PHL 110E.01: Introduction to Ethics

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In general, human beings seek not the way of their ancestors, but the good.
--Aristotle, Politics 1269a3-4

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This course introduces you to the major approaches to the study of ethics within the Western philosophical tradition. We'll supplement our inquiry with some vital American history and art from the 20th century.

Required Texts
Julia Driver, Ethics: The Fundamentals
I've placed all other readings on Moodle (M). You'll also find a copy of the syllabus there. For more information on how to access Moodle, login and then select Moodle 101 for students (or ask a friend).

Course Requirements
1. Exam #1 (Friday, February 15) 25%
2. Exam #2 (Wednesday, March 13) 30%
3. Final Exam (Wednesday, May 1) 45%

The exams will be multiple-choice based on the lectures and readings. Missed exams cannot normally be made up.

Email
Any email that I send to the class will be sent to your university email address via Moodle. Be sure to check your university email on a regular basis.
Disabilities
Please let me know at the beginning of the term if you’ll need accommodations from Disability Services for Students (DSS). If you need to take your exams through DSS, you must arrange this in advance, and you must provide verification of your disability from DSS. You can find more information at the DSS website.

Attendance and Etiquette:
Attendance is critical, but there are too many of you for me to keep track of it. Come to class regularly, and be sure to get notes from a colleague if you miss one. You’ll get much more out of the course, including a better grade.

To avoid disrupting our collective learning space, please (a) make a point to arrive on time and stay for the duration of the meeting. If you have to leave early, sit near an exit and close the door gently; (b) put your cell phone away and turn off the ringer; (c) refrain from playing on any other devices during our meeting. In brief: do your best to be present, focused, and considerate.

Academic Misconduct
In fairness to your classmates—and yourself—I’ll hold you strictly to the UM Student Conduct code (http://www.umt.edu/SA/). The exams are closed-note: you are not to consult anything, except your own mind, while taking them. Absolutely no cell phones or other devices may be used during the taking of exams. The first instance of cheating or other forms of academic dishonesty will result in an “F” for the course and may also be subject to University sanction.

Schedule of Readings and Lectures
(Changes to the schedule are possible)

Context

January

F 11   Introduction

M 14   Context: Some European History (No reading)

W 16   What is Ethics About? Driver, Introduction, pp. 1-10

F 18   Context: Some American History (No reading)

M 21   Martin Luther King Jr. Day. No Class.

Resistance to Normative Ethics: Relativism, Religion, Egoism, Nihilism
W 23  *Relativism* (Simple Subjectivism) Driver, ch. 1

F 25  *Relativism* (Cultural Relativism) Driver

M 28  Appiah, “Relativism and Cross-Cultural Understanding” (M)

W 30  *Universalism* Driver ch. 1

F 1  *Religion and Ethics* (Divine Command Theory) Driver, ch. 2, pp. 22-31

**February**

M 4  *Egoism* Driver, ch. 2, pp. 31-39

W 6  *Egoism* continued

F 8  Documentary: *Courage to Care*. True tales from the 20th century

M 11  *Nihilism* Driver, ch. 10; Didion, “On Morality” (M)

W 13  Review

F 15  Exam 1

M 18  Presidents’ Day. No Class.

W 20  No class.

F 22  Hume and Sympathy (No reading)

**Normative Ethics: Utilitarianism and Consequentialism**

M 25  *Classical Utilitarianism* Driver ch. 3, pp. 40-50 (Bentham)

W 27  *Classical Utilitarianism* continued (Mill)

**March**

F 1  *Classical Utilitarianism* continued (Nozick) (M)

M 4  *Contemporary Utilitarianism* Driver ch. 4, pp. 61-66 (The Problem of Justice)

W 6  *Contemporary Utilitarianism* continued

F 8  Hare, “What Is Wrong with Slavery” (M)

M 11  Review
Normative Ethics: Kant and Deontology

M 18 Kantian Ethics Driver ch. 5, pp. 80-87 (Motives)
W 20 Kantian Ethics Driver ch. 5, pp. 87-93 (Moral Law and Universalizability)
F 22 TBA

March 25-29 Spring Break
April

M 1 Kantian Ethics Recap (no new reading this week)
W 3 Kantian Ethics (Categorical imperatives; Perfect and Imperfect Duties)
F 5 Kantian Ethics (Humanity formulation)
M 8 MLK Jr., “Letter from a Birmingham Jail” (M)
W 10 “Brown v. Board of Education” (M)
F 12 Documentary: Eyes on the Prize: Fighting Back. (Resistance to Brown.)

Normative Ethics: Aristotle and Virtue

M 15 Virtue Ethics Driver, ch. 8, pp. 136-146; Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics Book I (M) (Eudaimonia)
W 17 Nicomachean Ethics Books I-II (M) (Eudaimonia and Virtue of Character)
F 19 Nicomachean Ethics Book II (Specific Virtues)
M 22 Nicomachean Ethics Book II (How Virtue is Acquired)
W 24 “The Conscience of Huckleberry Finn” (M) (Non-Virtuous States of Character)
F 26 Wrap-Up

Final Exam: Weds. May 1, 10:10a-12:10p (SS 356)
The final will cover only and all of the material from March 15 on.