Ethics

University of St. Thomas, Houston, TX
Spring 2018
Monday, Wednesday, Friday 11:10 AM – 12:00 PM
Classroom: Strake 207

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Office: Sullivan Hall 213
Office Hours: Monday/Wednesday 12:10 PM – 12:40 PM; Tuesday/Thursday 5:00 PM – 5:30 PM

Course Summary:

As the second step into a student’s core education of Philosophy at the university, this course will serve as an introductory overview of ethics in the history of philosophy. This course will survey select primary philosophical texts from the Ancient and Medieval periods, with secondary sources on Modern thought. We shall also consider perennial philosophical questions such as: the nature of the good, the truth regarding happiness, moral responsibility, the meaning of human existence, and the relation of Christian themes to our study of ethics. The primary texts considered will be those of Plato and Aristotle (5th Century B.C.), and St. Thomas Aquinas (13th Century A.D.).

Primary Objectives:

The primary aim of the course is to explore the fundamental questions of ethics through key figures in the history of philosophy from Ancient to Modern times. Moreover, our goal is to intersect our present study of philosophy to our contemporary lives. Students will learn how to analyze philosophical texts directly, as well how to express themselves critically through articulating philosophical positions in writing.

Student Learning Outcomes:

In a writing assignment, students will present in a clear manner and in their own words, an argument in a valid form, a counterargument, and an effective response to that counterargument.

Note: this syllabus is subject to revision at the discretion of the professor.
Required Texts:


Classroom Expectations:

Philosophy cannot only be studied passively (through readings or lectures); it must be actively engaged. Accordingly, classes will consist in lectures and seminar style discussions. **Students are expected to participate in class dialogue by asking questions and posing solutions to philosophical inquiries.** Obviously, this will require regular classroom attendance.

If help is needed in further understanding the class, or in preparing for the exam, or in writing the papers, please do not hesitate to contact me during office hours, or by appointment. Students can also find help at the Tutoring Center, on the second floor of the Crooker center; they have a tutor specifically for Philosophy.

Assignments and Examinations:

Check class schedule page for assignment dates. Reading assignments are to be completed before class.

Reading Assignments: **Reading assignments of primary texts are mandatory.** If a student does not complete the assigned reading for a particular day, this will severely impact their ability to understand the class lecture or discussion. **You will not get a good grade in this class without staying on top of the class readings; the lectures alone are not enough to understand the material. Class lectures presume you have read the material in question.**

Quizzes: There will be a brief quiz at the beginning of some classes on the material covered in the previous class. If you miss a quiz, I will allow you to make it up, however, the make-up quiz will be more challenging than the original quiz.

Short research papers: There will be two short research papers throughout the semester, the topics of which will be discussed in class at the appropriate time. **The objective of this paper will be to present in a clear manner and in your own words, an argument in a valid form, a counterargument, and an effective response to that counterargument.** These papers should be approximately **1500 words** (about 5 pages), double spaced, Times New Roman font, size 12. The format of these papers should be in Chicago style. They should be turned in electronically (via email), as well as printed at the beginning of class on each due date.

Note: this syllabus is subject to revision at the discretion of the professor.
These are individual projects. If you use the work of another student, you will receive an F for the course and I will report you for academic dishonesty, as this is another form of plagiarism. Do not share your papers with other students.

The cover page and works cited page are not part of the expected page count.

Examinations: There will be a mid-term and final exam consisting of multiple-choice, along with short essay questions. The final exam will be cumulative.

Missing the final exam will result in failure of the final exam. If you cannot take the exam on the scheduled date, you are responsible for scheduling an alternate time to take the final before the end of the final exam period.

Grade Distribution and Scale:

- **Quizzes**: 10%
- **First Short Paper**: 15%
- **Second Short Paper**: 25%
- **Mid-Term Exam**: 20%
- **Final Exam**: 30%

A: 93-100  
A-: 90-92  
B+: 87-89  
B: 83-86  
B-: 80-82  
C+: 77-79  
C: 73-76  
C-: 70-72  
D+: 67-69  
D: 63-66  
D-: 60-62  
F: 59 or below

Attendance:

Students are required to attend class. Students are expected to be on-time each day to take the quiz. Examination questions on the mid-term and final will follow from what is dealt with in class. If you have a good reason for being absent, please let me know ahead of time if possible. If a student has an excused absence, they will not receive a quiz grade for the day. Instead, the quiz for that particular day would be dropped.

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Suggestions for Class Readings:

Students are encouraged to take careful notes on each of the reading assignments. Clear, slow, patient reading is necessary to accomplish this. Students will find that their work in this regard will be indispensable for them for the mid-term and final exams. There will not be enough time to re-read texts; students will have to rely primarily on their notes (both class notes, as well as textual notes) for the purpose of study.

Academic Dishonesty:

**Plagiarism and cheating in any form will result in an F for the course. All plagiarism will be reported to the registrar. If a student is caught plagiarizing twice in his or her academic career, they will be expelled from the university.**

Plagiarism means using another author’s work in part or in whole without attributing it to that author. This includes not quoting or citing the author when using his words, or paraphrasing the author without proper citation. Another form of cheating is to copy another student’s work (be it in a paper or during the exam), or to have another person do your work. **To be clear: the definition of plagiarism is to take credit for another person’s ideas.** This means that if you take an idea from another source and do not give credit to the original author by providing a citation, you are plagiarizing. Changing the words (i.e., paraphrasing) is still plagiarism; it does not need to be a verbatim match to be considered plagiarism.

If you are worried about inadvertent plagiarism, please visit http://campusguides.stthom.edu/plagiarism for suggestions about paraphrasing and when to cite a text to which you are referring. **Unintentional plagiarism is not a valid excuse. It is your responsibility as college students to not only be familiar with what plagiarism is and how to avoid it, but also how to write a college-level research paper.**

**Do not copy and paste from Wikipedia articles or other similar kinds of on-line summaries, or from papers posted by other students on-line. Wikipedia is not an academic source, SparkNotes is not one either, and neither are other students.** Aside from the universally accessible tool of Google, your professor also has easy access to “Turn-it-in.”

**Fair warning: The first thing I do before grading any paper is check thoroughly for plagiarism. If you are guilty of academic dishonesty in my judgment, I will inform you by email and submit the report. I am neither lenient nor open to negotiation on this matter. No excuses.**
Disability Statement:

Any student with a documented disability needing academic accommodations is requested to speak with me as early as possible. All discussions will remain confidential. If you have a documented disability that will impact your work in this class, please contact Counseling and Disability Services Office in Crooker Center. This office can be reached at (713) 525-6953 or 2169. If you have questions or concerns regarding the accommodation process, please call Debby Jones or Rose Signorello at ext. 6953 or 3162 at Counseling and Disability Services.