

MORAL PHILOSOPHY
PHILOSOPHY 3310
SPRING 2006

Course Description: Ethics is frequently divided into three branches: meta-ethics, normative ethics, and applied ethics. In this course on theoretical ethics, we will study the first two branches. We will begin by studying two traditional challenges to morality: cultural relativism and amoralism. Next, we will study some issues in meta-ethics, especially focusing on the meaning of moral claims. For the latter half of the course, we will discuss the three most dominant moral theories: utilitarianism, deontology, and virtue ethics. For each of these theories, we will consider classical formulations, as well as the associative criticisms.

Lecture: TR 2:00-3:40 Moore 1111

Professor: Dr. Fritz Allhoff
Moore Hall 3006; Thursday 12:30-2:00, and by appt.
fritz.allhoff@wmich.edu; 387.4503 (w)

Graduate Assistant: To be assigned.

Text: Course Reader available at Western Michigan University Bookstore.

Grading:	Short paper (600-900 words)	15%	(due in class February 9)
	Longer paper (1200-1500 words)	25%	(due to my office March 23)
	Final Paper (1800-2100 words)	35%	(due to my office April 26)
	In-class presentation	10%	
	Class attendance and participation	15%	

Papers: Paper topics and guidelines will be given out later in the term. For the final paper, students will be asked: to choose a topic not covered in class; to have the topic approved by the professor; and then to do independent research on that topic. Students are *strongly* encouraged to meet with either the graduate assistant or professor to review drafts. Late papers will be penalized one letter grade for each day that they are late, with a maximum of a two letter grade penalty.

Class presentation: Students will be asked to give a 15-20 minute class presentation, which can be on the topic of their final paper. Details will be forthcoming later in the term.

Class attendance and participation: Students are expected to attend class daily, and 15% of your grade will be dictated by your attendance and contributions to in-class discussion. The idea here is to make *valuable* (as opposed to necessarily frequent) contributions!

TENTATIVE LECTURE SCHEDULE AND READING ASSIGNMENTS

1	Introduction to Ethics	
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Unit 1: Challenges to Morality

1.1 Cultural Relativism

2	Arguments and Cultural Relativism	William Graham Sumner, "Cultural Relativism"
3	Responses to Cultural Relativism	James Rachels, "The Challenge of Cultural Relativism"

1.2 The Amoralist's Challenge

4	Gyges' Challenge...	Plato, excerpts from <i>The Republic</i>
5	...and Socrates' Reply	Plato, excerpts from <i>The Republic</i>
6	Class Cancelled	

Unit 2: Meta-Ethics

2.1 The Meaning of Moral Claims

7	Divine Command Ethics	Plato, <i>Euthyphro</i>
8	Simple Subjectivism (and Cultural Relativism again)	James Rachels, "Subjectivism in Ethics" (§3.1-3)
9	Secular Objectivism	Renford Bambrough, "A Proof of the Objectivity of Values"
10	Emotivism and Error Theory First Paper Due	James Rachels, "Subjectivism in Ethics" (§3.4-7); John L. Mackie, "The Subjectivity of Values"

Unit 3: Normative Ethics

3.1 Utilitarianism

11	The Principle of Utility	John Stuart Mill, excerpts from <i>Utilitarianism</i>
12	The Hedonic Calculus and Quality of Pleasure	John Stuart Mill, excerpts from <i>Utilitarianism</i>
13	Objections to Utilitarianism	Robert Nozick, "The Experience Machine" and John Rawls "Separateness of Persons"
14	Objections to Utilitarianism (cont.)	Bernard Williams, "Jim and the Indians" and Peter Railton, excerpts from "Alienation, Consequentialism, and the Demands of Morality"
15	Spring Break (no class)	
16	Spring Break (no class)	
17	The Deterrence Theory of Punishment	Jeremy Bentham, excerpts from <i>The Principles of Morals and Legislation</i>

	3.2 Deontology	
18	The Kantian Conception of Practical Reasoning	Immanuel Kant, excerpts from <i>Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals</i>
19	The Categorical Imperative	Immanuel Kant, excerpts from <i>Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals</i> (cont.)
20	Objections to Kant's Moral Theory	
21	The Retributivist Theory of Punishment	Joel Feinberg, "The Classic Debate"
22	Class Cancelled Second Paper Due	

	3.3 Virtue Ethics	
23	The Function Argument and <i>Eudaimonia</i>	Aristotle, <i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> I
24	The Doctrine of the Mean and the Virtues	Aristotle, <i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> II

	4. Student Presentations	
25	Student Presentations	
26	Student Presentations	
27	Student Presentations	
28	Student Presentations	
29	Student Presentations	
30	Student Presentations	
	Final Paper Due (Wednesday, April 26 by 5:00p to my office)	