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PHL 110E.01: Introduction to Ethics

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PHIL 110: Introduction to Ethics, Velasco

Class Info and Office Hours:

- Dr. Melodie Velasco Stenger, melodie.stenger@umontana.edu (Please call me Dr. Velasco or Dr. V)
- **Office:** Liberal Arts Building, Room 155
- **Office Hours:** 11am-12pm MW (no appointment needed) and by appointment (most usually during evenings at Break Espresso, and occasionally mornings on campus.)
- Teaching Assistants: Toryn Rogers and Valan Anthos
- **Office Hours:** TBA

Course Description:

This course begins with the meta-ethical task of defining and situating the Self via the work of various essayists, creative writers, philosophers, and psychologists (including Virginia Woolf, Garcia Marquez, Camus, Erik Erikson, William Perry, Descartes, Hegel, and Lawrence Kohlberg). It then takes up four major ethical theories (virtue, deontological, consequentialist, and care ethics) as presented by Aristotle, Kant, J.S. Mill, and Carol Gilligan. The central line of questioning connecting both halves of the course is how one's ethical outlook relates to one's understanding of both Self and Other. Limited consideration will be given to contemporary ethical debates, though there will be some focus on animal and environmental ethics. This is a lecture course with a conversational tone that makes considerable use of Moodle. Weekly reading journal assignments ("Spark Points") and tests on alternating weeks are required.

Learning Outcomes:

As an introductory *philosophy* course, this course will coach students to attain, at minimum, an ability to *read* exceedingly complicated and nuanced texts; this ability is not presupposed. The excellent student, however, will surpass this skill if she attains the ability to *write* in such a way that her complicated and nuanced understanding—her *reading* of the text—is communicated in a clear and persuasive fashion.

As an introductory *ethics* course, this course uses the self-development of the traditional college-aged student within broader society as its touchstone. The excellent student will discover that the sensitivity and responsibility required by successful reading and writing are also required by successful ethical exchange between self and society.

At the conclusion of this course, the successful student will be able to:

1. Demonstrate habits of a successful reader (vocabulary, marginalia, Spark Points).
2. List and define the chief parts of a Problem Synopsis and an Argument Analysis;
3. Define each of the Key Terms identified in each lesson's Text Map;
4. Recognize and identify the outline of an argument within a text;

The excellent student will, in addition, be able to:

1. Critique the argument or a sub-argument in a given portion of text;
2. Formulate a counter-argument in response to a given text's argument;
3. Construct a clean and organized prose presentation of a counter-argument, once formulated.

Texts:

I **require** the following editions so that everyone has the same text. **Do not wait to purchase these**; do it now.

- Aristotle, and Joe Sachs. [*Nicomachean Ethics*](#). Newburyport, Mass.; Cardiff: Focus ; Drake, 2003. ISBN 978-1-58510-035-4

- Gilligan, Carol. [*In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development*](#). Reissue edition. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1993. ISBN 978-0-674-44544-4
- Kant, Immanuel. [*Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals: With On a Supposed Right to Lie because of Philanthropic Concerns*](#). Translated by James W. Ellington. 3rd edition. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 1993.
- Mill, J.S. [*On Liberty*](#). Edited by Elizabeth Rapaport. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 1978.
- Mill, J.S. [*Utilitarianism*](#). Edited by George Sher. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 2002.

PDFs of additional individual readings will be made available on Moodle. ***I require that you print these pdfs instead of trying to read them on the computer.*** To facilitate this, I have compiled all readings into one file that you can easily print all at once.

Requirements:

Spark Points (25% of final grade):

Upon completing each reading assignment, each student shall post at least one and not more than three Points (separate posts) on the appropriate Moodle discussion board. In no more text than will fit on one side of a 3x5 card, each SP should contain three parts: A **quotation** from the reading assignment that grabbed the student's attention, typed in full; a specific **citation** that allows that quotation to be located in the text, and a **question** about or **response** to the quotation. These are due each Monday before class begins.

Grading: Only Points with 3 parts (quotation, citation, response) will be graded. One Point per assignment earns a C; 2, a B; 3, an A. *Please note that these are graded not on intellectual brilliance, but on completion as per the directions. That being said, putting your best (thoughtful, grammatical, proofread) foot forward is always a good idea.*

Tests (50% of final grade):

The six Tests will consist of two parts. The first part, Part One, will

- be administered via our Moodle website beginning Friday after class and closing at 11:55 pm Saturday;
- consist of ~10 multiple choice/true/false/short-answer style questions;
- be timed, taking no longer than ~25 minutes;

Students may

- use notes, books, the internet, and even peers, but not TAs during the Tests;
- may take each Test up to 3 times (highest grade will be recorded); an hour must separate each attempt.

The second part, Part Two, will

- consist of an ~300 word written response to be typed up as a Word document in 12-point Times font and submitted to the appropriate drop box on Moodle;
- will be due by 11:55pm the next Wednesday;
- consist of a different activity for those earning a C and below on Part One than for those earning a C+ and above on Part One.

Due dates for the Tests are as follow:

- Test #1 Part One due 2/3, Part Two due 2/7
- Test #2 Part One due 2/24, Part Two due 2/28
- Test #3 Part One due 3/10, Part Two due 3/14
- Test #4 Part One due 3/24, Part Two due 4/4 (not during Spring Break, but the week after)
- Test #5 Part One due 4/14, Part Two due 4/18
- Test #6 Part One due 4/28, Part Two due 5/2

Grading: Part One will receive a stepped letter grade (A, A-, B+...). Part Two will be graded as **P** for "passing," **E** for "excellent," **U** for "unsatisfactory," or **Z** for "zero" (used solely for instances in which Part

Two is not submitted.) A **P** will increase the grade on Part One by one step (from a B to a B+), an **E** by two steps (from a B to an A-). A **U** will decrease the grade on Part One by one step (from a B to a B-), a **Z** by two steps (from a B to a C+).

Final Exam (25% of final grade):

During Final Exam week, on *May 11th from 10:10am-12:10pm*, a Final Exam will be administered. The Final Exam will consist of approximately 75% questions taken from previous exams and/or study guides. The remaining questions, including questions drawn from the last week of reading assignments and a final, comprehensive 400 word essay question, will be new. The Final Exam will be given in the classroom.

Grading: The Final Exam will receive a traditional stepped letter grade with the final essay question raising or lowering that grade as on the Tests.

Policies:

The Right to Write:

Based on a student's performance on both Spark Points and Tests, a student may be granted the Right to Write. Invited students may submit a proposal for a final paper to be written instead of taking the Final Exam. This proposal—an approximately 2 page Word Document in 12-point Times font—should consist of:

- a. The Spark Point upon which the paper shall be based (passage, citation, response), and
- b. A brief and tentative Problem Synopsis and Argument Analysis of the proposed paper, including the Topic, Question, Significance, Main Claim, and Reasons. (Including some passages to use as Evidence is encouraged.)

This proposal is due by 11:55pm, April 23rd in the appropriate drop box on Moodle.

Missed Assignments:

Because both Spark Points and Tests are administered online and over a large period of time, there should be very few circumstances in which arrangements need to be made for missed assignments. Catering to the complex schedules of over 100 students is extremely tedious. However, I am not unreasonable, and I do want you to succeed in the course. If you find yourself in a situation that you feel rises to the level of needing an exception to a given due date, please let me know. Additionally, if you email me a picture of a cute animal right now, I am more likely to think of you as an honorable person who read the syllabus at the outset of the semester as directed.

Academic Honesty:

All students must practice academic honesty. Academic misconduct is subject to an academic penalty by myself (at least the failing of the assignment in question, perhaps the failing of the course in its entirety) and/or a disciplinary sanction by the University. Written work may be screened by various plagiarism-screening websites. For more, please review the University of Montana [Student Conduct Code](http://www.umt.edu/vpsa/policies/student_conduct.php): (http://www.umt.edu/vpsa/policies/student_conduct.php).

Technology:

The use of mobile phones is not permitted in class. Students using phones will be asked to leave. I strongly discourage students from [using laptops or tablets to take notes](#). If you would like to hear [more](#) about [why](#), please visit me in office hours. If you feel strongly about using a laptop to take notes, please be courteous by sitting in the very back of the classroom.

Accessibility:

Students with disabilities will receive reasonable accommodations. Please place your request with sufficient advance notice and be prepared to provide verification of disability and its impact from Disability Services. If you are going to take the Final Exam at DSS, please schedule it well in advance. See the [Disability Services for Students](#) website at www.umt.edu/dss/.