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PHIL 200E.01: Ethics - The Great Tradition

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THE GREAT TRADITION
PHIL 200

Professor: Christopher J. Preston
Classroom: ED 214
Class time: Tuesday and Thursday, 2.10p.m – 3.30p.m.
Office: LA 148
Office hours: Tuesday 4-5pm, Wednesday 12-1pm, 2-3pm.
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1. Course Introduction:

This class is an introduction to theoretical and applied ethics in the western tradition. We have two goals this semester. One is to acquaint ourselves with some of the most influential ethical theories, including those of Aristotle, Thomas Hobbes, David Hume, Immanuel Kant, John Stuart Mill, and Nel Noddings. The second is to consider a number of contemporary ethical issues in the light of the theories. The issues considered will include cloning, assisted suicide, animal welfare, the environment, racism, and capital punishment.

Be warned that some of this reading is extremely difficult! Even after studying philosophy for several years, they remain challenging. When you are working through a reading do not get demoralized. We will use the class time to highlight the important points and to discuss their significance. A careful study of these influential thinkers, if you are prepared to put in the work, can be extremely rewarding.

2. Reading Material (required):


3. General Expectations:

I expect you to come to class having carefully read the material assigned for that week. As we talk about the reading, I will seek opinions on various topics and may pick out individuals to answer questions relevant to the reading and lecture. Please be prepared to discuss the issues and to bring your own questions and concerns to everyone’s attention. Some assignments in this class may require familiarity with Blackboard and E-res at the library. Please ensure that you know how to access these two digital services.
I also expect you to contribute **positively** to a community of learning. This means being respectful of those around you in the class at all times, including myself. You are expected to attend class, to not disrupt those around you unnecessarily, and to **stay for the duration of each class period**. I also expect complete academic integrity at every point of the course. Any academic dishonesty will lead to an automatic F for your semester grade and a meeting with the appropriate academic authorities. There will be no exceptions to this zero tolerance policy on academic dishonesty.

4. Reading Assignments (provisional):

**Week 1** (Jan 24, 26): HOW TO ARGUE IN ETHICS (1-5, 154-160).

**Week 2** (Jan 31, Feb 2): ADDRESSING RELATIVISM AND OTHER CHALLENGES (31-36, 20-28).

**Week 3** (Feb 7, 9): ARISTOTLE (5-6, 37-43).

**Week 4** (Feb 14, 16): AQUINAS, NATURAL LAW, AND HOMOSEXUALITY (6-8, 44-49, 144-153).

**Week 5** (Feb 21, 23): HOBBES AND WAR (8-10, 221-230).


**Week 7** (Mar 7, 9): MILL AND UTILITARIANISM (11-14, 64-75).

**Week 8** (Mar 14, 16): ASSISTED SUICIDE (175-179, 180-188).

**Week 9** (Mar 21, 23): ANIMAL RIGHTS (192-202, 190-191).

**SPRING BREAK**

**Week 10** (April 4, 6): KANT AND THE CATEGORICAL IMPERATIVE (17-18, 76-81).


**Week 12** (April 18, 20): FEMINIST ETHICS (82-93).

Week 14 (May 2, 4): BIOTECHNOLOGY AND ENVIRONMENT (114-127, 204-220).

*** Final Exam 1.10 – 3.10 p.m., Thurs, May 11th ***

5. Course Requirements:

a) Position papers (36 points). Three times during the semester you will be asked to write in class a 500 word (approx. 2 page, double-spaced) position paper on an ethical issue. You may bring in notes to help you with this position paper, but you must write the paper in class. You must turn in any notes that you bring with your completed paper. You will be graded on:
   1) your grasp of the moral complexity of the issue (4 points),
   2) your use of the philosophical theory learned in this class (4 points),
   3) the clarity and coherence with which you express your position (4 points).

b) Campus talk (14 points). UM offers a range of extra-curricular lectures, conferences, and talks on a variety of ethical issues. You are required to attend one of these events during the semester on your own initiative and to turn in a two page summary of the content and quality of the talk. You should also include some analysis that reflects the ethical theory we have been studying. You may not use an event that you are required to attend for another class. Suitable events can be found in the Kaimen, the Missoulian, the Independent, posted on flyers around campus, and on the website www.umt.edu/news. If you hear of a suitable upcoming campus event, you should feel free to announce it at the start of class.

c) Attendance and participation (10 points). Attendance and participation are required in this class. Attendance will be measured in part by unannounced in-class assignments that cannot be made up.

c) Final Exam (40 points). There will be a final exam on Thursday, May 11th at 1.10 p.m. that will test your knowledge of the reading and lecture throughout the semester. This exam may only be taken at the date specified. This date was set in the UM Calendar three years ago.

6. Additional remarks:
If you have any physical or learning disability that may make it hard for you to complete the requirements of this class, let me know right away and I will be happy to make appropriate accommodating arrangements.

I encourage you to use both my own and the teaching assistant’s office hours. We are paid to help you with this class! It is a good idea to use office hours as much as you need. Five or ten minutes of discussion can sometimes really help to clarify things. Use e-mail to stay in touch.

Finally, I ask you to contribute to the best learning environment possible as we share time together this semester. With your help, this class will be challenging, stimulating, and – I hope – helpful to your intellectual development.