

# PHIL 112: HISTORY OF ETHICS

## Fall 2006

**Class Meetings:** TR 10:30-11:45am, DH 208

**Instructor:** Dr. Christina Bellon

**Office Hours:** T 1:30-3:30pm; W 11:00-12:30pm; and by appointment.

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**Course Material:** [www.csus.edu/indiv/b/bellonc](http://www.csus.edu/indiv/b/bellonc) and WebCT

### ***CATALOGUE DESCRIPTION***

This course consists of *an investigation of the main approaches to ethics in Western moral philosophy with an emphasis on Plato, Aristotle, Hume, Kant and Mill.*

Prerequisite: Passing score on the Writing Proficiency Exam (absolutely no exceptions).

### ***GENERAL EDUCATION CRITERIA***

This course satisfies General Education Requirements for Advanced Study by requiring students to spend considerable time writing and revising essays. *Students are required to write not less than 5,000 words of clear and logical prose.* See the following description of assignments for more detail.

This course satisfies General Education Requirements Area C3: Introduction to the Humanities in the following ways:

1. By (i) study of the major historical approaches to ethical questions and problems, from Ancient Greek and Roman to Enlightenment era traditions; and by (ii) offering students an opportunity to discuss (intellectually and personally) both the principal ethical ideas of these periods and their broader historical context (including the dominant ethical practices of the times), and by (iii) considering contemporary criticisms and development of these ideas, *fosters in students the development of an understanding of and an appreciation for the diversity of the human community and condition.*

2. While theoretical ethics often seem removed from matters of social and economic diversity, this course will emphasize the important connection between theory and experience by reflecting on the relation of ideas to historical events (not least of which are social, economic and political). For example, we will consider ancient Athenian customs and practices regarding women and slaves to better understand the appeal of Plato's and Aristotle's ethics; to add context to the enlightenment morality of Locke, Hume, Kant, and Mill we must understand the significant intellectual and social influence of European nationalism and colonization of Asia and Africa, as well as of the Americas. The bulk of the contemporary readings stem from concerns about gender, race/ethnicity, and class differences as they arise in moral practice and critical evaluation. In this and other ways, this course also *presents the contributions and perspectives of women, persons from various ethnic, socio-economic, and religious groups, gays and lesbians, and persons with disabilities.*

### ***TEXTS***

Readings are available on WebCT as pdf files. There is no text to purchase. Please be sure to bring your copies of the readings to each class period.

## LEARNING OBJECTIVES

ASPIRATION/OBJECTIVE	PRACTICAL GOALS	ASSESSMENT TOOLS
Develop competence in philosophical and ethical language and literature, especially the historical origins and transformations of ethical theories.	1. Accurately describe and distinguish between a variety of ethical concepts, theories, and positions; 2. Express one's own ethical judgements in a cogent and clear fashion; 3. Engage in cogent and respectful discussion of difficult and sometimes controversial issues; 4. Analyse specific ethical arguments for consistency and credibility (including one's own).	1. Pre and Post course open-ended question/assessment. 2. Content in each of: a. Essays b. on-line discussion c. in class discussion
Develop written and oral communication skills, especially as those are associated with argumentative writing and public speaking.	1. Writing competently in concise, precise and well developed logical style; 2. Expression of a point of view through the formulation of a coherent and consistent argument; 3. Presentation of an exposition of text in a coherent manner to an audience of peers.	1. Quality of the form (essay structure, logic) and mechanics (syntax, grammar) of each of: a. essays b. on-line discussion 2. Substance, structure, and delivery of in-class and on-line discussions.
Develop an appreciation of the diversity of the human condition, as this is reflected in ethical theories, formulated at different epochs, in diverse historical contexts and by a diversity of individuals.	Accurately describe and distinguish the central elements of each ethical tradition, against its historical and cultural context.	Discussion of similarities and divergences between classically "western" ethical traditions and various "non-Western" (i.e., Eastern Asian, Arabic) ethical traditions in each of: a. essays b. on-line discussion c. class participation

## ASSIGNMENTS AND REQUIREMENTS

Evaluation of your progress toward the development of the above listed abilities, will be conducted by several means. The following assignments comprise the whole of the requirements for this course.

### LETTER/NUMERICAL GRADING SCALE

<b>A</b> Outstanding (96pts and above)	<b>C+</b> Highly Satisfactory (70-75pts)
<b>A-</b> Exceptional (90-95pts)	<b>C</b> Satisfactory Competence (65-70 pts)
<b>B+</b> Very Good (85-90pts)	<b>C-</b> Minimally Satisfactory (60-65pts)
<b>B</b> Good (80-85pts)	<b>D</b> Range Poor (50-59pts)
<b>B-</b> Very Competent (75-80pts)	<b>F</b> Unacceptable (49pts and below)

This is based upon a 100 pt scale with 1pt = 1%

### Technology Component

Please note this course includes a WebCT component. Essay assignments can be found there, as well as group discussion and e-mail options. You will need a saclink account to participate in this component of the course. Note that opportunities to contribute to on-line discussion of each text will expire one week after we have finished with the text in class.

### ***Participation (15pts)***

As this is an upper division class, it should be taken as an opportunity for you to enhance your communication skills. Attendance will be taken each class period, though it will not count toward your grade (it's a way for me to get to know you and see who's coming or not).

I strongly encourage you to come regularly, do the readings ahead of time, and participate in class discussions and activities. To reward your efforts in this regard, this section of the course will be worth 15%. Please take very seriously this component of the course. Suitable performance in this regard consists of more than being present in class. You must be active, both as a listener and as a contributor to the success of the course. Mere attendance in class without contribution to class discussion will result in a minimal participation grade of C- (60% or 9/15). Of course, if you're not in class, the task is even more difficult!

***Arriving late, falling asleep, chatting while others are speaking, and using your cell phone are serious distractions for everyone. Any of these will result in a deduction of 1pt per occurrence. All cell-phones should be turned off during class.***

### ***Essays (70pts)***

These are six required essays for this course. Each essay is due on the date indicated in the schedule below. You must write all required essays to complete the course. Each essay will be written in response to the assigned question which will be made available in WebCT at least 7 days prior to the due date. The essays are differentially weighted, each worth 10pts except the Essay #2 (on Aristotle) and Essay #5 (on Kant) which will be worth 15pts each. Essays are to be submitted electronically, through WebCT in response to the assigned question.

As this is a writing intensive course, you are required to write a minimum of 5000 words of cogent and clear text, over the whole of the semester. The bulk of this writing will be done in your essays. The remainder will be tallied in your on-line discussions. Therefore, ***each essay has a maximum and minimum length requirement of 1000 words (approx 3-4 pages in standard 12pt font, double spaced, 1" margins)***. Word counts do not including citations, titles, headers, etc.; ***each essay must include an accurate word count (these will be verified prior to grading)***. Essays which do not meet these requirements will be refused and you will be required to rewrite and resubmit the essay for grading. Late penalties will be applied during this process.

***Failure to submit all required essays will result in a failing grade of F for the course!***

### ***On-Line Discussion (15pts)***

Every student will be required to contribute at least 10 times to the on-line discussion, including at least once to each of the six course sections. To complement the writing requirement in the essays, you will be required to write a total of at least 1000 words of cogent and clear text in the course of your on-line discussions. This means each of the 10 entries must be at least 100 words long (approximately one paragraph – e.g.: this paragraph is 123 words long). Discussion sections will remain open for the period during which the topics are discussed in class, and will be closed 7 days following the last date of in-class discussion. Each student is also expected to read and follow the discussions of their class-mates.

Contributions may consist of:

- (i) asking and proposing an initial response to philosophical questions which probe the reading and engage in further explication and analysis of the text,
- (ii) responding thoughtfully to someone else's question,
- (iii) suggesting connections between this reading and other course material,
- (iv) bring current events and other empirical facts/evidence to bear on the reading.

All of this must be conducted in the effort to better understand the texts and to further our appreciation of the material's strengths and weaknesses. Polemics, ideological shortcuts, and other rather thoughtless and unscholarly contributions will not satisfy this requirement and should be resisted. Proper on-line etiquette is expected; violations will not be tolerated.

Each student must have made a total of 10 contributions to on-line discussion by the end of semester (with at least one to each of the 6 course sections). Further, each student must have read at least  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the available contributions of their fellows to qualify for a satisfactory grade of B- or better (regardless of how many submissions they have made).

## ***COURSE POLICIES***

### ***Late Policy***

All assignments are due at the beginning of class on the day listed. Late assignments will be penalized at a rate of 10% per *calendar day* (not merely *class period*) beginning with the due date. **After three days, acceptance of the assignment is at the instructor's discretion.** If you know you will not be able to meet a due date, it is your responsibility to consult with the instructor **before** the assignment is due. Allowances may be made for illness or other family or personal emergencies. Always, always, come to see the instructor ASAP when you know your assignment is or will be late! Extensions must be arranged with the instructor and will be approved only if the student experiences some extenuating circumstances which prevent on-time submission!

### ***Plagiarism Policy***

Plagiarism is a serious academic offence and will not be tolerated in this class. Always use quotation marks and a footnote/endnote citation to indicate sentences or passages you borrow from another author or source. **All** resources used to write your essay should be listed properly in the bibliography. Assignments in which plagiarism is found will **at the least** be graded at 0 (not just an F). **ALL** incidents of plagiarism will be reported both to the Department Chair and to the Judicial Officer in the Office of Student Affairs for possible further administrative sanction.

***It is your responsibility to be familiar and act in accordance with the University's policy on plagiarism and cheating!***

### ***Disability Accommodation***

If you have a documented disability (visible or invisible) and require accommodation or assistance with assignments, tests, attendance, note taking, etc., please see the instructor by the end of the **third week of classes** so that arrangements can be made. Failure to notify and consult with the instructor by this date may impede my ability to offer you the necessary accommodation and

assistance in a timely fashion. Also be sure to consult with the Services to Students with Disabilities (Lassen Hall) to see what other campus services and accommodation options are available for you.

### **WEEKLY COURSE OUTLINE**

Sept 5	Welcome and Introductions
Sept 7	History of Ethics -- A brief synopsis.
Sept 12-14	Plato on Virtues and the Gods Read: <i>Euthyphro</i> and <i>Apology</i>
Sept 19-21	Plato on Society and the Individual Read: <i>Crito</i> ; Martin Luther King, Jr, "Letter from a Birmingham Jail," and Letter from Clergy.
<b>Sept 26</b>	<b><i>Essay #1 due -- on Plato.</i></b>
Sept 26-28	Aristotle on Happiness and Character Read: Excerpts from <i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> , Bk I & X; "Politics," Bk, I.
Oct 3-5	Aristotle on Virtue Read: Excerpts from <i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> , Bks II-III, iv.
Oct 10-12	Aristotle, Criticisms and Development Read: Grene, "An Implicit Premise in Aristotle's Ethics;" and Rosalind Hursthouse, "Virtue Theory and Abortion."
<b>Oct 17</b>	<b><i>Essay #2 due -- on Aristotle.</i></b>
Oct 17-19	Locke on Contractual Morality Read: Excerpt from "Second Treatise on Government" Ch 1-7, 9.
Oct 24-26	Locke, Criticisms Read: Excerpts from Carole Pateman, "On the Sexual Contract," and Charles Mills, "On the Racial Contract"
<b>Oct 31</b>	<b><i>Essay #3 due -- on Locke.</i></b>
Oct 31-No 2	Hume on Benevolence, Justice and Moral Sentiments Read: Excerpts from <i>Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals</i> , Section 1-3, Appendix.
Nov 9-11	Hume, Criticisms and Development Read: Baier, "Hume, the Women's Moral Theorist?," Virginia Held, "Non-Contractual Society"
<b>Nov 14</b>	<b><i>Essay #4 due -- on Hume.</i></b>
Nov 14-16	Kant on Duty and the Categorical Imperative Read: Excerpts from <i>Metaphysics of Morals</i> , Sec 1-2.
Nov 21	Kant, Categorical Imperative and Freedom Read: Excerpts from <i>Metaphysics of Morals</i> , Sec 2-3.
Nov 23	Holiday - Thanksgiving
Nov 28-30	Kant, Criticisms and Development Read: Korsgaard, "The Right to Lie: Kant on Dealing with Evil."
<b>Dec 5</b>	<b><i>Essay #5 due -- on Kant.</i></b>
Dec 5-7	Mill, Utilitarian Ethics Read: Excerpts from "Utilitarianism," Ch 1, 2, 4.
Dec 12-14	Mill, Criticisms and Development Read: TBA
<b>Dec 21</b>	<b><i>Essay #6 due -- on Mill; This is a time sensitive deadline 12:00 p.m. All essays must be submitted by this deadline; no lates, no extensions, no exceptions. No Final Exam.</i></b>