Course Description: This course is an introduction to the basic issues in philosophical ethics. The first part will be an introduction to theories about happiness, the human good, and the moral life. The second part is concerned with the evaluation of human acts, and will involve a consideration of consequentialism in the context of ethical issues such as killing innocents in warfare, lying, and the relevance of the distinction between contraception and Natural Family Planning. The third part considers the cardinal virtues, namely prudence, justice, fortitude, and temperance, and will finish with a consideration of grace and love.

Texts: The books below are available from the UST bookstore. Supplementary and recommended readings from authors including Thomas More and Elizabeth Anscombe will be distributed via email or Blackboard.


O’Keefe, Martin D. *Known From The Things That Are*. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1987. 978-0268012281 (Must be purchased from Mrs. Hall in Sullivan Hall (Philosophy House), Yoakum St.)


Evaluation: Students will be expected to take two exams. There will also be two short papers (750-1000 words) on an assigned topic. Plagiarism will result in failure for the course. Reading response questions will be assigned daily, and answers should be posted on Blackboard. Class participation is expected in the form of asking relevant questions or making relevant comments. You must read the assignment if you wish to participate. “Pop Quizzes” will be distributed throughout the term at the beginning of class. There are no makeup “Pop Quizzes” for those who arrive late or miss class. Computer or cell phone use is prohibited during class. You can type up your notes after class. Absences will hurt your grade. Assuming relatively few absences, the breakdown will be:

- Tests: 40% (20% Mid-Term, 20% Final)
- Short Papers: 40%
- Participation/Quizzes/Daily Reading Responses: 20%
The professor reserves the right to edit this syllabus. If you have a documented disability that will impact your work in this class, please contact me to discuss your needs in person. Additionally, you will need to register with the Counseling and Disability Services Office in Crooker Center. This office can be reached at (713) 525-2169 or 6953. Readings from Known From the Things That Are will be assigned throughout the semester.

Recommended Reading:


Schedule of Readings:


Wed Jan 25. Plato’s Republic I

Mon Jan 30. Republic IV and VII (selections), IX


Mon Feb 6. Happiness as Contemplation: Aristotle (EN, X. 4-9)


Mon Feb 13. Natural Law (Thomas, 643-645, especially q. 84, aa. 2,4,6).

Wed Feb 15. Natural Law (Thomas, 647-652)


Wed Feb 22. Voluntary Action (Thomas Aquinas, S.T., I-II, q. 6, art. 8, on Blackboard) and Thomistic Action Theory (ST I-II, 6-17 selections on Blackboard).

Mon Feb 27. Good and Evil Action (Thomas, 566-574, especially ST I-II, 18.1-5). Intrinsic Evils.


Mon Mar 13. Spring Break

Wed Mar 15. Spring Break


Mon Mar 27. Virtues: Plato (*Republic* IV) and Aristotle (*EN*, II. 2-7)

Mon Mar 29. Cardinal Virtues: Aquinas (Thomas, 658-70; ST I-II, q. 55.4, 56 on Blackboard).

Mon Apr 3. Prudence (*EN*, VI.3-8, 13; Thomas, ST I-II 65.1-4, ST II-II, qq. 47-56 selections on Blackboard)

Wed Apr 5. Prudence (Pieper, all)

Mon Apr 10. Justice (Thomas, ST II-II, q. 58, art. 7; q. 61, art. 1 on Blackboard)


Mon Apr 17. Fortitude (*EN*, III.6-9)

Wed Apr 19. Fortitude (Pieper, 117-141). **Paper 2 Due.**

Mon Apr 24. Temperance (*EN*, III.10-12)

Wed Apr 26. Temperance (Pieper, 145-206; Thomas, ST II-II, q. 161, 166-7 selections on Blackboard).

Mon May 1. Love (Dietrich Von Hildebrand, JPII, TBA)

Wed May 3. Review.

TBD Final Exam.