstore for @ .35¢.

**Required Text:**

**Schedule and Reading List:**

**INTRODUCTION**

January 24:
Intro, vocabulary

**PART I: CHALLENGES TO MORALITY**  
"God, please make me pure ... but not yet!" ~ St. Augustine

January 26:  
*Morality and Moral Philosophy* William K. Frankena, p.3

January 31:  
*How Not to Answer Moral Questions* Tom Regan, p.25

February 2:  
*God and Morality*, Steven M. Cahn, p.30

February 7:  
*The Challenge of Cultural Relativism*, James Rachels, p.34  
*Right and Wrong*, Thomas Nagel, p.47

February 9:  
*Egoism and Moral Scepticism*, James Rachels, p. 51

February 14:  
*Happiness and Immorality*, Cahn & Murphy, p.63

February 16:  
*The Nature of Ethical Disagreement*, Charles Stevenson, p.70

**PART II: MORAL THEORIES**  
"Be Good" ~ His Holiness, The Dalai Lama

February 21:  
*The Categorical Imperative*, Immanuel Kant, p.79  
*A Simplified Account of Kant's Ethics*, Onora O'Neill, p.89

February 23:  
*Utilitarianism*, John Stuart Mill, p.93  
*Strengths and Weaknesses of Utilitarianism*, Louis P. Pojman, p.105

February 28:  
*The Nature of Virtue*, Aristotle, p.114  
*Virtue Ethics*, Bernard Mayo, p.120

March 2 – **Midterm Exam**

**PART III: MORAL PROBLEMS**  
"Life's most persistent and urgent question is, 'What are you doing for others?'" ~ Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr.

March 16:  
*A Defense of Abortion*, Judith Jarvis Thomson, p.145  
*On the Moral and Legal Status of Abortion*, Mary Anne Warren, p.164
March 21:
Why Abortion Is Immoral, Don Marquis, p.182
Virtue Theory and Abortion, Rosalind Hursthouse, p.190

March 23:
Saying No to Human Cloning, Evans (Ga View/Vista)
A Cabbit in Sheep's Clothing, Tim Renick, (Ga View/Vista)

March 28:
Active and Passive Euthanasia, James Rachels, p.203

March 30:
The Ethics of Care Virginia Held, p.123
Suicide

April 4:
Famine, Affluence, and Morality, Peter Singer, p.218

April 6:
Terrorism, Michael Walzer, p.239
Is Terrorism Distinctively Wrong? Lionel McPherson, p.248

April 11:
Torture, Henry Shue, p.254
Ticking Bombs, Torture, and the Analogy with Self-Defense, Daniel J. Hill, p.268

April 13:
Just-War Theory, Anscomb (Ga View/Vista)

April 18:
The Case for Animal Rights, Tom Regan, p.300
The Case for the Use of Animals in Biomedical Research, Carl Cohen, p.314

April 20:
We Are What We Eat, Tom Regan, p.326
Philosophical Problems for Environmentalism Elliott Sober, p.334

April 25:
“The Meaning of Life”

April 27:
Death, Thomas Nagel, p.356
The Meaning of Life, Richard Taylor, p.366

May 2 – Final Exam

*Note: This syllabus represents a general plan for the course; changes may be necessary as the semester progresses.*