This course offers an introduction to ethics, focusing on the most important ethical issues: good and evil, meaning of life, happiness, virtue, justice, the foundation of moral actions. The main ethical theories presented in this course are: virtue ethics, deontology and utilitarianism. The course explores also various contemporary issues such as business ethics and bioethics. The aim of the course is to help students better understand and shape their own life and to train them in ethical reasoning. Through writing assignments and oral presentations, students will also be encouraged to improve their writing and oral skills. Active class participation is required. The syllabus is subject to changes.

T Aug 25
Presentation

Th Aug 27
Introduction to Ethical Theories
Movie discussion: The Others, The Secret Life of Walter Mitty

ETHICAL THEORIES

1. VIRTUE ETHICS
T Sep 1
Plato, Republic, ch.1 (what is justice?) p. 3-25

Th Sep 3
Plato, Republic (Why it is good to be good?) p. 36-43

T Sep 8
Plato, Republic Ch. 4 The supremacy of good (transcendence of good) 508 c- 521 a (p. 235-248)

Th Sep 10
Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics, Book I, ch. 7, happiness, p. 11-22

T Sep 15
Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics, Book II , ch. 5 virtues p. 35-47, Movie discussion: As good as it gets

Th Sep 17
Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics, Book 8, friendship p. 192-200

T Sep 22
Presentations I

Th Sep 24
St. Thomas Aquinas, Summa of the Summa, happiness p. 349-359

T Sep 29
St. Thomas Aquinas, Summa of the Summa, natural law p. 392-399

Th Oct 1
Team work: Find concrete moral problems and try to solve them according to Aquinas’ natural law.
T Oct 6

Th Oct 8 – No class – teacher goes to conference

T Oct 13 – Fall break

Th Oct 15
*Paper due: “What is the good life according to Plato and Aristotle?” (3 pages)*

T Oct 20
Presentations II

3. DEONTOLOGY
Th Oct 22
Kant, *Grounding for the Metaphysics of morals* – the categoric imperative (on BB)

T Oct 27
Kant, *Grounding for the Metaphysics of morals* – the categoric imperative (on BB)

4. UTILITARIANISM
Th Oct 29
Mill, *Utilitarianism* – on BB

T Nov 3
Mill, *Utilitarianism* – on BB

Th Nov 5
Presentations III

CONTEMPORARY MORAL ISSUES

1. BUSINESS ETHICS
T Nov 10

Th Nov 12

T Nov 17
Business Ethics: Karl Marx, *Alienated Labor*, in *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts* (on BB)
Movie discussion: *Fight Club*

2. BIOETHICS: ABORTION
Th Nov 19
Alexaner Pruss: *I Was Once a Fetus – Against Abortion* (on BB)

T Nov 24
Judith Jarvis Thomson: *A defense of Abortion* (on BB)

Th Nov 26 - Thanksgiving
T Dec 1
Presentations IV

Th Dec 3
Final exam preparation – Study Guide on BB

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Grade:

a. grade structure:
   - 1/4 class participation (participation to discussions, disputation, team work)
   - 1/4 paper “What is the good life according to Plato and Aristotle?” (3 pages, 12 ct, 1.5 lines, Times New Roman), due Thursday, October 15
   - 1/4 presentation
   - 1/4 final exam (questions from the Study Guide posted on BB)

b. extra-credits:
   1. for class participation (including make up on absences): paper “Compare Aquinas' natural law and Kant's categoric imperative” (5 pages, 12 ct, 1.5 lines, Times New Roman)
   2. for final exam: 2 extra questions, not from the study guide

c. penalties:
   1. only 2 unexcused absences are allowed. For every additional unexcused absence your class participation grade will be lowered with half letter
   2. For each time you use the cell phone in class without previous permission (granted only in emergency cases), your class participation grade will be lowered with half letter.
   3. computer use is not allowed: if you use it, you will be asked to leave the class and you will get F for class participation. Computer use can be allowed only in case of special personal needs – please talk to me.
   4. for each task that you miss in class (disputation and team work) your class participation grade will be lowered with one letter.
   5. for each assignment that you do not perform (paper and presentation) you will get F.
   6. for an unexcused absence at the exam your exam grade will be lowered with one letter.
   7. if you come late to class more than 5 times, your class participation grade will be lowered with one letter.

Texts:

Classroom etiquette:
No computers, no phones, no ipods, no food.

Blackboard:
This course will make intensive use of the online blackboard. Please make sure that you have access to it and that you check it regularly.

Students with disabilities
Any student with a disability requiring accommodations in this course is encouraged to contact Counseling and Disability Services in Crockerer Center. Their offices can be reached at (713) 525-6953 or 2169.