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PHL 110E.R80: Introduction to Ethics (Honors)

Paul Muench

University of Montana, Missoula, paul.muench@umontana.edu

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University of Montana Fall 2020
Philosophy 110E.R02/R80
Prof. Paul Muench (pronounced “Minch”)

office: LA 151 **office hours:** T 2-3, W 12-3, or by appointment
mailbox: LA 152 **email:** paul.muench@umontana.edu **office phone:** (406) 243-2351

Introduction to Ethics

Tuesday/Thursday 12:30-1:50 p.m.

In this course we will consider some of the common ways that people think and talk about ethics. We will examine what sorts of things we should do, say, think or feel in certain situations, and why. Our chief goal will be to improve our ability to engage in meaningful conversations about what is good and right, so that we are better able to have productive discussions with our friends, neighbors, coworkers, family members, and fellow citizens. You will also be introduced to some of the skills and methods used in philosophical inquiry, skills and methods that may be useful in other sorts of inquiries as well. These include the ability to analyze and criticize arguments; the ability to articulate one’s own views and to support them with reasoned arguments; and the ability to read a text carefully, sympathetically, and critically.

This course satisfies the general education requirement for Group VIII: Ethics and Human Values. Upon completion of this course, you should be able to:

- (1) Correctly apply the basic concepts and forms of reasoning that we investigate to ethical issues that arise in some of the examples we consider;
- (2) Analyze and critically evaluate the basic concepts and forms of reasoning that we investigate.

Course Requirements

1. Exam #1: Monday, September 28
2. Exam #2: Monday, October 19
3. Exam #3: Monday, November 23

Students enrolled in the honors section of this course (section 80) will also be required to write a short paper and to take part in a discussion group that takes place every other week.

Readings

Books

These three books are required and can be purchased at the UM bookstore. It may also be worth checking the prices at [Amazon](https://www.amazon.com) or [BookFinder.com](https://www.bookfinder.com).

1. Henrik Ibsen, *A Doll’s House* (Dover, 1992 [1879]; ISBN 978-0486270623)
2. Richard Kyte, *An Ethical Life: A Practical Guide to Ethical Reasoning* (Anselm Academic, 2012; ISBN 978-1599820743)
3. Plato, *The Trial and Death of Socrates* (Hackett, 2000 [429-347 B.C.E.]; ISBN 978-0872205543)

The bookstore sells new and used physical copies of books, occasionally allows you to rent books (returnable at the end of the semester), and sometimes has digital copies of books. For this course, the bookstore has digital copies of *A Doll's House* and *The Trial and Death of Socrates*. If you'd like a digital copy of *An Ethical Life*, you will need to buy this from the publisher at a separate website.

Here is the link to the [UM Bookstore](#) . Under DEPARTMENT, select PHL; under COURSE, select 110E; under section, select R02 (honors students select R80).

If you would a digital copy of [An Ethical Life, please use this link](#) .

Additional Required Readings

I will make available additional required readings in Moodle.

Zoom (Remote Lectures)

Due to the risks of COVID-19, lectures for this course will be offered remotely using Zoom. I will also make available on Moodle recordings of the lectures.

Here is the [Zoom link we will use for all of our classes](#).

Here is a link where you can [download Zoom for free](#) .

Here is a link with tutorial videos that help you [learn how to use Zoom](#).

Moodle

This course has a [Moodle](#) page. For more information on how to [access Moodle, login and then select Moodle 101 for Students](#) .

Email

Any email that I send to the class will be sent to your university email address via Moodle. It is your responsibility to check your email on a regular basis.

Office Hours (Remote)

Due to the risks of COVID-19, my office hours this semester will be offered remotely using Zoom. My normal office hours this semester are Tuesdays, 2-3 and Wednesdays, 12-3. If these times are not convenient, I am happy to make an appointment with you for another time.

Here is the [link for my Tuesday office hours](#).

Here is the [link for my Wednesday office hours](#).

Accommodation for Disabilities

Whenever possible, and in accordance with civil rights laws, the University of Montana will attempt to provide reasonable modifications to courses for students with disabilities who request and require them. Please feel free to set up a time with me to discuss any modifications to this course you may require. For more information, contact [Disability Services for Students](#), located in the Lommasson Center, room 154.

Attendance, Participation, Class Etiquette

Attendance and Participation: Your attendance and participation are crucial for the success of this class and will play a significant role in determining whether or not our time together proves to be intellectually fulfilling. As many of you probably know, it is a university requirement that you attend all class meetings for courses in which you are enrolled (See "[Class Attendance/Absence Policy](#)"). In my experience, students also get the most out of those classes that they regularly attend.

Etiquette: As a courtesy to me and to your fellow students, during class please do not (1) talk to a classmate while I or others are speaking; (2) consult other reading materials (such as newspapers, crossword puzzles, etc.) or play computer games; or (3) use your cell phone.

Exams

This course has three exams. Each exam is worth 1/3 of your final grade. Exams will be multiple choice and taken on Moodle.

- (1) Exam #1: Monday, September 28
- (2) Exam #2: Monday, October 19
- (3) Exam #3: Monday, November 23

Missed exams cannot normally be made up.

The Art of Reading

Reading, like writing, is an art that can only be acquired through extensive and intensive practice. In general, you should plan to read each assignment for this course two times before you come to class: (i) read it through once to get a sense of the overall shape of the discussion and what the chief issues and questions seem to be; (ii) read it a second time, going more slowly and with an eye to how the different parts hang together. As Thoreau put it, "To read well, that is, to read true books in a true spirit, is a noble exercise, and one that will task the reader more than any exercise which the customs of the day esteem. It requires a training such as the athletes underwent, the steady intention almost of the whole life to this object. Books must be read as deliberately and reservedly as they were written" ("Reading," *Walden*).

Plagiarism/Academic Dishonesty

I will not tolerate cheating or plagiarism or other forms of academic dishonesty in this course. In addition to being a violation of the University of [Montana Student Conduct Code](#), cheating harms your fellow students by giving you an unfair advantage, and harms you since you thereby fail to take yourself seriously. In general, the first instance of cheating or other forms of academic dishonesty will result in a failing grade ("F") for the course and will also be subject to University sanction.

Schedule of Readings and Assignments

(Subject to change with advance notice)

Plato, *The Trial and Death of Socrates*=TDS

Week 1

H 8/20

Introduction: What is Ethics? (Initial Description)

(1) Wittgenstein, "A Lecture on Ethics" (excerpt) (**Moodle**)

- (2) Aristotle, “Chart of Virtues,” *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book 2, § 7 (1107b1-1108b10) **(Moodle)**
- (3) Watch: “[What is Ethics?](#),” The Ethics Centre
- (4) Watch: “[Ethical Decision Making](#),” The Ethics Centre

Week 2

T 8/25

Misconceptions about Ethics

- (1) Kyte, *An Ethical Life*, Preface (9-11); Chapter 1 (15-32)
- (2) Watch: “[Ethics, Morality, and the Law](#),” The Ethics Centre

H 8/27

Misconceptions about Ethics (cont.)

Kyte, *An Ethical Life*, Chapter 1 (32-51)

Week 3

T 9/1

Can the Gods Disagree about What is Ethical?

- (1) Muench, “Reading Plato’s Socratic Dialogues” **(Moodle)**
- (2) Plato, *Euthyphro* (2a-9b, in *TDS*)

H 9/3

Why Do the Gods Love the Pious?

Plato, *Euthyphro* (9c-16a, in *TDS*)

Week 4

T 9/8

Four Ways of Ethical Thinking

Kyte, *An Ethical Life*, Chapter 2 (52-71)

H 9/10

Way #1: Truth

- (1) Kyte, *An Ethical Life*, Chapter 3 (72-103)
- (2) Watch: “[Episode 4 – Free Expression](#),” *Ethics Matters*

Week 5

T 9/15

Socrates on Ignorance and Wisdom

Plato, *Apology* (17a-24b, in *TDS*)

H 9/17

Legal Charges; Fear of Death

Plato, *Apology* (24b-35d, in *TDS*)

Week 6
T 9/22

What Punishment Did Socrates Deserve?

Plato, *Apology* (35e-42a, in *TDS*)

H 9/24

Way #2: Consequences

- (1) Kyte, *An Ethical Life*, Chapter 4 (104-134)
- (2) Watch: "[Consequentialism](#)," The Ethics Centre
- (3) Watch: "[Episode 1 – Consequences](#)," *Ethics Matters*

Week 7
M 9/28

Exam #1 (Moodle)

Exam will cover material from 8/20 to 9/22

T 9/29

Should Socrates Try to Escape from Jail?

Plato, *Crito* (43a-50a, in *TDS*)

H 10/1

Law, the Individual, and the State

- (1) Plato, *Crito* (50a-54e, in *TDS*)
- (2) Watch: "[Moral Courage & Moral Imagination](#)," *The Ethics Centre*

Week 8
T 10/6

Way #3: Fairness

- (1) Kyte, *An Ethical Life*, Chapter 5 (135-168)
- (2) Watch: "[Deontology](#)," *The Ethics Centre*
- (3) Watch: "Episode 2 – [My Rights](#)," *Ethics Matters*

H 10/8

Telling the Truth, Paying People Back, Benefiting and Harming

Plato, *Republic*, Book 1 (327a-336a) (**Moodle**)

Week 9
T 10/13

Is Ethics a Tool to Control the Weak?

Plato, *Republic*, Book 1 (336b-344e) (**Moodle**)

H 10/15

Is Ethics a Tool to Make People Happy?

Plato, *Republic*, Book 1 (344e-354c) (**Moodle**)

Week 10
M 10/19

Exam #2 (Moodle)

Exam will cover material from 9/24 to 10/15

T 10/20

Way #4: Character

- (1) Kyte, *An Ethical Life*, Chapter 6 (169-197)
- (2) Watch: "[Virtue Ethics](#)," The Ethics Centre
- (3) Watch: "[Aristotle and Virtue Theory](#)," Crash Course

H 10/22

Way #4: Character (cont.)

Kyte, *An Ethical Life*, Chapter 6 (197-217)

Week 11
T 10/27

What is Friendship?

Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book 8 (1155a-1163a34) (**Moodle**)

Short Paper Topics Handed Out (Honors Students Only)

H 10/29

**Why Do Friendships End? What is it to Be a Friend to Oneself?
How Many Friends Should We Have?**

Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book 9 (1163a35-1172a15) (**Moodle**)

Week 12

T 11/3

No Class (Election Day)

H 11/5

What is Marriage? What Are the Costs of Inequality in a Marriage?

(1) Milton, Selections from *The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce* (**Moodle**)

(2) Ibsen, *A Doll's House*, Act I (1-28)

Week 13

T 11/10

Fantasy and Real Life

Ibsen, *A Doll's House*, Act II (29-50)

Short Papers Due (Honors Students Only)

H 11/12

What are a Woman's Duties to Herself?

(1) Ibsen, *A Doll's House*, Act III (51-72)

(2) Ibsen, "Alternative, 'Conciliatory' Ending to *A Doll's House*" (**Moodle**)

Week 14

T 11/17

Conclusion

Kyte, *An Ethical Life*, Appendix (219-233)

Week 15

M 11/23

Exam #3 (Moodle)

Exam will cover material from 10/20 to 11/17