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PHL 110E.03: Introduction to Ethics

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PHIL 110: Introduction to Ethics

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Office: LA 157, x2937

Office Hours: 1-2pm MWF and by appointment

Teaching Assistants

Kristian Cantens, Kristian.cantens@umconnect.umt.edu;

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Office Hours: 2-3pm T, 11-12 R, UC, by the windows.

Course Description

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 is also required by successful ethical exchange between self and society.

Learning Outcomes

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:

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

Texts

I strongly prefer the following editions so that everyone has the same text:

- 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. ISBN 978-0-87220-166-8
- Mill, John Stuart. [*Utilitarianism*](#). Edited by George Sher. 2nd edition. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 2002. ISBN 978-0-87220-605-2

Additionally, these two texts are optional:

- Cameron, Julia. [*The Artist's Way*](#). 10th edition. New York: Jeremy P. Tarcher/Putnam, 2002. ISBN 978-1-58542-146-6
- Seligman, Martin E. P. [*Authentic Happiness: Using the New Positive Psychology to Realize Your Potential for Lasting Fulfillment*](#). 1st Edition. New York: Atria Books, 2004. ISBN 978-0-7432-2298-3

Finally, PDFs of additional individual readings will be made available on Moodle. ***I strongly suggest 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

- I. **Spark Points (25% of final grade):** Upon completing each reading assignment, each student shall post at least one and not more than three Spark Points on the appropriate Moodle discussion board, usually before Saturday at 11:55p.m. In no more text than will fit on one side of a 3x5 index 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 one of the following **responses** to the quotation:
- An attempted **restatement** of the quotation, in the student's own words;
 - A **statement** or **question** responding to the author of the quotation;
 - A possible **connection** to another passage/question in any already completed reading assignment.

Grading: Only SPs with 3 parts (quotation, citation, response) will be graded. One SP per assignment earns a C; 2, a B; 3, an A. Exceptional SPs will be flagged by the instructors; this raises the grade of the assignment by a +. Courteous replies to peers' posts are encouraged, but not required.

- II. **Tests (50% of final grade):** Given each Friday (with the exception of 11/14 and 11/21, which are Mondays) from September 9th - December 9th, these closed-note, technology-free Tests will consist of:
- Approximately three questions designed to examine (cumulative) command of the course content, each to be answered in ~30 words;
 - An essay question about the current reading assignment, to be answered in ~200 words (the number of words of this portion (II. Tests) of the syllabus is approximately 140.)

Grading: Part (a) will receive a stepped letter grade (A, A-, B+, B, B-...); part (b) will be graded as either P (increasing the grade of part (a) by one step, e.g. from a B to a B+), U (decreasing the grade of part (a) by one step, e.g. from a B to a B-), or E (increasing the grade of part (a) by two steps, or one full letter.)

- III. **Final Exam (25% of final grade):** During Final Exam week, on *December 15th at 8-10 a.m.*, a twelve-question Final Exam will be administered. Nine of these questions will be taken verbatim from part (a) of previous Tests, three will pertain to the last week's reading assignment.

Grading: The Final Exam will receive a traditional stepped letter grade.

- IV. **Evaluations (0% of final grade):** Your participation in the frequent periodic course evaluations and self-reflection pieces in this class are important because:
- It will improve your [metacognition](#) of your own progress in the course, thereby improving your experience in the course;
 - It will improve my understanding of how to teach this particular group of individuals, thereby making our course more dynamic and engaging;
 - It will assist you in learning to give quality feedback, which is an important professional skill no matter your profession.

Policies

- I. The Right to Write:** Those students aspiring beyond success and towards excellence in this course may submit a dossier just before Thanksgiving Break (November 22nd) petitioning for the chance to write a Philosophical Paper instead of taking the Final Exam. This dossier should consist of:
- A brief and tentative Problem Synopsis and Argument Analysis of the proposed paper.
 - A very short cover letter in which the student evaluates him or herself against the Learning Outcomes enumerated on page 1. Please also tally the total percentage of Tests in which an E was earned as well as the total number of Spark Points that were flagged as exceptional.

- II. Tests (make-ups and re-takes):** If you miss or do unexpectedly poorly on a Test, you may visit me in office hours to request the chance to demonstrate your understanding of the week's material. If granted, this chance consists of the task of designing and taking your own version of parts (a) and (b) for a Test that could have been given for the week in question. These make-ups/re-takes must be submitted on Moodle as soon as possible (definitely before December 9th). These Tests (and their grades) will not be returned unless requested at office hours.

I hope that this policy demonstrates my desire to be courteous to you and the complexity of your life; please return this courtesy to me should you employ it.

- III. Academic Honesty:** All students must practice academic honesty. Academic misconduct is subject to an academic penalty by myself (which often becomes its own lesson about the ethics of plagiarism) and/or a disciplinary sanction by the University. All make-up and re-take Tests must be submitted via Moodle and 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).

- IV. Technology Use by Students:** 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.

- V. 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. As Disability Services for Students website at www.umt.edu/dss/.