Ethics

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**Course Description**

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. We will survey important moral philosophical writings, which span from ancient authors such as Plato and Aristotle to contemporary authors such as Robert Nozick and Peter Singer. We will start first by talking briefly about philosophical attitude and method before talking about issues related to morality and moral philosophy so that you are better prepared to approach each readings and discussions. We will discuss the relation of philosophy and authority in that connection. After that we will discuss two great challenges to morality. Only then will we be well prepared to discuss three main theories of normative ethics – consequentialism, deontology and virtue ethics. In tandem with virtue ethics, we will also discuss feminist ethics or ethics of care. After that, we will have a small excursion outside ethics proper into psychology and behavioral studies because we need more than knowledge of theories of ethics to be a responsible ethical agent in the complicated modern world. We will wrap up our class with two issues of applied ethics of my choice, poverty and war.

Besides providing familiarity with the primary questions addressed within moral philosophy and the most influential answers given by well-known philosophers, this course aims 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**

All the required readings can be found in the Course Book, which will be uploaded in Cybercampus. (If you want it in print, you may get it in the Fuji Xerox Center in ECC.)

**Lecture topics and Reading Assignments**

(Subject to revision)

**Week 1 –** Course introduction/ Philosophical attitude and Ethics

No assigned readings

**Week 2 –** Ethics and Authority – Going beyond what others tell you

Plato, “Euthyphro problem” (pay special attention from p. 8 on)

**Week 3 -** Challenges to Morality - Self-interest

Plato, “The Ring of Gyges” (optional)

Stephen Jay Gould, “Ever since Darwin” (optional)

Joel Feinberg, “Psychological Egoism”

**Week 4&5–** Challenges to Morality - Relativism and Subjectivism

James Rachels, “The Challenge of Cultural Relativism”

James Rachels, “Subjectivism” (optional)

**Week 6&7–** Normative Ethics: Consequentialism

John Stuart Mill, “Utilitarianism” (excerpts)

R. M. Hare, “What is Wrong with Slavery” (optional)

Bernard Williams, “A Critique of Utilitarianism”

**Week 8- Midterm recess**

**Week 9&10 –** Normative Ethics: Deontology and Theory of Justice

Immanuel Kant, “The Groundwork of Metaphysics of Morals” (excerpts)

John Rawls, “A Theory of Justice” (excerpts)

**Week 11&12)** – Normative ethics: Feminist Ethics and Virtue ethics

Aristotle, “Nicomachean Ethics”, Bk. 2 & 7 (excerpts)

Bernard Williams, “Persons, character and morality” (optional)

**Week 13–** Why do people make unethical decisions and what can we do about it?

**Week 14 -** Applied Ethics: Poverty

Peter Singer, “Famine, affluence and morality”

**Week 15** – Applied Ethics: Ethics and politics

Michael Walzer, “Political action: the problem of dirty hands”

**Week 16–** Final exam

**COVID-19 situation:**

Since we cannot meet in the classroom due to the pandemic, we will meet online through Zoom application. This course will be conducted in accordance with the University policy. When we use Zoom, I suggest that video be on so that we can see each other.

**Team presentation:** There are four presentation slots. You can make a team (2-3 people) and make a presentation on one of the optional readings marked . The presentation should be in English. I will be available to help you prepare for the presentation both for the content and the delivery. Depending on the quality of the presentation, I will give extra credit (up to one letter grade (e.g. A- to A0)) to the team members.

**Final grades** will be determined as follows:

45% One 3-4 page argumentative paper on one of the three normative theories

45% Final Exam (There is no midterm exam)

10% Class participation, Attendance

Extra Credit – Team presentation

**Readings:** All assigned readings should be completed before the lecture at which they are to be discussed. Keep in mind that you may have to read them more than once to properly understand them. My suggestion: Read the assigned material at least once before the lecture to be able to follow the lecture. After the lecture read it at least once more to see how the reading now makes sense to you. (This is the absolute minimum!)

**Papers & Plagiarism:** Late papers will be penalized for each day late. If you finish a late paper during a weekend, email it to me right away, and turn in a hard copy later

I will not read drafts of papers, but I encourage you to come to me and discuss your ideas as you work on them. Extensions should be asked before the due date. Plagiarism in the paper is very serious. If plagiarism is found to have occurred, this will result in zero point on that assignment, and most probably in an “F” in the course.