Course Syllabus

**Phil. 2314, Ethics**  
Spring 2015  
Section D: Monday, Wednesday 12:10 pm – 1:25 pm, Strake 201  
Section NA: Monday, Wednesday 5:30 pm – 6:45 pm, Malloy Hall 012

John Boyer, Adjunct Professor  
Email: boyerj@stthom.edu  
Office Hours: Friday 2:00 pm – 3:00 pm in Rm. 109 of the Mathematics Department

**Required Texts:**


Readings from Thomas Aquinas will be assigned and can be accessed at newadvent.org/summa/ while all other additional reading materials will come in the form of handouts available on Blackboard.

**The aim of the course:**

In this course, we will pursue the questions “what is ethics?”; “what is virtue and vice?”; “how ought we to live?” and “what is the best life for human beings?” We will explore the notion of ethics as a practical science, that is, how our knowledge of the principles of human action relates to our own action here and now. To this end, we must consider the *telos* (end) and proper activity of human beings in order to come to know the nature of human acts and the corresponding roles of reason, will, and bodily appetites in these acts.

Ethics gives rise to very strongly held opinions which can lead to passionate debate. These can be good things as long as we maintain respect for opposing positions. However, I expect students to think before speaking. If you wish to offer your opinion, you ought to be ready to provide good reasons to support it. Above all this is a philosophy course, and philosophy requires thinking and frowns upon emoting!

You are not required to agree unconditionally with the ethical theories presented in class. You are, however, expected to understand them. You should not dismiss a position *prima facie* without being able to explain why the author holds the position and why the author is wrong. Simple assertion is not sufficient.
Assignments and Grading:

There will be a midterm which will be worth 20%. Two essays which will each be worth 20% of your grade. There will be a final exam worth 30% of your grade. Class participation will constitute the remaining 10%.

A = 100-95%; A- = 90-94; B+ = 87-89; B = 83-86; B- = 80-82; C+ = 77-79; C = 73-76; C- = 70-72; D = 60-69; F = 59 and below.

Attendance and Participation

One of the best ways to learn is to ask questions and to discuss them. This is definitely true of philosophy. Since most students will have only taken one philosophy class, questions and discussion are encouraged. All students should be prepared to answer questions in class and to participate in discussions. To earn participation you must be present and provide thoughtful comments and questions.

If you do not show up, know that I am a professor who will improvise and alter the course as it goes along; you are accountable not only for what is found in the readings but also for what I say in class. If you are not present to hear it and are unaware of the alterations, your grade might be negatively affected. Those in college to learn something worth knowing, I suspect, will do so in this class. Please notify me by email when you are going to be absent and of the reason for it.

Electronic distractions such as computers, smartphones, and tablets (e.g. iPads) may not be used during class.

Academic Dishonesty

Cheating and plagiarism will not be tolerated. If I discover cheating or blatant plagiarism, the student will automatically fail the class. This is a class about ethics, so please act ethically.

If you are worried about inadvertent plagiarism, please visit campusguides.stthom.edu/plagiarism for suggestions about paraphrasing and when to cite a text to which you are referring.

Disabilities

Any student with a documented disability needing academic accommodations is requested to speak with me as early as possible. All discussions will remain confidential. Students with disabilities will also need to contact Counseling and Disability Services in Crooker Center. This office can be reached at (713) 525-2169 or 6953.

Disclaimer

This syllabus is subject to change at the professor’s discretion.
Recommended Reading

