

English 389R/Philosophy 115: Literature and Ethics

Spring 2001
Oxford College

Dr. Lemons, Humanities 203
Dr. Anderson, Language 118

Objective and methods: This special topics course will explore the relationships between 7 important literary works (including Euripides, Voltaire, Dickens, Shaw & Camus,) and the ethical theories of 7 philosophers (including Plato, Aristotle, Kant, & Nietzsche). Students will engage in close textual analysis, discussion, and written work that will lead to an understanding of basic ethical theory in the context of concrete literary and imaginative expression.

Requirements:

- 2 three-page papers, each relating one philosophical concept to one work of imaginative literature
- 1, 6 - 8 page paper that 1) argues for one ethical theory over another using examples from literary work(s); or, 2) argues through analysis of literary work(s) that moral philosophy is either relevant or irrelevant to literary understanding or something in between and explains how this is so
- a mid-term exam, short essay
- a final exam, short essay, covering the second half of the class with the opportunity of including material from the first half
- class participation: each student has his/her own style, but it should include listening, questioning, responding in the class room setting at some level of comfort for you
- quizzes: brief, factual reading quizzes that should be easy if you have read the material

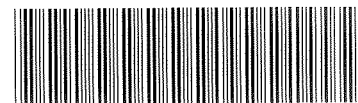
Absence policy: two free cuts, thereafter one point off the final grade for each of the next two classes missed, thereafter three points off for each class missed.

Grading Scheme:

Final Exam-----20%
3rd paper-----20%
Mid term-----15%
Quizzes-----15%
Papers 1 & 2----15%
Participation----10%

(over)

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Schedule of readings:

- 1/23 – 1. Plato: What is Right Conduct? Pp. 2-18
- 1/25 – 26. Aristotle: Virtue Ethics, pp. 249-259
- 1/30 – Euripides: Iphigenia at Aulis, pp. 215-275
- 2/1 – Euripides: Medea, pp. 333-390
- 2/6 – 27. Mayo: Virtue and the Moral Life, pp. 260-263, Euripides: The Bacchae, pp. 391-456
- 2/8 – 22. Kant: The Foundations of Ethics, pp. 194-201
- 2/9 – FIRST ESSAY DUE 3PM IN DR. LEMONS MAILBOX IN HUMANITIES HALL
- 2/13 – 22. Kant, pp. 201-207
- 2/15 – 22. Kant, pp. 207-213
- 2/20 – Melville: Billy Budd, all
- 2/22 – Voltaire: Candide, chaps. 1-13, pp. 1-28
- 2/27 – Voltaire: Candide, chaps. 14-26, pp. 28-70
- 3/1 – Voltaire: Candide, chaps. 27-30, pp. 70-79, and Leibniz and Pope (in Voltaire volume), pp. 84-94
- 3/6 – MIDTERM EXAM
- 3/8 – 17. Mill: Utilitarianism, pp. 141-146
- 3/20 – 18. Nielsen, Against Moral Conservatism, pp. 147-156
- 3/22 – Dickens: Hard Times, Book the First, pp. 11-114
- 3/27 – Dickens: Hard Times, Book the Second, pp. 115-218
- 3/29 – Dickens: Hard Times, Book the Third, pp. 219-292
- 3/30 – SECOND ESSAY DUE 3PM IN DR. LEMONS MAILBOX IN HUMANITIES HALL
- 4/3 – 31. Norton: Moral Minimalism and the Development of Moral Character, pp. 296-307, Shaw: Major Barbara, Act I, pp. 51-74
- 4/5 – Shaw: Major Barbara, Acts II and III, pp. 75-153
- 4/10 – 13. Nietzsche: Beyond Good and Evil, pp. 116-123
- 4/12 – Camus: The Plague, Part I, pp. 3-59
- 4/17 – Camus: The Plague, Parts II and III, pp. 61-168
- 4/19 – Camus: The Plague, Parts IV and V, pp. 169-278
- 4/23 – THIRD ESSAY DUE 3PM IN DR. LEMONS MAILBOX IN HUMANITIES HALL
- 4/24 – Frayn: Copenhagen
- 4/26 – 32. Plato: The Euthyphro Problem, 33. Russell: A Free Man's Worship, pp. 311-317
- 5/1 – Book of Exodus
- 5/3 – Final Exam, 2:00-5:00pm