PHIL 112: History of Ethics
Section 2
Professor Don Moulds
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Office: Benicia Hall 1014
Office Hours: Tuesday 5:00 – 5:45 PM

Required Text:

Republic, Plato (G.M.A. Grube Translation)
Nicomachean Ethics, Aristotle (Terence Irwin translation)
Utilitarianism and Other Essays, Bentham and Mill
Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals, Kant (James Ellington translation)
Leviathan, Hobbes

Course Description:

This course investigates the main approaches to ethics in Western moral philosophy, paying particular attention to the ethical thought of Plato, Aristotle, Hobbes, Hume, Kant, Bentham, Mill, and Nietzsche. The course focuses on the writings of each of these philosophers and on contemporary discussions of their work.

Assignments:

Grades will be based on class participation, four short papers, two in-class exams, and a final.

Class participation will comprise 5 percent of the student’s grade. The participation grade will be based on a student’s attendance, level of preparation, and contribution to class discussion. Attendance is mandatory. If a student misses more than two classes, he or she will receive an “F” for class participation. Students may occasionally be asked to lead class discussions.

Each paper will comprise 12.5 percent of the course grade. Papers should be about four pages in length, typed and double spaced. Paper grades will be based on a student’s ability to demonstrate an understanding of the material, ability to put forth and defend a thesis, and general clarity of presentation. In preparing papers, students should follow the department’s guidelines for writing a philosophy paper, found at http://www.csus.edu/phil/req/writing.htm. Unless
otherwise noted, papers will be due on Tuesday at the beginning of class. The grade for a late paper will be lowered by one-third of a grade (e.g., from an A to an A-) for each calendar day the paper is late.

The two exams and the final will each count for 15 percent of the course grade.

For information on the department’s policy on written work please see: http://www.csus.edu/phil/req/writing.htm. For information on departmental policy on grading please see: http://www.csus.edu/phil/req/grading.htm.

Weekly Course Outline:

Week 1 (1/24) Introductions, Course Overview, Plato (Reading: Republic, book I)

Week 2 (1/31) Plato (Readings: Republic, books II, IV; handout, Plato’s Ethics, pp. 169-243)

Week 3 (2/7) Plato (Readings: Republic, books VIII, IV; handout, Plato’s Ethics, pp. 244-261 and 281-297)

Week 4 (2/14) Aristotle (Readings: Nicomachean Ethics, books I, II; handout, A Short History of Ethics, pp. 57-83)

The first paper is due on February 14.

Week 5 (2/21) Aristotle (Readings: Nicomachean Ethics, books V, VI, X)

Week 6 (2/28) Hobbes (Readings: Leviathan, chapters 6, 13, 14, 17, 18, 21, 29; handout, A Short History of Ethics, pp. 130-140)

Week 7 (3/7) First Exam and Introduction to Hume

The first Exam will take place on March 7.

Week 8 (3/21) Hume (Readings: Handout, selections from A Treatise of Human Nature and “On Suicide”)

The second paper is due March 21.
Week 9 (3/28) Kant (Readings: *Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals*, first and second sections)


The third paper is due April 11.

Week 12 (4/18) Second Exam

The second exam will take place on April 18.

Week 13 (4/25) Mill (Readings: *Utilitarianism*, books III, IV, V; handout on utilitarianism)

Week 14 (5/2) Nietzsche (Readings: Handout, selections from *Beyond Good and Evil* and *Towards a Genealogy of Morals*; Selections from *Nietzsche*, by Richard Schacht).

The fourth paper is due May 2.

Week 15 (5/9) Nietzsche and Review for Final Exam