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### PHL 210E.01: Moral Philosophy

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## **Moral Philosophy—Philosophy 210E/ Spring 2013**

Tuesday/Thursday 12:40-2:00 SG 303

Pat Burke

Office: DHC #106; Office Hours: Wednesdays 1:00-3:00 p.m. and by appointment

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### **Course Description and Objectives:**

This course carefully examines the three major secular traditions of western ethics as expressed in the writings of Aristotle, Immanuel Kant and J.S. Mill. Each of these traditions gives an account of right action, the good life and the role of happiness that has profoundly influenced the way in which we take up with ethical issues today. Throughout the course contemporary ethical issues will be discussed in light of these traditions. The strengths and possible inadequacies of each tradition will be discussed with special attention to the possible need to fundamentally rethink them in light of the reality of contemporary life and our environmental crisis. In addition to providing a fundamental understanding of the western ethical traditions, the course should enable students both to understand the ethical arguments underlying controversial issues and express their own ethical convictions.

### **Required Texts:**

Immanuel Kant, *Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals*, trans. By Lewis White Beck, Library of Liberal Arts, 128 pp.

John Stuart Mill, *Utilitarianism*, Hackett Publishing, 63 pp.

Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. Martin Ostwald, Library of Liberal Arts, 316 pp.

### **Readings on Reserve:**

David Abram, "Reciprocity," 16 pp.

Albert Borgmann, *Real American Ethics*, Chapters 12-15, pp. 142-201.

Dreyfus and Kelly, *All Things Shining*, Chapter 1, 21pp.

Holmes Rolston III, "Value in Nature and the Nature of Value," 11 pp.

Bertrand Russell, "The Value of Philosophy," 4 pp.

Bertrand Russell, "Reflections on Suffering," 2 pp.

Ronald Sandler, "Global Warming and Virtues of Ecological Restoration," 23 pp.

Peter Singer, "One Atmosphere," 19 pp.

Jack Turner, "The Abstract Wild," 18 pp.

Bernard Williams, "A Critique of Utilitarianism," 8 pp

**Approximate Schedule and Reading Assignments:**

January 29 (Tuesday): Introductions and Introduction to the Course

January 31 (Thursday): Philosophy and Ethics; *Readings: Russell, "The Value of Philosophy" and "Reflections on Suffering"; Woods, "Is That All There Is?"*

February 5 (Tuesday): Nihilism, Orientation and Ethics; *Reading: Dreyfus and Kelly, Chapter One—"Our Contemporary Nihilism"*

February 7 (Thursday): Western ethical traditions: Virtue Ethics, Deontological Ethics and Utilitarianism. Introduction to Kant. *Reading: Kant, Foundations, Preface*

February 12 (Tuesday): Deontological Ethics. *Reading: Kant, Foundations, Section 1*

February 14 (Thursday): Deontological Ethics. *Reading: Kant, Foundations, Section 1*

February 19 (Tuesday): Deontological Ethics. *Reading: Kant, Foundations, Section 2*

February 21 (Thursday): Deontological Ethics. *Reading: Kant, Foundations, Section 2*

February 26 (Tuesday): Deontological Ethics. *Reading: Kant, Foundations, Section 3*

February 28 (Thursday): Deontological Ethics. *Reading: Kant, Foundations, Section 3, Paper # 1 Due.*

March 5 (Tuesday): Deontological Ethics: Criticisms of Kant

March 7 (Thursday): Utilitarianism. *Reading: Mill, Utilitarianism Chapters 1 & 2*

March 12 (Tuesday): Utilitarianism. *Reading: Mill, Utilitarianism, Chapter 3*

March 14 (Thursday): Utilitarianism. *Reading: Mill, Utilitarianism. Chapters 4, 5*

March 19 (Tuesday): Criticisms of Utilitarianism. *Reading: Bernard Williams, "A Critique of Utilitarianism"*

March 21 (Thursday): Virtue Ethics. *Reading: Aristotle, N.E., Books 1 & 2*

March 26 (Tuesday): Virtue Ethics. *Reading: Aristotle, N.E., Books 3 & 4*

March 28 (Thursday): Virtue Ethics. *Reading: Aristotle, N.E., Book 5. Paper #2 Due.*

April 1-5th (Tuesday): SPRING BREAK

April 9 (Tuesday): Virtue Ethics. *Reading: Aristotle, N.E., Books 8,9*

April 11 (Thursday): Virtue Ethics. *Reading: Aristotle, N. E. Book 10*

April 16 (Tuesday): Criticisms of Virtue Ethics and Contemporary Virtue Ethics.

April 18 (Thursday): Real Ethics. *Reading: Borgmann, Real American Ethics, Chapter 12.*

April 23 (Tuesday): Real Ethics. *Reading: Borgmann, Real American Ethics, Chapters 13 & 14.*

April 25 (Thursday): Real Ethics. *Reading: Borgmann, Real American Ethics, Chapter 15.*

April 30 (Tuesday): Environmental Ethics. *Reading: Rolston, "Value in Nature and the Nature of Value."*

May 2 (Thursday): Environmental Ethics. *Reading: Sandler, "Global Warming and the Virtues of Ecological Restoration;" Singer, "One Atmosphere."*

May 7 (Tuesday): Environmental Ethics. *Reading: Turner, "The Abstract Wild;" Abram, "Reciprocity."*

May 9 (Thursday): Concluding Thoughts and Review. **Paper #3 Due.**

**Expectations:**

Please come to every class having read carefully the material assigned for that day and ready to discuss it. Your questions, insights, observations and objections regarding the readings are critical to our discussions, so be sure to make note of them and bring them to class. I will call upon individuals to answer questions and give their thoughts. The issues we will be discussing are complex and difficult and all our attempts to reflect upon them are imperfect. The only way our thinking will improve is if we engage each other on a continuing basis in a respectful way. So, don't be shy; we are all interested in what you have to say.

**Assignments & Grades:**

During the semester there will be three (3) required essays, each of which will address issues or themes raised in the course. The essay assignments will be given at least two weeks in advance of their due date and should be at least six (6) pages in length excluding the works cited section. In addition, there will be a comprehensive in-class written Final Exam at the scheduled Final Exam time. Each paper will be worth 20% of your total grade. The Final exam will be worth 25%. Your active, informed participation in discussion will be worth 15% of your final grade.

**Attendance and Participation:**

I will be taking attendance. If you have three (3) unexcused absences you will automatically receive an “F” for the course. If you are unable to attend a class and have a legitimate excuse please let me know, preferably in advance, by e-mail. Please bring a doctor’s written excuse or explain the nature of the personal emergency that prevented you from attending at the next class meeting. If you provide neither it will count as an unexcused absence. Active participation is required in class and will count for 15% of your grade.

**Devices:**

The use of electronic devices is not permitted in class. This includes but is not limited to cell-phones, tablets and computers. I strongly encourage you to bring a paper notebook and to take handwritten notes during class.

**Plagiarism and Academic Integrity:**

I expect complete academic integrity throughout the course. Any academic dishonesty including but not limited to plagiarism will result in an automatic “F” for the course and a meeting with the appropriate academic authorities. There will be no exceptions to this zero tolerance policy. All students need to be familiar with the Student Conduct Code. You can read this online at [http://life.umt.edu/vpsa/student\\_conduct.php](http://life.umt.edu/vpsa/student_conduct.php)

**Grading Criteria:** Assignment grades will reflect the following criteria:

- F: Failure to meet minimum requirements
- D: Unsatisfactory, but some effort to meet minimum requirements
- C: Satisfactory; meets minimum requirements of assignment but not much more
- B: Good to Very Good; thoughtful reflection, good analysis, clear writing style
- A: Excellent depth of critical analysis, thoughtfulness of reflection, and writing style; demonstrates creativity and mature analytical skills in going beyond the primary requirements of the assignment.

**Students with Disabilities:**

The University of Montana assures equal access to instruction through collaboration between students with disabilities, instructors, and Disability Services for Students [DSS]. If you think you may have a disability adversely affecting your academic performance, and you have not already registered with DSS, please contact DSS in Lommasson 154. (406) 243-2243 VOICE/TDD. Please let me know the first week of classes of any accommodations that are needed.