

**Philosophy 2400: Introduction to Ethics****301 Old Main | MWF 8:30 – 9:20***Instructor:* Justin Clark | *Office:* Geology 417 | *Email:* justin.clark@usu.edu*Office Hours:* Tuesday 10:45-12:00, or by appointment*Course Website:* [phil2400.posthaven.com](http://phil2400.posthaven.com)

**I. Course Description:** This course is designed as an introduction to normative ethics. How ought we to live our lives? How ought we to treat other people? What are the specific features of an action that make it morally right or morally wrong? What are the character traits of a person that make her a good or bad person? We will spend most of our time discussing three of the major traditions in ethical theory—Consequentialism, Deontology, and Virtue Ethics. Along the way, we will discuss some “applied” ethical questions concerning the morality of abortion, poverty, pornography, and the treatment of non-human animals. We will also explore some questions of moral motivation. An effort will be made to read the great books in the history of moral philosophy, and to criticize the views of some authors in light of the views of others.

There are two main objectives. First, students should leave the course with a deeper understanding of ethical questions and theories, knowing what philosophers have said, and why they have said it. Second, the course should develop each student’s ability to make informed decisions, and to reflect on what’s important. In other words, the course should enhance your ability to reason—to think, discuss, and write more clearly about moral issues. This involves understand difficult texts, reflecting on their truth and significance, and evaluating the arguments on both sides of an issue (i.e. critical thinking skills).

**II. Required Texts:**

- (1) John Stuart Mill, *Utilitarianism* (Hackett)
- (2) Immanuel Kant, *Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals* (Hackett)
- (3) Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* (Hackett)

\* Additional readings will be posted on the course website at [phil2400.posthaven.com](http://phil2400.posthaven.com)

**III. Course Requirements:**

- (1) Attendance & Participation—10% of course grade.
- (2) Two Midterm Quizzes (in class)—30% of course grade (15% each).
- (3) Two Writing Assignments (3 pages each)—40% of course grade (20% each).
- (4) One Final Quiz— 20% of course grade.

Evaluation of papers and written exams will be based on three criteria: (a) the clarity and organization of your written work, (b) the degree of understanding demonstrated, and (c) the depth of personal engagement and argumentation.

Papers and Plagiarism: Do not use the work of another student, and do not use anything from the web when writing your papers. If you must use the web (although I urge you not to), quote and cite everything you have used. If you do not quote and cite material that you have used, it is plagiarism. Any student caught plagiarizing will fail the class.

Late Work will not be accepted. There will be no make-up quizzes or papers. This policy may be overridden only by extenuating cases. To make-up a quiz or paper, the following conditions *must* be met: (i) the instructor must be notified well in advance, (ii) the student must have a formal written excuse, and (iii) the quiz or paper must be made-up within one calendar week.

Handouts will be made available on all topics; they will *not* be posted on the website or emailed to you. Handouts can be acquired by attending lecture or office hours.

#### **IV. Tentative Schedule:** Subject to Change

##### **Topic 1: Philosophy and Argumentation**

Readings: Syllabus; Perry, “Logical Toolkit” (posted on website); Plato, *Apology* (posted on website)

##### **Topic 2: Abortion**

Readings: Thomson, “A Defense of Abortion” (p.266-268) (posted on website); Thomson, “A Defense of Abortion” (p.268-273); Marquis, “Why Abortion is Immoral” (§1-66) (posted on website)

\* Quiz One: Friday, February 2<sup>nd</sup> (in class)

##### **Topic 3: Divine Command Theory and Cultural Relativism**

Readings: TBA

##### **Topic 4: Mill’s Utilitarianism**

Readings: Mill, *Utilitarianism*, Chapter 1 ‘General Remarks’ (p.1-5); *Utilitarianism*, Chapter 2 ‘What Utilitarianism Is’ (p.6-26); *Utilitarianism*, Ch. 3- 4 ‘Of the Ultimate Sanction’ and ‘What Sort of Proof’ (p.27-41)

\* Quiz Two: Wednesday, February 21<sup>st</sup> (in class)

##### **Topic 5: Critiques and Applications of Utilitarianism**

Readings: Fischer, Perry and Bratman, “Writing Philosophy Papers” (posted on website); Singer “Famine, Affluence and Morality” (posted on website)

\*Writing Assignment 1 Assigned

### **Topic 6: Kantian Ethics**

Readings: Kant, *Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals*, section 1 (p.7-9); *Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals*, section 1 (p. 10-17) *Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals*, section 2 (p.19-32); *Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals*, section 2 (p.32-37)

\*Writing Assignment 1 Due: Wed, March 14<sup>th</sup>

### **Topic 7: Critiques and Applications of Kantian Ethics**

Readings: Hill, "Pornography and Degradation," or Gunderson, "A Kantian View of Suicide and End of Life"

\*Writing Assignment 2a Assigned

### **Topic 8: Aristotle's Virtue Ethics**

Readings: Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, I (p.1-5); *Nicomachean Ethics*, I (p. 7-16); *Nicomachean Ethics*, I-II (p.16-30); *Nicomachean Ethics*, III, IV, VI (p. 40-53, 86-99); *Nicomachean Ethics*, VII (p.99-104; 111-114); *NE*, VIII, X (p. 119-125; 157-167)

\*Writing Assignment 2a Due: Friday, April 6<sup>th</sup>

\*Writing Assignment 2b Assigned

### **Topic 9: Critiques and Applications of Virtue Ethics**

Readings: Hursthouse, "Environmental Virtue Ethics," or Walker, "The Good Life for Non-Human Animals"

\*Writing Assignment 2b Due: Fri, April 20<sup>th</sup>

\* Quiz Three: Friday, April 27<sup>th</sup> (in class)

#### **No Class:**

\* **Monday, January 15<sup>th</sup>:** Martin Luther King Jr. Day

\* **Wednesday, January 31<sup>st</sup>:** Reading Day (prior to Quiz One)

\* **Monday, February 19<sup>th</sup>:** President's Day

\* **Friday, February 23<sup>rd</sup>:** *American Philosophical Association* Conference in Chicago

\* **Monday, March 4<sup>th</sup> - Friday, March 9<sup>th</sup>:** Spring Break

\* **Wednesday, April 25<sup>th</sup>:** Reading Day (prior to Quiz Three)