Fall 9-1-2007

PHIL 200E.02: Ethics - The Great Traditions

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This is an introductory course in ethics. There are no prerequisites. We want to get at the bottom of the judgments we make about what is morally right and wrong. Specifically, what kind of reasons can we give for those judgments and prescriptions? We will study in depth three western moral theories that we frequently appeal to in order to justify the moral claims we make: theories about virtuous character, Kantian and rights theories, and utilitarianism. We'll also look at critiques of these three theories. In order to understand how these theories are applied and how satisfying they really are, we will test their application to some contemporary moral issues: abortion, euthanasia, capital punishment, duties to the environment, and duties to rescue. In addition to our reading, we'll watch three films that explore the application of these principles. By the end of the semester you should be more conscious and articulate about the moral judgments and prescriptions that you, family, friends, politicians, and religious authorities make, if nothing else.

Schedule

8/28 Hello
30 *The Elements of Moral Philosophy* (EMP), chpt. 1
9/4 *The Right Thing to Do* (RTD), p. 20-22, "Arguments"

RTD, chpt 10
6 RTD, chpt. 11
11 EMP, chpt 2
13 EMP, chpt 4
18 EMP, chpt 5
20 Crimes and Mismdeamors, film
25 Crimes
27 discussion of Crimes
10/2 Utilitarianism: EMP, chpt. 6; RDT, chpt 8
7 EMP, chpt. 7
9 NO class
11 RKT chpt 17, and chpt. 18
16 Kant and Rights: EMP, chpt. 8
18 EMP, chpt. 9
23 RTD, chpt. 24, and chpt. 25; "Death Penalty Unfair," David Love (x)
25 Dead Man Walking, film
30 finish Dead Man, discussion
11/1 discussion Dead Man and capital punishment
6 Virtue: EMP, chpt. 12
8 RTD, chpt. 4
13 EMP, chpt. 11
11/15 RTD, chpt. 22
11/20 NO class
27 Weapons of the Spirit, film
28 Weapons
12/4 discussion of Weapons
12/6 Last day!

Texts:
The Right Thing to Do, James Rachels & Stuart Rachels
The Elements of Moral Philosophy, James Rachels & Stuart Rachels
(x): paper reserve (Mansfield Library) and e-reserve (Password: Phil 200/Slicer)

Requirements
1) 13 weekly mini-exams (You’ll receive questions on Thursday prior to the exam.
   I’ll ask one question on the exam.) 55%
2) Comprehensive final exam 35%
3) Ethical Autobiography, 3 typed, double-spaced pages, due 9/4 at the beginning
   of class. I will accept NO late papers. 10%