PHL 110E.50: Introduction to Ethics

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PHIL 110: Introduction to Ethics, Velasco

Class Info and Office Hours:

- Dr. Melodie Velasco Stenger, melodie.velasco@umontana.edu (Please call me Dr. Velasco or Dr. V)
- Office: Eck Hall/Liberal Arts Building, Room 145
  - Office Hours: Wednesdays, 11:30-12:15; Thursdays, 12:30-1:15

Teaching Assistant: Anne Belldina
- Office Hours: TBA

Course Description:

We often find ourselves feeling we know the fictional characters within our favorite stories as well as if not better than the people around us. As readers and viewers, we are in the position of being able to judge those characters’ actions with clarity. But what does it mean, and what does it take, for one to be a person of character? What does it mean and what does it take to live a whole life, a life of integrity? Considering various works of fiction and memoir and a few developmental psychologists alongside such canonical philosophers as Descartes, Hegel, and Aristotle, this course is an attempt to answer that question. We end by considering the current ethical climate, taking up Carol Gilligan’s *In A Different Voice* as well as some works on animal ethics to extend the question thusly: what is most required of the person of character by today’s society? This is an online course with over 1,100 pages of reading, weekly reading journal assignments, tests, and a final exam.

Learning Outcomes:

As an introductory philosophy course, this course will coach students to attain, at minimum, an ability to read exceedingly complicated and nuanced texts; this ability is not presupposed. The excellent student, however, will surpass this skill if she attains the ability to write in such a way that her complicated and nuanced understanding—her reading of the text—is communicated in a clear and persuasive fashion. As an introductory ethics course, this course uses the self-development of the traditional college-aged student within broader society as its touchstone. The excellent student will discover that the sensitivity and responsibility required by successful reading and writing are also required by successful listening and speaking, and that these last two actions, when performed well, are central to being a person of character.

At the conclusion of this course, the successful student will be able to:

1. Demonstrate habits of a successful reader (vocabulary, marginalia, Spark Points);
2. List and define the chief parts of a Problem Synopsis and an Argument Analysis;
3. Define each of the Key Terms identified in each lesson’s Text Map;
4. Recognize and identify the outline of an argument within a text;

The excellent student will, in addition, be able to:

1. Critique the argument or a sub-argument in a given portion of text;
2. Formulate a counter-argument in response to a given text’s argument;
3. Construct a clean and organized prose presentation of a counter-argument, once formulated.

Texts:

I respect that many of you are working while in school. If financial hardship prevents you from printing and purchasing/renting your books, please contact me.

A large course packet is on Moodle; this should be printed in hardcopy.

The following two texts are required in hardcopy unless a learning difference requires another medium. **Do not wait to purchase these:** do it now. Do not purchase a different translation of the Aristotle.


These four texts are required, but the format and edition are up to you: electronic, audio, or even film versions are acceptable.


**Requirements:**

**Spark Points (25% of final grade):**

Upon completing each philosophical reading assignment, each student shall post at least one and not more than three Points (separate posts) on the appropriate Moodle discussion board. In no more text than will fit on one side of a 3x5 card, each SP should contain two parts: a **cited quotation** from the reading assignment that grabbed your attention, typed in full and cited such that I can find it again, and a **question** about that quotation. No late Spark Points are allowed. (However, see “Extra Credit,” below)

**Grading:** Only Points with both parts (cited quotation, question/response) will be graded. One Spark Point per assignment earns a C; 2, a B; 3, an A. *Please note that these are graded not on intellectual brilliance, but on completion as per the directions.* That being said, putting your best (thoughtful, grammatical, proofread) foot forward is always a good idea.

**Extra Credit:** Accurate answers to other students’ questions can replace a previously missed Spark Point. For example, if you only do 2 Spark Points during one week, but the next week do 3 Spark Points and accurately answer the question of a peer, you will receive not a B and an A, but two weeks of A’s.

Due Dates: 1/17, 1/24, 1/29, 2/3, 2/12, 2/21, 2/28, 3/17, 3/21, 411 by 11:55pm.

**Bridges (25% of final grade):**

Students will be added to small groups of 4 or 5 students, and these cohorts will remain unchanged throughout the term. The main objective of these cohorts is to complete the Bridges assignments. There are five, and one is due at the end of each Unit (2 due during Unit 4). The objective is to connect a scene or action from the literature assigned in that unit to the philosophical readings assigned in that unit. In summary form, the texts are as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Unit</th>
<th>Literature</th>
<th>Philosophy</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Hate U Give</td>
<td>Midgley/Adams</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Grading: Please see Moodle for more about how these are graded.

Tests (30% of final grade):
The Tests will
- be administered via our Moodle website;
- consist of ~10 multiple choice/true/false/short-answer style questions drawn from a larger pool of questions;
- be timed, taking no longer than ~25 minutes.

Students may
- use notes, books, the internet, and even peers, but not TAs during the Tests;
- may take each Test up to 3 times (highest grade will be recorded); an hour must separate each attempt.
  The questions in each attempt might be different.

Grading: The Tests will receive a stepped letter grade (A, A-, B+…). Those earning a C or below may opt to write a 300 word response to a short essay question to improve their grade; more details will be given at the time of the Test.

Final Exam (20% of final grade):
The Final Exam will consist of two parts. The first part consists of questions taken from previous exams and/or study guides. This Part One will be administered via Moodle with 3 re-takes allowed, much in the manner of the Tests, though each attempt is allotted 140 minutes. Part Two will consist of a comprehensive 400-word essay question that will require you to use one of the philosophical texts in the course to analyze a literary character’s choice or action. Part Two will be made available on Moodle 24 hours before it is due. It is due at 11:55pm on Wednesday, May 1st.

Grading: The first part of the Final Exam will receive a traditional stepped letter grade (A, A-, B+…). The second part will be graded as P for “passing,” E for “excellent,” U for “unsatisfactory,” or Z for “zero” (used solely for instances in which the second part is not submitted.) A P will increase the grade on Part One by one step (from a B to a B+), an E by two steps (from a B to an A-). A U will decrease the grade on Part One by one step (from a B to a B-), a Z by two steps (from a B to a C+).

Policies:

Attendance:
Course content is delivered as though this were a MWF 12-12:50 class. It is expected that you finish one lesson for every class meeting day, and that you complete it by 11:55pm of the class day it represents. Students falling too far behind in completion of class lessons will negatively impact the group-based Bridges assignment collected each unit, and so will be asked to drop the class.

Missed Assignments:
The course, while not completely flexible in its due dates, does offer sufficient flexibility such that you should not need to ask to submit late work. Please observe that Spark Points are due ~weekly and that the end of each unit requires Bridges assignments to be completed and Tests to be taken. Leniency regarding the due dates of Bridges and Tests will only be provided to students who have an excellent record of completing Spark Points.

If you expect to have difficulty with internet access for more than 3 days at a time, you must email me ahead of time if you are to be given the chance to complete any assignments due during that time. I am also more likely to be lenient if I have proof that you read this syllabus. To prove it, email me a picture of yourself and your favorite corny joke.
No Grade Option:
If you would like to forego looking at your grades during the semester to instead focus on your own feeling of satisfaction with your progress, I am happy to schedule additional online or in-person meetings to help you assess your understanding of the material. For more information, email me.

Academic Honesty:
All students must practice academic honesty. Academic misconduct is subject to an academic penalty by myself (at least the failing of the assignment in question, perhaps the failing of the course in its entirety) and/or a disciplinary sanction by the University. Written work may be screened by various plagiarism-screening websites. For more, please review the University of Montana Student Conduct Code.

Academic honesty extends to looking for and creating digitized copies of the Test.

Accessibility:
Students with disabilities will receive reasonable accommodations. Please place your request with sufficient advance notice and be prepared to provide verification of disability and its impact from Disability Services. If you are going to take the Final Exam at DSS, please schedule it well in advance. See the Disability Services for Students website.

Please note that I understand that not all disabilities fall into a neat diagnostic category, and that not everyone with a disability can comfortably go through the process of getting it institutionally recognized, so please feel free to speak to me confidentially about any special needs or accommodations that you feel would help you learn effectively and display what you have learned in this class. My goal is to help you learn and do well in the class, not to hold you to a specific set of rules and institutional norms that does not suit your needs.

Parenting and Working Students:
Students who are also parents or who are working more than a few hours a week should find the flexibility of an online class helpful. However, if there is anything else I can do to specifically support your academic life, please do not hesitate to ask.

ESL Students:
This course is expected to be difficult for those for whom English is the primary language; it will be exceedingly difficult for those for whom English is a secondary language. I encourage ESL students to contact me early in the term to discuss how I might best support their success in the class. ESL students are permitted the use of a hardcopy dictionary during in-class assignments, and are encouraged to find translations of our required texts to use as additional support in reading and studying their assignments.

Further Changes:
If necessary, changes may be made to this syllabus during the course of the semester. Students are expected to note these changes as they are announced.
TL;DR

Class Info and Office Hours:
- Dr. Melodie Velasco Stenger, melodie.velasco@umontana.edu, LA145, W11:30-12:15, R12:30-1:15

Course Description:
What does it mean to be a person of character today?

Learning Outcomes:
I don’t assume that you know how to read hard stuff, but I intend to teach you. I’d be delighted if you could go even further and learn how to write well, but I’ll settle for teaching you how to read.

Texts:
Contact me if financial hardship is preventing you from printing, purchasing, or renting any of the following.

A large course packet is on Moodle; this should be printed in hardcopy.

The following two texts are required in hardcopy unless a learning difference requires another medium. **Do not wait to purchase these**: do it now. Do not purchase a different translation of the Aristotle.


These four texts are required, but the format and edition are up to you: electronic, audio, or even film versions are acceptable.


Requirements:

**Spark Points (25% of final grade):**
Due ~weekly on Moodle. Cannot be made up if missed. Extra credit is available.
Due Dates: 1/17, 1/24, 1/29, 2/3, 2/12, 2/21, 2/28, 3/17, 3/21, 4/11 by 11:55pm.

**Bridges (25% of final grade):**
Group work. Due at the conclusion of each unit: 1/25, 2/13, 3/13, 4/10, 4/26. Some flexibility in being made up if missed. No extra credit is available. Part of your score reflects other members’ thoughts about your contributions. Entails connecting the literature in each unit with the philosophy in each unit.

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<tr>
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**Tests (30% of final grade):**
The four Tests are due on 1/25, 2/13, 3/8, 4/26. You can take each one up to 3 times; each attempt is limited to 25 minutes. Those earning a C or below may opt to write a 300 word response to a short essay question to improve their grade.

**Final Exam (20% of final grade):**
The Final Exam will consist of two parts. Part One is multiple choice, due 5/3 at 11:55pm. Part One is a 400 word essay question, due 11:55pm on 5/1.

**Policies:**

**Attendance:**
Course content is delivered as though this were a MWF 12-12:50 class. It is expected that you finish one lesson for every class meeting day, and that you complete it by 11:55pm of the class day it represents. Students falling too far behind in completion of class lessons will negatively impact the group-based Bridges assignment collected each unit, and so will be asked to drop the class.

**Missed Assignments:**
The course, while not completely flexible in its due dates, does offer sufficient flexibility such that you should not need to ask to submit late work.

If you expect to have difficulty with internet access for more than 3 days at a time, you must email me ahead of time if you are to be given the chance to complete any assignments due during that time.

**Academic Honesty:**
I take Academic Honesty seriously. Plagiarism and looking for and creating digitized copies of the Test are all acts of academic dishonesty, and I will fail you if you commit them.

**Accessibility for diverse learners, parenting students, working students, ESL students:**
My goal is to help you learn and do well in the class, not to hold you to a specific set of rules and institutional norms that does not suit your needs. Help me help you.

**Further Changes:**
If necessary, changes may be made to this syllabus during the course of the semester. Students are expected to note these changes as they are announced.