

Introduction to Ethics

PHI 2600

J-313, sect. 91544

TR 12:30-1:45 J313

PURPOSE: To offer an historical overview of Western traditions in ethics from ancient Greece and Christian Europe to modern existentialism and phenomenology to consequentialism, deontology, and virtue ethics to contemporary morality and environmental ethics. Included will be a survey of Eastern writings that offer unique perspectives on principles, and practices. Emphasis is placed on ways to frame and resolve ethical issues. An underlying theme is to relate ethical decision-making processes to one's culture, world, and personal life.

READINGS: *Ethics*, Steven Cahn and Peter Markie; handouts; internet readings.

REQUIREMENTS: Attendance and participation (10% and no more than 1 unexcused absence and 2 tardies); two exams (25% each); one paper (35%); and two presentations (5%).

Learning Outcomes: Students will develop an understanding of the values and worldviews correlative to ethical traditions and theories past to present. Along with a formal paper and presentation regarding those perspectives, students will be encouraged to discuss passionately and tolerantly many of the issues that concern notion of the sacred, nature, and human purpose. Besides gaining familiarity with major names and concepts involved in the area of study, students will engage their own views and values in regard to the material.

TOPICS SCHEDULE:

Week One-Introductions and discussion of course objectives.

Week Two- What is ethics? Is Socrates right, “The unexamined life is not worth living”? Plato, Republic book 3, pp.79-82; book 6, pp. 96-103. Justice, logos, the philosopher, the good life, citizenship, morality.

Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics. The Golden Mean—and the nature of moral character "Choose an ethicist" for presentations for next week's class.

5- Film on ethical theory and student-led discussions of various ethical theorists—ancient to contemporary.

10- *GT* pp. 43-83. Selections from Epictetus and Epicurus and discussion of Stoicism and Epicureanism. **Essay and discussion on absolutism versus relativism.**

12-*GT* pp. 84-125. Selections from Augustine and Aquinas. Discussion of Christian

ethics, dogma, faith, and religious experience. Ethics grounded in divine law and/or divine being.

17-*GT* pp. 126-146; 164-179. Selections from Thomas Hobbes and David Hume. Discussion of human nature, the need for social contracts versus morality as Humean Sentiment.

19-*GT* 180-219. Selections from Immanuel Kant and John Stuart Mill. Discussion of duty and reason in ethical decision making and the utilitarian principle of “the greatest good for the greatest amount of people.”

24- *GT* 220-239; 261-281. Selections from Soren Kierkegaard and Friedrich Nietzsche. Discussion of existentialism and ethics; the leap of faith or the transvaluation of values.

26- *GT* pp. 282-316. Selections from John Dewey and G.E. Moore. Discussion of the scientific method in ethical decision making versus the “indefinability of the good.” Brief film on modern ethics.

Oct. 1-Review. **Paper topics and outline due.**

3-Midterm exam.

8- *GT* pp. 366-401. Selections from Kurt Baier and John Rawls. Discussion of “good” reasoning in ethics and the roles of ethics in social justice.

10- *GT* pp. 402-438. Selections from Philippa Foot and Annette Baier. Discussion of moral virtue and human interest and ethics as trust. **First paper due.**

15-*GT* 317-351. Selections from W.D. Ross and A.J. Ayer. Discussion of *prima facie* duty and ethics as emotive expression; and the relationship of language, truth, and logic.

17-Handouts from the Gospel According to Thomas, the Koran, and the Torah and discussion of Western religious ethics.

22-Handouts from the Tao Te Ching, the Dhammapada, and Bhagavad Gita and discussion of Eastern religious ethics.

24- Film on environmental ethics and discussion of human-nature relations. Introduction to *Environmental Ethics (EE)*.

29- *EE* chs. 6 Tom Regan and handout from Peter Singer. Discussion of how to judge the nonhuman world.

31- *EE* chs. 8,10, 45. Holmes Rolston, Henry David Thoreau, and Aldo Leopold. Discussion of the intrinsic moral value of the natural world. **Essay and discussion of anthropocentrism versus ecocentrism.**

Nov. 5- *EE* chs. 22, 29, 32. Lynn White, Po-Kueng Ip, and Gary Nabhan. Discussion of the historical roots of our environmental crisis, and ways in which Taoist and Native-American earth wisdom traditions can serve as models.

7-*EE* chs. 24 and 48. Wendell Berry and Arne Naess. Discussion of the gift of nature and the values of deep ecology.

12- *EE* chs. 51 and 53. Karen Warren and Charlene Spretnak. Discussion of ecofeminist ethics and the relationship of women, nature, and patriarchal consciousness.

14- *EE* ch. 25. Matthew Fox and handout from Rosemary Radford Ruether. Discussion of creation spirituality, Gaia and God, and earth ethics.

19-Handout from Roszak, film on ecopsychology. Discussion of creating a new definition of sanity with the Earth in mind.

21-The first essay revisited: discussion of favorite ethicists and/or ethical theories.

26-Class presentations.

28-Thanksgiving.

Dec. 3-Class presentations. **Second paper due.**

5-Class presentations and Review.

10-12-Final Exams.

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Student Rights, Responsibilities, and Academic Integrity Students are responsible for adherence to all college policies and procedures, including those related to academic freedom, cheating, classroom conduct, and other items included in the *OWC Catalog and Student Handbook*. Students should be familiar with the rights and responsibilities detailed on pages 25-29 of the *2006-07 OWC Catalog and Student Handbook*. Plagiarism, cheating or any other form of academic dishonesty is a serious breach of student responsibilities and may trigger consequences which range from a failing grade to formal disciplinary action.

Special Needs If you have special needs for which accommodations may be appropriate to assist you in this class, please contact the Office of Services for Students with Special Needs in Building C-1 on the Niceville Campus, or call 729-6079 (TDD 1-800-955-8771 or Voice 1-800-955-8770).

Incomplete Grades An incomplete grade ("I") may be awarded when the student is unable to finish the required work because of unforeseen extenuating circumstances such as illness or TDY assignment. To receive an "I" grade, the student must have successfully completed a significant portion of the required coursework and be able to finish the remaining work without attending class. An "I" grade will automatically convert to a grade of "F" if the student does not complete the remainder of the coursework by the established deadline.

Cell phones Cell phones, pages and other such electronic devices must be turned off during class time. Communication by electronic device during class is prohibited unless expressly designated as part of the learning activities. Where emergency or employment situations require access to electronic communication services, arrangements may be made in advance with the instructor.

Children Attending Classes (The full "Children on Campus" Policy Statement appears on page 31 of the 2006-07 catalog) As a courtesy to other students and the learning process, students may not bring children with them to class sessions. Health and safety concerns prohibit children from accompanying adult students in any lab, shop, office or classroom or other college facility where potential hazards exist. If a child-related emergency means you must miss class, contact the instructor as soon as possible to determine your options.

Class attendance Class attendance is an integral part of the learning process for this course. Students are expected to attend class regularly. As a courtesy, students with excessive absences (including tardies) may be withdrawn from the class.

Changes to Course Policies

In the event of unusual or extraordinary circumstances, the schedule, requirements, and procedures in this course are subject to change. If the college closes for inclement weather or other emergency, the date for any exams, presentations or assignments due during the closure period will be postponed. A revised schedule will be available at the first regular class meeting held once the college re-opens. If changes to graded activities are required, students will not be penalized as a result of the adjustments, but will be responsible for meeting revised deadlines and course requirements.