

SAMPLE COURSE SYLLABI AND ASSIGNMENTS

INTRODUCTORY UNDERGRADUATE COURSE: INTRO TO ETHICS (SPRING 2014)

Syllabus: P140 - Introduction to Ethics

Section 27349

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Office Hours: Monday/Wednesday 12-1 pm

Class Location and Time: Sycamore Hall Room 003, M/W/F 10:10-11:00AM

Course Description

Welcome to Introduction to Ethics. This is a lecture-discussion class in which we will study Western philosophical approaches to the following fundamental questions of ethics: How should I live? Why be moral? Are there universal moral values?

In the first unit we will discuss these fundamental ethical questions by examining in a more or less chronological manner key theories from the history of western philosophy. We will begin with Plato's response to the relativistic challenge of the sophists and continue with Aristotle's conception of human flourishing as examples of ancient theories that ground morality in human reason. In modern philosophy we will examine Hume's theory of moral sentiments, Mill's principle of maximizing happiness (utilitarianism) and Kant's rational conception of moral duty. We will conclude the historical survey with Nietzsche's critique of morality.

In the second unit we will read articles by contemporary philosophers discussing the nature and the scope of the moral standpoint dealing with questions such as: should moral considerations override all other considerations? How are moral dilemmas possible?

In the last unit we will discuss specific ethical issues such as global justice and the treatment of non-human animals by reading articles of contemporary philosophers applying the moral theories discussed earlier.

Course Objectives

To introduce students to basic concepts and selected theories in moral philosophy through classical texts in the history of western philosophy.

To discuss with students applications of the philosophical approaches to practical problems in the personal and public spheres

To help students develop certain philosophical skills such as critical reasoning, careful reading, and argument evaluation

Required Texts

1) Plato, *Republic*. Translated by Grube, G. M. A. and C. D. C. Reeve. Indianapolis: Hackett Pub. Co., 1992.

2) Aristotle, *Nicomachean ethics*. Translated by Irwin, Terence. 2nd ed. Indianapolis, Ind.: Hackett Pub. Co., 1999.

3) 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 ed. Indianapolis: Hackett Pub. Co., 1993.

4) Mill, John Stuart. *Utilitarianism*. Edited by George Sher. 2nd ed. Indianapolis: Hackett Pub., 2001.

Course Requirements

Reading

Students are expected to attend all class meetings and do the appropriate reading prior to class. Since philosophy involves close examination of often fairly dense arguments, reading means more than just skimming over the printed page. It requires reading carefully, making an attempt to understand what the author is claiming, why he or she is making that claim, and beginning to think critically about whether those claims are justified.

You are of course not expected to have figured it all out before you walk in the door - that's what we are going to try to do in class. But we can't begin to make headway in class if you don't make a sincere attempt to critically read the assigned material.

Attendance and Participation

Dialogue is essential to philosophy. Obviously it is important to ask questions if you do not understand something. But you will also find your own ideas and arguments become much clearer if you attempt to articulate them in class. So I expect all students to come to class prepared to ask and answer questions and participate fully in class discussion.

Attendance for this course is mandatory. I'll accept 3 unexcused absences for the course—no questions asked—but after that, you will receive an F for the participation portion of the course grade. If you have an unusual circumstance affecting your attendance (e.g. Mono, flu, family emergency, etc.) you will need to provide documentation for the absence. You are permitted to miss class in observance of religious holidays but are responsible to make up work missed by these religious observances.

Weekly Quizzes

Weekly online quizzes to make sure you are keeping up with the readings.

Short Assignments

5 short assignments (around 500 words) to improve your analytical writing skills and assess your understanding of the lectures. Six short assignments will be assigned, out of which the best five will count for the grade.

In-class Exams

Written mid-term and final exams

Grade breakdown

Participation: 5%

Weekly quizzes: 20%

Short assignments: 30%

Mid-term exam: 20%

Final exam: 25%

I will be grading along the following lines. An 'A' indicates exceptional work, mastering of concepts and skills. A 'B' indicates good work, showing understanding of many main ideas, but fails to capture all of them. A 'C' indicates mediocre work, showing understanding of ideas and execution of skills but with some flaws. A 'D' indicates below average work, showing some engagement with material, but not at a satisfactory level. An 'F' indicates unacceptable work, e.g. little or no engagement with readings or material in class, showing little to no sign of work.

Special Note on Academic Integrity

As a student at IU, you are expected to adhere to the standards and policies detailed in the Code of Student Rights, Responsibilities, and Conduct: <http://www.iu.edu/~code/>

For the varieties of academic misconduct, see: <http://prezi.com/s-vvodf3avu/academic-misconduct-iu-college-of-arts-and-sciences/>

When you submit a homework assignment or a paper with your name on it in this course, you are signifying that the work contained therein is all yours, unless otherwise cited or referenced. Any ideas or materials taken from another source for either written or oral use must be fully acknowledged. If you are unsure about the expectations for completing an assignment or taking a test or exam, be sure to seek

clarification beforehand. All suspected violations of the Code will be handled according to University policies. Sanctions for academic misconduct in this course will include a failing grade in the course, along with a report to the Dean of Students.

Schedule of Classes

Readings are to have been read by the day under which they are listed.

R = Required Text

O = Available on Oncourse

Week	Date	Reading / Activity
Week 1	1/13	Class cancelled
	1/15	Introductory class: Overview of course; issues concerning the moral standpoint, facts vs. values;
	1/17	Plato, Republic book 2, p. 33-42 (357a-367b) [R]
Week 2	1/20	No class - MLK Day
	1/22	Plato, Republic book 4, p. 110- 121 (434e-445e) [R]
	1/24	Plato, Republic book 5, p. 146-156 (471c-480) [R]. Short assignment #1 due
Week 3	1/27	Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics, book 1. Ch 1-10,13 [R]
	1/29	Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics, book 1. Ch 1-10,13 [R]
	1/31	Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics, book 2 [R]
Week 4	2/3	Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics, book 2 [R]
	2/5	Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics, book 3, ch 1-3 [R]
	2/7	Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics, book 6, ch 1-7, Short assignment #2 due
Week 5	2/10	Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics book 10, ch 7-8 [R]
	2/12	Martha Nussbaum, "Non-Relative Virtues: An Aristotelian Approach" [O]
	2/14	Martha Nussbaum, "Non-Relative Virtues: An Aristotelian Approach" [O]
Week 6	2/17	Hume, An Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals, section 1 and appendix 1 [O]
	2/19	Hume, An Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals, section 2 and appendix 2 [O]
	2/21	Hume, An Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals, section 9 (O)
Week 7	2/24	Mill, Utilitarianism, ch 2 [R]
	2/26	Mill, Utilitarianism, ch 2 [R]
	2/28	Short assignment #3 due
Week 8	3/3	Mill, Utilitarianism, ch 4 [R]
	3/5	Review before midterm
	3/7	Mid-term exam
Week 9	3/10	Kant, Groundwork, section 1 (7-15) Ak 393-404 [R]
	3/12	Kant, Groundwork, section 2 (19-29) Ak 406-420 [R]
	3/14	Kant, Groundwork, section 2 (29-38) Ak 420-432 [R]
Week 10	3/17	No class - Spring break
	3/19	
	3/21	
Week 11	3/24	Kant
	3/26	Kant
	3/28	Kant, Short assignment #4 due
Week 12	3/31	Nietzsche Genealogy of Morals 1-14 [O]
	4/2	Nietzsche Genealogy of Morals 1-14 [O]

	4/4	Nietzsche Genealogy of Morals 1-14 [O]
Week 13	4/7	Class presentations (instead of assignment #5)- “Crimes and misdemeanors” (Woody Allen 1989) http://purl.dlib.indiana.edu/iudl/general/video/VAB9889 (password: apricot)
	4/9	Class presentations – cont.
	4/11	Wolf, Moral Saints [O]
Week 14	4/14	Peter Singer, “Famine, Affluence, and Morality,” [O]
	4/16	Peter Singer, “All Animals are Equal” [O]
	4/18	Tom Regan, “The Case For Animal Rights” [O]
Week 15	4/21	Christine M. Korsgaard, “Getting Animals in View” http://www.thepointmag.com/2012/metaphysics/getting-animals-view Christine M. Korsgaard, “Facing the Animal You See in the Mirror” http://www.people.fas.harvard.edu/~korsgaard/CMK.Facing.Animals.pdf
	4/23	Mary Anne Warren “Problems with the Strong Animal Rights Position” http://rintintin.colorado.edu/~vancecd/phil3140/Warren.pdf
	4/25	“Put Your Ethics Where Your Mouth Is” New York Times essay contest [O]
Week 16	4/28	Concluding discussion Short assignment #6 due
	4/30	Concluding discussion
	5/2	Review session for final exam

Final exam: 5/7 5:00-7:00PM

Sample Assignments – Intro to Ethics

#1 Hume and Mill

Write a short paper (max 500 words) on **ONE** of the following prompts:

1. What is the ultimate source of morality, according to Hume (Section I and Appendix I)? Explain one of his arguments for this claim. What are the advantages and disadvantages of such a view?
2. Hume claims that moral judgments are not reducible to self-interest (Appendix II). Explain one of his arguments for this claim. Is this a sound argument? Defend your answer.
3. Does Hume think it is always better to act morally (Section IX)? Explain his argument for this claim. Do you agree or disagree with Hume?
4. What is Mill's supreme principle of moral actions (chapter 2)? In this chapter Mill deals with some objections to this principle. Discuss one of the objections and Mill's reply. Do you agree with Mill?
5. Of what kind of proof does Mill think that the greatest happiness principle is susceptible (chapter 4)? How does he argue for the principle? Do you think his argument is sound? Defend your answer.

#2 Kant

Write a short (around 500 words) paper applying Kant's ethical theory to a particular case in which one is faced with a moral decision. Make sure you address the following:

- Come up with your own example, not one of Kant's 4 examples.
- What considerations would Kant regard as relevant in deciding what to do? Consider both the formula of universal law and the formula of humanity.
- Do you think Kant's theory provides the correct verdict in this case? Why or why not?

In section 14 of the 'Genealogy of Morality', Nietzsche explains 'how ideals are fabricated' (p. 27).

#3 Nietzsche

1. What are these ideals? How and why were they 'fabricated'?
2. Do you find Nietzsche's account of the origin of our current moral values plausible?

Write a 500 paper about **one** of the following topics

#4

Write a paper (max 1000 words) on **ONE** of the following prompts:

1. What do you think is the strongest objection to Singer's argument in "Famine, Affluence and Morality"? Do you think this objection can be overcome? Defend your answer.
2. Choose one of the essays from the New York Times feature "Put Your Ethics Where Your Mouth Is" (on OnCourse) and write a response:
 - a. What are the premises and how do they support the conclusion?
 - b. Critically assess the argument. Are the premises plausible? Does the conclusion follow from the premises? State your objections or defend the argument against a possible objection