

PHILOSOPHY 230

Iowa State University, Fall 2009
Morril Hall, Rm 2015

Instructor:

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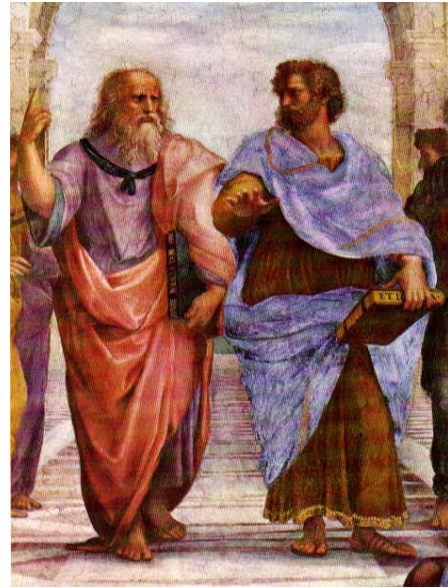
Office Hours: T-TH 12:30-2:00

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Class Syllabus: <http://www.public.iastate.edu/~jwcwolf/ClassSyllabi/230F09SYLL.pdf>

Paper Assignment: : <http://www.public.iastate.edu/~jwcwolf/230F09/PaperTwoF09.pdf>



Required Texts and Materials: Required materials for the first part of the course will be available on the web, linked from the syllabus. The first part of the course will cover philosophical classics on ethics, and ethical theory. The second part of the course will cover special topics and problems in practical ethics.

Other Resources:

We will begin each class with a brief exercise in argument analysis, to be collected five minutes after the beginning of class. For these you will need to purchase a stack of Three-By-Five index cards to bring to class every day. (*Note: You will need one of these cards for the second class on Thursday August 26. Why not go out and purchase them today?*)

Grading: The objective portion of your grade will be determined by four assignments:

Daily In-Class quiz or Exercise: 10% (These will be graded only with a "pass" or "no entry.")

First Brief Writing Assignment: 10%

Midterm Exam: 30%

Writing Assignment: 20%

Final Exam: 30%

When determining final grades, I will also take into account attendance and class participation. These factors can affect your grade by one full increment (Example B to B-). You will not be able

to do well in this class unless you attend regularly, complete assignments on time, keep up on the readings, and take appropriate notes.

Attendance Policy: Attendance is required, and will be taken at every class meeting. Because this class meets only twice a week, missing one class period is the equivalent of missing one-and-a-half periods of a regular class that meets three days a week. If you know you must miss a class and have a good excuse, let me know in advance by sending me an email before class begins. (Good excuse: Broken bones, sickness unto death... Bad Excuse: Fight with significant other, overslept, bones that are merely cracked, or fractures that are quite small...) Any unexcused absence will be noted and accounted at the time when I file final grades for the course. If you miss more than three classes, each additional absence will lower your grade one full measure. For example, if you were to miss four classes, your B would become a B-. If you were to miss five classes, your B would become a C+.

Missed Exams: If you miss an exam, I will need to make up an alternative exam for you to take. This is difficult to do, so I wish to give you the strongest motive *not* to miss an exam unless you cannot help it. Accordingly, make-up exams will always include an extra essay question, and will include at least one week's additional material.

Students With Disabilities: If you have a disability and anticipate needing accommodations in this course, please make arrangements to meet with me soon. I will gladly make any reasonable accommodations. Please contact a staff member from Disability Resources for help filing a SAAR form specifying the accommodation you will need.

Introduction to the Subject: All thoughtful persons, at some point in life, consider some of the problems which have been the subject of philosophical investigation for thousands of years. Some of these problems are fairly abstract, and rarely pose practical difficulties for us as we live our lives. Other of these problems are inescapable, and face us, whether we realize it or not, in every aspect of our lives. This course will introduce a few of the central problems of moral philosophy by introducing several different ethical theories, and by applying these theories to practical issues.

Our purpose is (at least) twofold. First, in examining interesting philosophical questions, we learn some of the roots traditions and ideas that inform our lives and our situation. But second, and perhaps most importantly, the problems of philosophy involve questions in which we are all (or should all be) deeply interested at the most basic level. They are important to us as we make decisions about what to believe, and how to be critical of our own naively held beliefs. Philosophical investigation may help us to determine what kinds of choices we should make, and what kind of person to be. They are important to us as we try to understand what we are and to determine our place in the scheme of things. And they are important to us as we try to choose

right actions in a complicated and difficult world, and to find meaning in our lives. These are not trivial projects.

If this class goes well, it should sometimes be *frustrating*. The reason for this is that we will raise many more questions than we can possibly answer, more than we can even completely discuss in a short class, and many will not be definitively resolved as a result of our discussion. Some of the topics we will discuss are essentially controversial and no simple solutions are available. When we discuss specific moral problems, I may (or may not) tell you what I think, but I will never tell you what *you* must think. While you will be required to understand and to be able to explain the positions and arguments of different authors, you are not required to agree (or disagree) with any of them. A class like this one requires mutual respect for the freedom of conscience of each person who participates in it.

My aim is to introduce some problems of moral philosophy, and to spark interest that may lead to further study. But many students are left, after an introductory class, with the impression that philosophical questions are answerless, and that serious philosophical investigation is therefore fruitless. In fact, I would argue that there has been considerable progress in philosophy. In many important cases there really are rationally discoverable answers to the questions we will raise, and reasonable conclusions to be drawn from the arguments we will consider. Philosophical questions are not vain and answerless, but our time is short and this class is only an introduction. And even where there are satisfactory answers to philosophical questions, most answers bring new questions along with them. Ideally, frustration experienced in this class will be productive, and will spur your interest in the frustrating questions considered. Maybe it will even motivate you to take more philosophy classes. For those of you who do not go on to study philosophy further, this class should give you some acquaintance with a few central problems, and how to think about them in an organized and rational way. The philosophical virtues of disciplined thought, clarity of language, and careful consideration of available evidence should be valuable in any context.

Ethics, Values, and Moral Philosophy: This introductory class will focus on moral philosophy and value theory. Values inform every choice we make. Our values are expressed every time we make a choice or voice a judgment. Often this process is unreflective and immediate: we react from values we have unreflectively acquired without thinking about their underlying basis. Moral philosophy involves the attempt to be self-reflective about the values and motives that underlie our actions, judgments, and choices. We start doing moral philosophy when we move from asking "What should I do?" to asking "What principles or other moral considerations should I use to decide what I should do?" Our values shape our choices, and our choices shape our lives. So in effect, to engage in moral philosophy is to begin to be self-reflective about what kind of person to be and what kind of life to live.

Note that it is possible to live one's life without being very self-reflective at all. But unreflective choices are more like things that happen to us than they are like things that we do. If philosophy itself aims to help us to be thoughtful and self-reflective about *everything*, the aim of moral philosophy is only slightly more modest: Moral philosophy aims to help us to be thoughtful and

self-reflective about the choices that make us the kind of persons we are. More broadly, moral philosophy aims to help us to make our choices rational and right, and to help us to avoid choices that are irrational and wrong.

Practical Ethics: This course is a practical introduction to moral principles and theories. Students will gain a basic acquaintance with a variety of different philosophical theories of morality, and will apply those theories to practical moral problems and issues.

SCHEDULE OF TOPICS AND ASSIGNMENTS: This portion of the syllabus will change as readings are added, or as the schedule is adjusted to accommodate the flow of material in class. Keep your eyes out for changes as the term progresses!

WEEK ONE: (AUGUST)

T25 INTRODUCTION TO THE COURSE

No reading assignment for today.

TH 27 Ethics and Ethical Theory

1) [“How to read and analyze arguments”](#) (Brief reading on the web, linked from syllabus.)

2) *Ethics*. From the Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy Available at

<http://iep.utm.edu/e/ethics.htm>

WEEK TWO:

T1 Ethical Theory, Plato

Reading: Plato, Republic. Book I, Book II to 368c. (Distributed in class)

[Arguments 101: Power Point Slides](#)

[Plato: Power Point Slides](#)

Nota Bene: I would prefer that you use the Grube/Reeve translation I have distributed. However, there are other versions available for free on the internet. You can find an [older translation by Benjamin Jowett](#) in the Internet Classic Archive. Jowett’s translation is highly readable, but it is also somewhat idiosyncratic and has come under criticism from Plato scholars. A [somewhat better translation](#) can be found on Google Books, but cannot be printed.

TH3 Ethical Theory: Plato, Continued.

Reading: Read Plato *again!*

WEEK THREE

T8 Ethical Theory: Aristotle

Reading: [Nichomachean Ethics](#), Books I and II.

[Aristotle Power Point Slides](#)

TH10 Ethical Theory: Aristotle

Reading: [Nichomachean Ethics](#), Book X.

WEEK FOUR:

T15 Stoic and Epicurean Alternatives

Reading: Note: These are all quite short.

[Epictetus, Encheiridion](#)

Epicurus, [Principal Doctrines](#),

and [Letter to Menoeceus](#)

Epicurus/Epictetus Powerpoint

[FIRST WRITING ASSIGNMENT](#) DISTRIBUTED

(Writing assignment is accessible from [this link](#).)

TH17 Justice as a Social Contract? Hobbes

Reading: [Hobbes, Leviathan. Ch 13, 14.](#)

[Hobbes Powerpoint](#)

WEEK FIVE:

T22 Equality as an Ideal? Rousseau

Reading: [Rousseau, Discourse on the Origin of Equality](#) (Abridged version)

[Rousseau Powerpoint](#)

TH24 Contract, Equality, Exploitation: Hobbes and Rousseau Continued

No new reading assignment (Finish Rousseau!)

WEEK SIX:

T29 Utilitarianism: Bentham, Mill

Reading: Mill, Utilitarianism. You may either read [this excerpt from Mill's text](#), or you may read the entirety of [Chapter 1](#) and [Chapter 2](#) from another site.

[Mill Utilitarianism, Powerpoint](#)

FIRST WRITING ASSIGNMENT DUE

TH1 (OCTOBER) Catch Up.

WEEK SEVEN:

T6 Catch Up.

TH8 Catch Up.

WEEK EIGHT:

T13 Catch Up

TH15 FIRST IN-CLASS EXAM

WEEK NINE:

T20 Moral Principles as Categorical Imperatives: Kant

Reading: [Kant, from Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals.](#)

Note: The above link will take you to some Excerpts from Kant's work. If you would like to read more, you can find the text of [the entire book here.](#)

TH22 Visiting lecturer: Michael Stanfield. Topic: Female Circumcision

Reading: Yael Tamir, "Hands Off Clitoridectomy"
FGM Fact Sheet

WEEK TEN:

T27 Liberty: Mill

Reading: Mill, [On Liberty \(Ch. 1\)](#)

TH29 Visiting Lecturer: Michael Stanfield

Female Genital Mutilation Case Study

WEEK ELEVEN (NOVEMBER)

T3 A Comprehensive Conception of Justice: Rawls

Reading: [Short excerpt from Rawls, Theory of Justice](#)

Optional: You may read this much longer excerpt from Rawls: [from A Theory of Justice](#)

TH5 Ethics and Reproductive Technology: Creating a Stem Cell Donor

Kahn and Mastroianni, ["Creating a Stem Cell Donor: A Study in Reproductive Genetics."](#)

WEEK TWELVE:

T10 Are there things that should not be bought and sold?

Reading: Wolf, ["Commodification, Exploitation, and the Market for Transplant Organs."](#)

LAST WRITING ASSIGNMENT DISTRIBUTED (Due: end of term)

TH12 Are there things that should not be bought and sold?

Reading: Nussbaum: ["Whether from Reason or Prejudice: Taking Money for Bodily Services"](#)

WEEK THIRTEEN:

T17 Conflicting Values: Free expression v. Animal Welfare

Reading: Please read both these brief editorials by Julie Hilden:

1) Hilden, ["Does the Federal Anti-Animal-Cruelty-Depiction Statute Violate the First Amendment? Part One.](#)

1) Hilden, ["Does the Federal Anti-Animal-Cruelty-Depiction Statute Violate the First Amendment? Part Two.](#)

TH19 Marriage, Morality, Equality

Reading: Iowa [Supreme Court Ruling, Varnum et al v. Brien, 2009.](#)

SPRING BREAK: T24-TH26 FALL BREAK

WEEK FOURTEEN: (DECEMBER)

T1 Obligation to Aid Others

Singer, [“Famine, Affluence, and Morality.”](#)

TH3 Career Choice and Moral Responsibility

Reading: Norman Care, [“Career Choice.”](#)

WEEK FIFTEEN:

T10

TH12