OXFORD COLLEGE
INTRODUCTION TO ETHICS

Philosophy 115 Writing   Dr. Ken Anderson
Spring 2011   Seney Hall 401

This course will be an introduction to the philosophy of ethics with a focus on biomedical issues. We will examine in some detail the thought of four thinkers – Aristotle, Kant, Mill, and Iris Murdoch. We will also consider how these ethical theories might be exemplified in or can be reflected upon through or might be found useful for problematic contemporary cases of biomedical concern.

The four philosophers present very different systems of ethical thought and with respect to these systems we will address the broad issues of what morality means and what constitutes a moral or ethical existence. The real test will be to see how these academic treatments of ethics help us work through the concrete problems presented by medicine and advances in understanding and treating various aspects of the human biological condition.

Texts: Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*
        Kant, *Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals*
        Mill, *Utilitarianism*
        Murdoch, *The Sovereignty of the Good*
        Carol Levine, *Clashing Views on Bioethical Issues*

Requirements:
1) Reading commentary (approximately 350 words) due every Tuesday. These commentaries will apply the ideas of the philosophers to concrete ethical matters: 10% collectively

2) Group presentation: 10%, dates TBD

3) Two short essays of 4-5 pages each: 10% each, due 2/15 and 3/29

4) One longer essay of 8-10 pages: 20%, due 4/26

5) Two exams: mid-term (2/24) and final (5/2 – 2:00-5:00): 15% each

6) Class participation is essential and **will** figure into the final grade: 10%.

7) +/- grading

8) Readings will be posted well in advance on the conference.

RULES OF BEHAVIOR, ETC.

You may miss **two** classes for **any reason** without penalty. If you miss **more than two** classes, you will be penalized on the following basis:

3rd – 4th absences lose 1.5% from the final grade for each absence
5th – 6th absences lose 3% from the final grade for each absence
7th – 8th absences lose 4.5% from the final grade for each absence
9th -- ? you are in real trouble

Three times late for class will be considered an **absence**. If you are exceptionally late, I will consider it two-thirds of an absence. If you are late, it is your responsibility to remind me after class to mark you as late rather than as absent. Sleeping in class may also be considered as an absence or as a late according to the discretion of the professor. You cannot argue later in the semester that you were not really absent as many times as my records indicate.

These penalties will be in **addition to** and **separate from** the class participation grade.

If your **cell phone** goes off during class I will be quite irritated. I am easily distracted, as you will discover quickly. If you **leave** the classroom after class has begun, unless you have a good excuse, I will be quite irritated. I am easily distracted, as you will discover quickly. Of course, exceptions can be made for medical reasons and other situations where you must be in constant communication with someone outside of our room.

No computer use during class (this includes texting on your phone). I know students like and are used to the devices, but I have found that they can be deadly to classroom dynamics and that students tend to check email/facebook/whatever during perceived lulls in class. If you absolutely need the thing, you must talk with me for permission.