

Introduction to Ethics, Spring 2006

PHIL 160 – Mondays and Wednesdays 11:15am-12:05pm in Bartlett 65 with Friday discussions

Instructor: Prof. Kevin Klement
Kevin's Office Hours: Mondays and Wednesdays 2:30-3:30pm, and by appointment
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Teaching Assistants: Indrani Bhattacharjee, Einar Bohn, Jayme Johnson and Gabriel Rabin

Course description and objectives: This course is an introduction to the philosophical study of morality, including the theory of right and wrong behavior, the theory of value (goodness and badness), and the theory of virtue and vice. Besides providing familiarity with the primary questions addressed within moral philosophy and the most influential answers given by well-known philosophers, this course is designed to help students develop their abilities to read, explicate, analyze, and evaluate philosophical literature, write and express themselves well about their own ethical positions, and think critically and analytically about ethical issues.

Required text: Louis P. Pojman, ed. *Moral Philosophy: A Reader*. 3rd ed. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 2003. ISBN 0-87220-661-0. It is available at the Textbook Annex. You are also required to buy a PRS "clicker". See below.

Personal Response System: This semester we will be using the *Personal Response System (PRS)*, an interactive in-class communication system that uses remote control-like devices called "clickers". This will allow students to respond electronically to questions asked during class. Clickers may be purchased at the Textbook Annex. You are required to buy a clicker, and submit your clicker number (found on the back of your clicker) along with your name, and student ID#, *in writing*, to your TA on or before Friday, February 17th. You are responsible for making sure your clicker has adequate batteries and is in working order. You will need to let us know ASAP if you need to change your clicker number.

Your TAs and I would like to hear from **anyone who has a disability** and may require some modification of seating, testing, or other class requirements so that the appropriate arrangements can be made. Please see me or your TA after class or during office hours as soon as possible, and in advance of any exams or other class requirements for which the modifications may be necessary.

The course has a **WWW page**. Included on this webpage is a copy of this syllabus, lecture notes, miscellaneous helpful information and links to additional philosophy resources on the World Wide Web. Consult it often! Its address is:

<http://courses.umass.edu/klement/160/>

The university policy on **academic dishonesty** (plagiarism and cheating) is stated in the University's *Academic Regulations*, available online at:

<http://www.umass.edu/registrar/media/academicregs05.pdf>

You are expected to know this policy. Bear in mind that plagiarism and cheating are grave offenses that strike at the very heart of academic life, and will result in serious penalties, including (but not limited to) receiving a failing grade in the course.

Your **final grade** is determined by your performance on the following:

Definitions quiz –	5%	(in discussion section, Feb. 10 th)
Logic quiz –	10%	(in discussion section, Feb. 24 th)
Participation in discussion section –	5%	(every Friday)
Use of PRS transmitter –	15%	(in lecture, every Mon. & Wed.)
Midterm examination –	20%	(in large lecture, April 5 th)
Paper (5-6 pages) –	20%	(due May 5 th)
Final examination –	<u>25%</u>	(during finals week; date TBA)
Total:	100%	

The **quizzes** will be in short answer or multiple choice format based on the first three weeks of lectures. **Participation** is based on both attendance in discussion section as well as the extent of your active participation in discussion, which includes raising questions and making comments pertinent to the topic at hand.

Your **PRS** grade will be based on *the number of questions* answered, not on their correctness and incorrectness (if applicable). A missed class or two should not affect your grade too much; however, frequent failure to attend or failure to participate will affect your grade negatively. Use of the clickers will start counting for credit on Wednesday, February 22nd.

The **midterm** and **final exams** will be in essay format, and may cover any aspect of the ethical theories presented in lecture or discussed in the assigned reading. The final exam will cover material from the second half of the semester only. Study guides will be posted online before the exams.

The **paper assignment** will require each student to write a sustained, argumentative and polished essay in which (s)he carefully explicates a controversial issue in ethical theory, and then proceeds to offer an original argument for, or analysis and evaluation of, a certain position on the issue. A list of possible paper topics will be distributed in early to mid-April.

Grading criteria:

A (or *Excellent*): A-level work in philosophy is well-organized and well-written. The arguments and positions found in the assigned readings or described in lecture are presented accurately and concisely, and original argument or analysis is offered in a compelling way. A-level work in philosophy requires thinking through a problem at multiple levels, a willingness to challenge one's own position, and playing close attention to the underlying logic of the views and arguments under consideration.

B (or *Good*): B-level work in philosophy is work that has *some* of the merits and characteristics of A work, but not to a degree that warrants an A.

C (or *Average*): C-level work in philosophy is that in which the writing and organization is *average or undistinguished*, that exhibits misunderstandings of the assigned reading or lecture material, or that contains little argument or analysis that goes beyond lecture or class discussion.

D (or *Below Average*): D-level work in philosophy is that in which the writing or organization is poor, that exhibits serious misunderstandings of the assigned reading or lecture material, or that contains significant errors in the use of philosophical or logical methods (arguments, critical thinking, appeals to evidence, etc.).

F (or *Unsatisfactory*): F-level work in philosophy is that in which the writing is so poor as to be unacceptable work from a college student, that exhibits egregious misunderstanding of the assigned reading or lecture material, or that contains pervasive errors in the use of philosophical or logical methods.

READING AND LECTURE SCHEDULE (Subject to Change)

Day	Date	Material	Reading from Textbook
W	Feb 1	Course introduction	
M	Feb 6	An overview of ethical theory 1	
W	Feb 8	An overview of ethical theory 2	
<i>Definitions quiz in discussion section, Friday, Feb. 10th</i>			
M	Feb 13	Some core concepts of logic 1	
W	Feb 15	Some core concepts of logic 2	
M	Feb 20	<i>President's day. Class moved to Tuesday.</i>	
Tu	Feb 21	Extracting arguments, the principle of charity	
W	Feb 22	Religion and morality 1	Plato: "The Euthyphro Problem", pp. 311-312.
<i>Logic quiz in discussion section, Friday, Feb. 24th</i>			
M	Feb 27	Religion and morality 2	Mavrodes: "Religion and the Queerness of Morality", pp. 318-327; Nielsen: "Ethics without Religion", pp. 327-333.
W	Mar 1	Moral relativism 1	Pojman: "A Defense of Ethical Objectivism", pp. 38-52
M	Mar 6	Moral relativism 2	
W	Mar 8	Egoism 1	Hobbes: "Egoism as the Beginning of Morality", pp. 62-71
M	Mar 13	Egoism 2	Rachels: "A Critique of Ethical Egoism", pp. 79-86
W	Mar 15	Utilitarianism 1	Bentham: "Classical Hedonism", pp. 113-115
<i>Spring Break – March 18th – March 26th</i>			
M	Mar 27	Utilitarianism 2	Mill: "Utilitarianism", pp. 141-146
W	Mar 29	Criticisms of utilitarianism 1	Nielsen: "Against Moral Conservatism", pp. 147-56
M	Apr 3	Criticisms of utilitarianism 2	Williams: "A Critique of Utilitarianism", pp. 168-179
W	Apr 5	** MIDTERM EXAM **	
M	Apr 10	Axiology 1	Nozick: "The Experience Machine", pp. 124-125
W	Apr 12	Axiology 2	Parfit: "What Makes Someone's Life Go Best", pp. 131-139
M	Apr 17	<i>Patriot's Day. No class.</i>	
W	Apr 19	Deontology 1	Kant: "The Foundations of Ethics", pp. 194-213
M	Apr 24	Deontology 2	Feldman: "An Examination of Kantian Ethics", pp. 214-228
W	Apr 26	Deontology 3	Ross: "What Makes Right Acts Right?", pp. 229-238
M	May 1	Virtue ethics 1	Mayo: "Virtue and the Moral Life", pp. 260-263
W	May 3	Virtue ethics 2	Aristotle: "Virtue Ethics", pp. 249-259
<i>Paper due in discussion section, Friday, May 5th</i>			
M	May 8	Applied ethics 1	Hardin: "Lifeboat Ethics: The Case Against Helping the Poor", pp. 335-343
W	May 10	Applied ethics 2	Singer: "Famine, Affluence and Morality", pp. 344-352
M	May 15	Applied ethics 3	Noonan: "Abortion is Morally Wrong", pp. 353-357
W	May 17	Applied ethics 4	Warren: "The Personhood Argument in Favor of Abortion", pp. 358-362
May 19-26		** FINAL EXAM to take place during finals week **	