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PHL 114.01: Introduction to Political Ethics

Albert Borgmann

University of Montana-Missoula, albert.borgmann@umontana.edu

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Borgmann
Spring 2012
PHL 114.01

INTRODUCTION TO POLITICAL ETHICS

I. Intent of the Course

The intent of the course is to teach the standard versions of contemporary ethics and so to equip students with ethical literacy—the ability to recognize the origin and context of ethical arguments and the ability to convey one’s ethical convictions with clarity and circumspection. The focus of the course is on political ethics and on the social, cultural, and political conditions that are conducive to the good society.

There will be frequent references to the presidential primary campaigns, and from time to time there will be topical reading assignments.

II. Readings

Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, sections 1-9, 11-17, 20-26, 30-39, 41-43, 47, 60-61, 63-72, 75-76, 79, 82, 86.
Bok, *The Politics of Happiness*, all of it.

We’ll cover roughly four sections of Rawls per week and then three chapters of Bok per week.

III. Requirements

The tests will be graded according to the stepped traditional grading system: A, A-, B+, B, B-, etc.

There will be weekly 20 minute tests, usually on Thursdays. The first test will be on Thursday, February 2. Each test will consist of (a) three questions that will test your command of the course content and are to be answered with brief statements of about 30 words total for each question; (b) a question that asks you to identify the philosophical point of a passage taken from the readings. It is to be answered in about 30 words; and (c) an essay question to be answered in 150 to 200 words. The three answers to the questions in part (a) will jointly receive a letter grade. The answer to (b) will be graded P (passing) or U (unsatisfactory). The answer to (c) will be graded P, U, or E (excellent). A P will raise the grade for (a) by one step (e.g., B to B+); U will lower it by one step (e.g., B to B-); E will raise it by two steps (e.g., B to A-). The tests will be returned on the following Tuesday, and you are expected to receive the test that day and to keep your tests to track your progress in the course and to prepare for the final.

On the day of the final, Monday, May 7, 8:00 a.m., there will be a final test of twelve course content questions, nine drawn from previous tests, three on the material of the preceding week. The final test will have the weight of three ordinary tests. To pass the course, you have to pass the final.

You can make up one missed test without an excuse. Additionally, you can make up a missed test (a) for medical reasons if you provide a statement from your physician or the Health Service, (b) if you are away on University business, (c) if there is a real hardship. Otherwise you will receive an F for a missed test. You can take over one test (not a make-up or a missed test, however) by April 26. The higher grade of the two tests (regular and take-over) will count.

IV. Office Hours

Borgmann: TWR, 9:30-10:10 and by appointment in LA 149.
Phone and messages: 243-2792. e-mail: Albert.Borgmann@umontana.edu

Please let us know if you have a disability so that we can make accommodations.