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PHL 110E.02: Introduction to Ethics - The Pursuit of Happiness

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INTRODUCTION TO ETHICS: The Pursuit of Happiness

I. Intent of the Course

The course teaches ethical literacy—a command of the major ethical theories of human conduct and an understanding of how human conduct is informed by Churchill’s Principle: “We shape our buildings, and afterwards our buildings shape us.”

II. Texts

Mill, *Utilitarianism*.

Dreyfus and Kelly, *All Things Shining*.

Welch, *Fools Crow*.

Kant, *Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals*.

Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*.

III. Course Outline

We will spend between three and four sessions on each of the following eight parts.

- (1) The Dreams of Prosperity. Mill, chs. II and III.
- (2) The Nightmare of Nihilism. Dreyfus and Kelly, chs. 1 and 2.
- (3) The World We Have Lost and Its Encounter with Christianity. Dreyfus and Kelly, chs. 3 and 4.
- (4) The World We Have Lost and Its Encounter with Modern Culture. Welch, all of it.
- (5) The Gains of Modernity: Equality, Dignity, Autonomy. Kant, First and Second Section.
- (6) The Losses of Modernity: A Narrow Vision of the World. Dreyfus and Kelly, chs. 5 and 6.
- (7) The Forms of the Good Life: The Virtues. Aristotle, I, 1-5, 7, 9-11, 13; II, 1-2, 5-8; III, 6-9; V, 1-3, 7; X, 7-9.
- (8) The Content of the Good Life: Skillful Everyday Practices. Dreyfus and Kelly, ch. 7.

IV. Requirements

There will be weekly 20 minute tests, usually on Thursdays. They will be graded according to the stepped traditional grading system: A, A-, B+, B, B-, etc. The first test will be on Thursday, February 7. 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 the questions in part (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 required 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 13, at 8:00 AM, there will be a final test of twelve course content questions, nine taken verbatim 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 test without questions asked—a free make-up. If you bring me a note from a doctor or the Health Service or if there has been some hardship (caring for small children is a valid reason for missing), then it’s an excused make-up, and you don’t lose your right to a free make-up. To get the hardship exception, you have to come see me during my office hours and plead your case.

Make-up tests cover the same material and have the same format as the regular tests, but the questions are different. Make-up tests will not be returned. Email me to find out the grade, and come in if you want to look at the test. You can retake one test other than a make-up. The higher of the two grades (regular and retake) will count. You cannot use a retake to make up a test you missed. To take a make-up or retake, email me a note with the number of the test you want to make up or retake and an indication as to whether the test in question is a free or an excused make-up or a retake. The deadline for all the make-ups and retakes is April 3, 4 PM.

V. Office Hours

Borgmann: TR, 11:05-11:30, W 10:05-11:00 AM 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.