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PHIL 200E.03: Ethics - The Great Traditions

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UNIVERSITY OF MONTANA
DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY
SPRING SEMESTER 2001
ETHICS: GREAT TRADITIONS
PHIL 200E, SECTION 03 (30381)
NULH, ROOM 101
TR 9:40-11:00 A.M.

Professor: David Sherman
Office Hrs: TR 2-3 & by appt.

Liberal Arts Bldg, Room 153
Phone Number: 243-2607

COURSE DESCRIPTION AND OBJECTIVES:

This course will introduce the concepts and theories that underlie our ethical judgments. By the end of the course, you should be able to identify and critically assess the theoretical underpinnings of both your ethical positions and competing ones.

We shall begin with an exploration of the fundamental ethical concepts, knowledge of which is crucial for understanding what will follow. We shall close this introductory segment of the course by considering Alasdair MacIntyre's charge that the (seemingly) incommensurable nature of today's competing moral positions in our pluralistic society reflects not only our loss of the ethical life, but the very meaning of what such a life might entail. We shall then consider the ethical theories of Plato, Aristotle, Kant, and Mill, which, in large part, inform the nature and scope of ethical thought today. And, finally, we shall consider some of the most important attacks on these ethical theories, namely, those by Marx and Nietzsche in the nineteenth century, and existentialism (Sartre) and emotivism (Ayer) in the twentieth. The question that remains in the wake of these attacks, which MacIntyre asserts are symptomatic of contemporary life, is whether his pessimism is ultimately justified.

TEXTS:

Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, tr. Terence Irwin, Hackett (2nd ed.), 1999
Immanuel Kant, *Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals*, tr. Lewis White Beck, Library of Liberal Arts-Prentice Hall, 1997
John Stuart Mill, *Utilitarianism*, ed. George Sher, Hackett, 1979
Fac-Pac ("FP"), Excerpts from Plato's *Crito* and the *Republic*; Aristotle's *Politics*; Marx's *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844* and *The German Ideology*; Nietzsche's *The Gay Science*, *Twilight of the Idols*, and *The Genealogy of Morals*; Sartre's *Being and Nothingness* and "Existentialism is a Humanism"; Ayer's *Language, Truth and Logic*; and MacIntyre's *After Virtue*

REQUIREMENTS:

Five Exams (20% each) -- First (Basic Ethical Concepts and Plato); Second (Aristotle); Third (Kant); Fourth (Mill); and Fifth (Marx, Nietzsche, Sartre, and Ayer)

The exams are only tentatively scheduled for the dates set forth below. With the exception of the May 10 exam, I reserve the right to change these dates based upon the progress that we make in class. I shall give at least one week notice when confirming exam dates. In the event that you miss class, it is your responsibility to keep on top of changes in the schedule. Make-up exams will be arranged only in those situations in which there is an emergency or serious illness. The professor reserves the right to ask for evidence.

Although attendance records will not be kept, attendance is required, and, in any event, is necessary in order to do well in the course. Always bring the relevant text to class.

TENTATIVE SCHEDULE:

WEEK OF:	READINGS:
January 29	Why Ethics?; Introduction to Ethical Concepts; MacIntyre, "The Nature of Moral Disagreement Today" (FP 1-3);
February 5	Plato, <i>Crito</i> (FP 4-10) and extracts from <i>Republic</i> , Book I (FP 11-16), Book VII (FP 17-19)
February 12	FIRST EXAM; Aristotle, <i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> , Book I (1-18)
February 19	Aristotle, <i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> , Book II and III, ch. 1-5 (18-30, 30-49)
February 26	Aristotle, <i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> , Book V, ch. 1-8 (67-80) and Book I, Chapters 9-10 from <i>The Politics</i> (FP 20-23); Aristotle, <i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> , Book X (153-171)
March 5	SECOND EXAM; Kant, <i>Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals</i> , Preface (3-8), and Sec. 1 (9-22)
March 12	Kant, <i>Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals</i> , Secs. 2-3 (22-63, 63-82)
March 19	SPRING BREAK
March 26	Criticisms of Kant's Moral Philosophy; THIRD EXAM
April 2	Bentham's Utilitarianism; Mill, <i>Utilitarianism</i> , Chapters I-II (1-5, 6-25)
April 9	Mill, <i>Utilitarianism</i> , Chapters III-V (26-33, 34-40, 41-63); Recent Trends in Utilitarianism; Criticisms of Utilitarianism
April 16	FOURTH EXAM; Marx, extracts from <i>The German Ideology</i> and the <i>Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844</i> (FP 24-25, 26-34);
April 23	Nietzsche, extracts from <i>The Gay Science</i> and <i>Twilight of the Idols</i> (FP 35-51)
April 30	Nietzsche, extract from <i>On the Genealogy of Morals</i> , (FP 52-57); Sartre, from "Existentialism is a Humanism" (FP 58-62)
May 7	Sartre, "Freedom and Responsibility," (FP 63-65); Ayer, extract from <i>Language, Truth, and Logic</i> (FP 66-67); FIFTH EXAM