

Introduction to Ethics

Tuesdays & Thursdays, 10:00 AM-11:15 AM

Instructor: Apaar Kumar

Office Hours: Humanities Hall 205, every Tuesday and Thursday 4:00-7:00PM

Email: akumar6@learnlink.emory.edu

Content: The discipline of ethics deals with two sets of issues. On the one hand, it concerns itself with the general question of how we should live our lives which, in turn, includes questions like what kinds of actions are right or wrong if we want to live a good life, what kind of person should one be, what might happiness mean, etc. On the other hand, it deals with questions about morality itself, and, hence, broadly raises the question of whether there are any moral truths at all. Since this is an introductory course, we will touch upon both sets of issues in the hope that studying the theories of erstwhile moral philosophers will help us in better negotiating these issues/questions that inevitably arise in our everyday lives.

Texts:

Plato, *Republic*

Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*

Epictetus, *Enchiridion*

Epicurus, *The Essential Epicurus*

Kant, *Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals*

Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals*

Mills, *Utilitarianism*

Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morals*

Sartre, "Existentialism is a Humanism" (On reserve)

(Except for Sartre, all of these books are available at the Oxford Bookstore)

Course Requirements:

(1) Honor Code: It is assumed that you are familiar with the honor code and understand the implications of academic misconduct. Cheating on exams and quizzes will not be tolerated. If you're caught cheating on the quizzes and exams, you will be referred to the honor council.

(2) Absence Policy: You will not be penalized for absences if there is a valid reason and if you have informed me in advance. In cases of illness, a letter from the Student Health Center is required. Three unexcused absences will cost you a letter grade.

(3) Requirements:

(a) As is usually the case, you will read the material in advance before we discuss it in class – so, for instance, when you come to class on August 31st you will have read Plato's *Republic*, Book I.

(b) To ensure that you come prepared to class, I will assign homework after every class (via the learnlink conference). You will have to send me this work via email to the following address: akumar6@emory.edu with the subject heading "Ethics-2010." The homework assigned for a Tuesday class needs to be sent to me by 8pm on Monday, and the homework assigned for a Thursday class needs to be sent to me by 8pm on Wednesday. The homework in question will consist of a set of questions, some of which you will have to answer prior to reading the text while others will require you to explain a textual passage. As long as the work has been done honestly and well, you will get credit for it.

(c) The pace of the course will be dictated by our progress in class, and the syllabus may have to be changed to accommodate it. New versions of the syllabus (if required) will be sent to you in advance via the learnlink conference. CHECKING THE LEARNLINK CONFERENCE IS YOUR RESPONSIBILITY.

(d) There will be a midterm and a cumulative final examination. In addition, you will need to write an essay in the latter half of the course and which you might have to rewrite. There will be no make-up exams unless you have a genuine reason for missing them (refer to Absence policy above).

(e) Grading: Overall grades for the course will be calculated according to the following 1000-point scale:

A=	950-1000	B-=	800-832	D=	600-699
A-=	900-949	C+=	767-799	F=	Less than 600
B+=	867-899	C=	733-766		
B=	833-866	C-=	700-732		

The grade distribution is as follows:

Essay: 30%

Midterm: 20%

Final: 25%

Homework: 15%

Class participation: 10%

(f) Grading Homework: If you regularly do the work honestly and send it to me in time, then you get 15% of the grade. Every time you fail to do so, you will lose 10 points.

Reading Schedule

August 26	Introduction
August 31	Plato, <i>Republic</i> , Book I (pp. 1-31)
September 2	Plato, <i>Republic</i> , Book II (pp. 32-59)
September 7	Plato, <i>Republic</i> , Book IX (pp. 241-63)
September 9	Aristotle, <i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> , Book I (pp. 1-18) & Book II (pp. 18-30)
September 14	Aristotle, <i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> , Book III (pp. 30-45) & Book V (pp. 67-84)
September 16	Aristotle, <i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> , Book VI (pp. 86-99)
September 21	Aristotle, <i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> , Book VII (pp. 99-119) & Book X (pp. 153-61)
September 23	Aristotle, <i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> , Book VIII (pp. 119-29), Book IX (pp. 141-53) & Book X (pp. 162-7)
September 28	Epictetus, <i>Enchiridion</i> , pp. 11-45
September 30	Epictetus (cont.) & Epicurus, <i>The Essential Epicurus</i> , pp. 61-8, pp. 69-76 & pp. 77-86
October 5	Epicurus, <i>The Essential Epicurus</i> (cont.)

October 7 **Midterm Examination**

October 11- 12 Midterm Break

October 14 Kant, *Grounding*, pp. 1-17 & 19-29

October 19 Kant, *Grounding*, pp. 29-48

October 21 Kant, *Grounding* & "On the Axe-Murderer", pp. 49-62 & pp. 63-67

October 26 Hume, *Enquiry*, pp. 13-38

October 28 Hume, *Enquiry*, pp. 38-61

November 2 Hume, *Enquiry*, pp. 61-93

November 4 Mill, *Utilitarianism*, pp. 1-26

November 9 Mill, *Utilitarianism*, pp. 27-41

November 11 Mill, *Utilitarianism*, pp. 42-64
Paper topics Assigned

November 16 Nietzsche, *Genealogy*, pp. 15-56

November 18 Nietzsche, *Genealogy*, pp. 57-79

November 23 Nietzsche, *Genealogy*, pp. 79-96 & 96-116
First Draft of Essay Due

November 24-8 Thanksgiving Break

November 30 Nietzsche, *Genealogy*, pp. 117-39

December 2 Nietzsche, *Genealogy*, pp. 139-63
Rewrite of Essay Due

December 7 Sartre, "Existentialism is a Humanism" (on reserve), pp. 25-46

December 9 **Cumulative Final Examination – 2:00 PM-5:00 PM**

Homework for the 31st August Class: Both questions are to be answered before you've read the text.

(a) Portray a good person and a bad person and say why you think they are good/bad. Make sure that you first depict and exemplify the qualities, actions, etc. of this person (it could be a character in a novel or a film, someone you know, etc.) and then clearly explain what makes them good or bad in your view.

(b) Do you think that the strong (as opposed to the weak) decide what justice is? You can interpret "strong" or "weak" in any way that you want as long as you make it clear what you mean by these terms.