



Inspiring Excellence

HUM 103: ETHICS AND CULTURE Spring 2022

Midterm Take-Home Essays

- (1) Please submit two short essays (1200-1500 words), **one from each section**. Each answer is worth fifty percent (50%) of the assignment grade;
- (2) All answers must be **double-spaced** and typed in Times Roman 12 font;
- (3) This is an open-book assignment. You can consult your course readings, lectures, and class notes to write your essays. You can, but do not have to, consult outside materials;
- (4) You will be graded on your mastery of the course materials, and your own independent and critical thinking. Please ***provide citations any texts that you quote*** from the readings or outside source. ***I am interested in your views and answers, written in your own words***;
- (5) Any evidence of plagiarism from readings, outside sources, or another student's answers will be penalized;
- (6) The take-home assignment will have to be submitted by 11:30 p.m. **on Wednesday, 09 March 2022, in the Turnitin software**. Note that Turnitin will not accept any submission at any time after this deadline.

SECTION I: Answer **One (1)** of the following questions (1200-1500 words)

1. In the Early Dialogues, Socrates relies on the method of *elenchus* to uncover the definitions of different virtues. What is the method of elenchus (also known as the 'Socratic Method') and how does Socrates employ the method to accept or refute particular definitions? First, briefly define or describe the Socratic (or elenctic) method. Then, referring to each of the three definitions of 'courage' in the early dialogue *Laches*, show how Socrates uses the elenctic method to refute the definitions of courage offered by Laches and Nicias. Does the fact that the use of Socratic method results in their inability to specifically define courage, ending in an 'aporia,' mean that the method is not useful for the pursuit of knowledge or definition of virtues? Finally, how does this failure to define the specific virtue of courage stem from Socrates' notion of the 'unity of virtues'?
2. Why is ethics considered to be an essential and distinctive aspect of humanity? First, briefly explain each of the four areas of ethics discussed in class? What is "metaethics" and why are metaethical issues important for our understanding of the other areas of ethics? Are ethical standards or principles universally applicable to everyone? What are the three main arguments of 'moral relativism' against the universal or objectivist ethical standards of 'moral realism?' How would the 'moral realist' respond to each of the arguments of subjectivism or cultural relativism? Analyze the debate between the two sides with use of examples, and discuss whether you agree with position of the moral realism? In other words, do you believe that common ethical standards are possible? Why or why not? Finally, say a few words about how moral relativism undermines the study or philosophy of normative ethics?

SECTION II: Answer One (1) of the following questions (1200-1500 words)

1. According to Confucius, “We are not born perfect, but we can become perfect.” How does the concept of *ren* (humaneness) and the practice of ritual propriety (*li*) lead to the development of the ‘superior’ or ‘exemplary’ person? Explain each term (*ren*, *li*) and the correlation between them. *Analyze* how the person of *ren* can live an ethically fulfilled life and represent the humaneness of an exemplary person. In other words, distinguish between the conception of *ren* in both the broad and narrow senses, and analyze how this highlights both the individual and relational aspects of Chinese ethics. Finally, think of a figure that would fit the description of an “exemplary” person and explain why.
2. Why does Aristotle make a distinction between instrumental and intrinsic goods, and how does this distinction allow him to arrive at the notion of the highest good? What is *eudaimonia*, and how is this notion different from ‘pleasure’? How does Aristotle define the term and why does he consider it to be the highest good? Second, why and how does Aristotle define virtue as excellence? Third, how Aristotle distinguish between moral and intellectual virtue? According to Aristotle, what is the role of habituation or habit formation in cultivation of a morally virtuous person? Using examples, discuss why and how the rational thought and actions of a morally virtuous person are guided by the ‘doctrine of the mean.’ Finally, think of a figure who might fit the description of a ‘morally virtuous person,’ and explain why.

Best Wishes for your Success!