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 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 an essential requirement, and students are responsible for all assignments. Because our Summer Semester is a rigorously condensed 4-week session, attendance is crucial to your success; therefore, you are permitted one (1) absence without penalty. Additional recorded absences will result in a deduction of one (1) letter grade from the Class Participation grade – 10% of overall grade.

2) Your grade will also be based on the completion and quality of two (2) short “Thought Papers.” These are position papers, @ 5 pages in length, in which you must state an opinion on a debate topic assigned by the Instructor (20% each, totaling 40% of the overall grade). Your “Thought Papers” are due in-class (stapled) on the date 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 Examination Book (BLUE BOOK) 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:

June 1: INTRODUCTION(s)

June 2:
Intro, vocabulary

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

June 6:
Morality and Moral Philosophy, William K. Frankena, p.3
How Not to Answer Moral Questions, Tom Regan, p.25
God and Morality, Steven M. Cahn, p.30

June 7:
The Challenge of Cultural Relativism, James Rachels, p.34
Right and Wrong, Thomas Nagel, p.47
Happiness and Immorality, Cahn & Murphy, p.63

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

June 8:
The Categorical Imperative, Immanuel Kant, p.79
A Simplified Account of Kant's Ethics, Onora O'Neill, p.89
Utilitarianism, John Stuart Mill, p.93
Strengths and Weaknesses of Utilitarianism, Louis P. Pojman, p.105

June 9:
The Nature of Virtue, Aristotle, p.114
Virtue Ethics, Bernard Mayo, p.120

Paper 1 due

June 13 – 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.

June 14:
A Defense of Abortion, Judith Jarvis Thomson, p.145
On the Moral and Legal Status of Abortion, Mary Anne Warren, p.164
Why Abortion Is Immoral, Don Marquis, p.182

June 15:
Active and Passive Euthanasia, James Rachels, p.203

June 16:
Famine, Affluence, and Morality, Peter Singer, p.218
June 20:
*Terrorism*, Michael Walzer, p.239
*Is Terrorism Distinctively Wrong?* Lionel McPherson, p.248

**Paper 2 due**

June 21:
*Torture*, Henry Shue, p.254

June 22:
*The Case for Animal Rights*, Tom Regan, p.300
*The Case for the Use of Animals in Biomedical Research*, Carl Cohen, p.314
*Philosophical Problems for Environmentalism*, Elliott Sober, p.334

June 23:
*Death*, Thomas Nagel, p.356
*The Meaning of Life*, Richard Taylor, p.366

**June 27 – Final Exam**

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