

PHIL 112: History of Ethics

FALL 2012

Course Information

Class Meetings: TR1:30-2:45pm, Capistrano 327
Instructor: Prof. Christina Bellon
Office Hours: MW10:00-11:00am, MND 3000; by appointment.
Contact: MND 3000, 278-4759, www.csus.edu/indiv/b/bellonc. Please keep all course related communications within Blackboard Messaging.

A Note on Availability: Other than during scheduled office hours, communication will be answered generally within one working day. After 5pm M-F or on the weekend, do not expect a response until the next business day.

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.*

This course satisfies General Education Area C3: Introduction to the Humanities and the Advanced Study Writing Intensive requirements. This course is also approved for the Peace and Conflict Resolution Studies Program.

Enrolment Requirement: You must have GEAR certification before Fall 2009; or WPJ score of 80 or above; or 3-unit placement in ENGL 109M/W; or 4-unit placement in ENGL 109M/W + co-enrollment in ENGL 109X; or WPJ score 70/71 + co-enrollment in ENGL 109X.

Course Description

This course offers students an overview and introduction to the philosophical study of ethics. Several questions will form the focus for the semester's study. These include: Are values relative to cultures, societies or individuals, or do some transcend these differences? Are values subjective and emotional or are they objective and rational? What is the relation between facts and values, values and principles or rules, and actions? How can we live good lives and be good people?

This course will offer to students some useful tools and insights, as well as the opportunity to apply these, to answer these questions as well as some questions of their own which may subsequently arise. Among these tools are a variety of theories, complete with their own terms and concepts, rankings of values, and list principles for right and good action. Among these, we will examine three of the major ethical theories: Utilitarianism (I ought to do what brings the greatest happiness), Duty Ethics (I ought to do my duty), and Virtue Ethics (I ought to do what makes me a good person).

Insofar as each of these theories offers us the means to answer those central questions of

ethics, they also raise questions of their own: are my interests the only ones I should be concerned with? How do I figure the greatest happiness? What are my duties and where do they come from? What are my rights and where do they come from? What makes a person's character good or bad?

Please be aware this is a writing intensive course, and as such students will be required to engage in considerable writing exercises. Students should be prepared to write significant amounts of cogent and clear text on often difficult conceptual material. As there are multiple required essays for this course, you should anticipate writing at least one essay every two weeks.

Note!

This course contains a substantial on-line component via Blackboard, including on-line assignments, discussions, and course material. This will require you to have regular and reliable access to computing facilities. It is also recommended that students regularly bring their laptops and assigned readings to all class meetings.

GE/GR Requirements

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.*

Required Texts

Readings are available on Blackboard as pdf files (the whole set is available as a zip file for easier downloading). There is no text to purchase. Please be sure to bring your copies of the readings to each class period.

Learning Outcomes

This course satisfies 3 units of upper division General Education Area C3 and Writing Intensive Graduation Requirement. You must complete the course in all its requirements with a satisfactory grade of C- or better to ensure GE/GR credit.

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: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Essays on-line discussion 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: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> essays 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.	Evaluation of discussions of similarities and divergences between points of view expressed in different theories in student <ol style="list-style-type: none"> written substantive essays on-line discussion in-class analytic exercises class participation
Develop understanding of and competence applying philosophical methods to ethical concepts, theories and issues.	1. Accurately describe and distinguish between a variety of ethical concepts, theories, positions; 2. Formulate and express own critical judgment; 3. Engage in cogent and respectful discussion of difficult and controversial ethical issues; 4. Analyze philosophical arguments for consistency and credibility	1. Pre- and post-course open-ended question/assessment. 2. Content in each of: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> weekly in-class essays on-line discussion extended philosophical analyses (essays)

	(including one's own).	
Develop written and oral communication skills and to develop skills in critical reasoning, argumentation, and evaluation of basic concepts and theories.	1. Writing competently in concise, precise and logical style; 2. Expression of a point of view through the formulation of a coherent and consistent argument in response to an ethical problem or case.	1. Quality of the form (essay structure, logic) and mechanics (syntax, grammar) of each in-class assignment. 2. Substance, structure, and delivery of in-class and on-line discussions 3. Preparation of philosophical analyses.

Evaluation

Students will be evaluated by several means. These will include a series of short in-class analytic essays, three philosophical analyses, and on-line discussions. The course is graded on the basis of 100pts (1pt = 1%).

ALL assignments and essays are administered within BlackBoard. Print or hand submitted copies will not be accepted, except for work completed in class. All assignments must be completed in the appropriate assignment or assessment area in BlackBoard.

GRADING SCALE

A Outstanding (96pts and above)	A- Very Good (90-95pts)
B Range Satisfactory (80-89pts)	C Range Minimally Satisfactory (70-79pts)
D Range Poor (60-69pts)	F Unacceptable (below 60pts)

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

Technology Component

Please note, this course includes a significant BlackBoard component. Essay assignments can be found there, as well as required group discussion, and general calendar and class notification options. You will need a saclink account to participate in this component of the course. Technical problems must be addressed to the SacLink Help Line @ 278-7337.

A Note on Participation

As this is an upper division class, it should be taken as an opportunity for you to enhance your communication skills. I strongly encourage you to come regularly, do the readings ahead of time, and participate in class discussions and activities. Attendance will be taken at the beginning of every class.

Analytic Exercises (20pts)

At least 10 times during the semester, you will be given a question at the beginning of class which will prompt you to reflect on some aspect of the assigned reading. You will have approximately 10 minutes in class to write and submit a response. These prompts will serve to focus discussion for the class period. These submissions will be graded as excellent (A: 2.0), good (B: 1.75), satisfactory (C: 1.5), unsatisfactory (D: 1.0) on a two-point scale. Failure to

submit a response during the class period assigned will result in a zero grade (F: 0). No make-ups, no late submissions.

Essay Project (60pts)

For this course, you will write one substantive essay on an assigned topic. You will write the essay in four stages, each of which will be commented upon by the instructor and revised by you before submitting the next stage (see the weekly schedule for due dates).

You must submit all components of the essay (drafts, revisions, and final submission) for grading to complete the course. Failure to do so will result in a grade of F for the course.

On-Line Discussion (20pts)

Every student will be required to contribute at least 12 times to the virtual discussion in the **Discussion Boards area** of Blackboard, including at least three times to each of the four discussion topics. Each student is also expected to read and follow the discussions of their classmates. Contributions may consist of:

- (i) asking 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 at least 12 contributions to on-line discussion by the end of semester (with at least three postings to each of the four course sections). Further, *each student must have read at least ¾ (three-quarters) of the available contributions of their fellows to qualify for a satisfactory grade of C- or better (regardless of how many submissions they have made).*

Course Policies

EXPECTATIONS

Attendance

Regular attendance is expected from all class participants. Disruptions, rudeness and private discussions, including cell phone disruptions, will not be tolerated. This means while in class, you should be focused on classroom activities and material. Sleeping, using a cell phone, reading a newspaper, doing assignments for other classes, or otherwise engaging in disruptive or disrespectful behavior will be met with a loss of ½pt (per incidence) from the final course grade. **All cellular devices and iPods/music players must be turned off during class unless being used explicitly for class activities.**

Diversity and Respect: CSUS attracts a diverse population of students, faculty and staff with a wide range of cultural norms, lifestyles, beliefs and backgrounds. Opinions may vary on many issues, but students and faculty in this class will be expected to converse and debate in a respectful and tolerant manner.

This class will only be rich if everyone feels free to express her/his views and personal understanding of the course material. Because this is a philosophy class, and philosophy prompts us to think in ways that may be unfamiliar, let us all be mindful and respectful of each other's opinions. Everyone has a responsibility to make the classroom environment a place where we can respectfully agree to disagree, and perhaps even settle some long unsettled questions.

LATE ASSIGNMENTS

All assignments are due at the date and time specified in the assignment. Late assignments will be penalized at a rate of 10% per calendar day (not merely class period) beginning with the due date. After three late 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. ***When submitting any assignment in BlackBoard, ALWAYS check its status to ensure it was submitted. Do not merely hit "submit" and leave. It is your responsibility to ensure your assignment was submitted accurately and timely. Do not wait for the instructor to ask you about it or for a "0" to appear in your grade column!***

No extensions, no exceptions. It is your responsibility to know the due dates and to plan accordingly. Leaving an assignment until the day or two prior is risky and makes you more vulnerable than you already are to factors and events in the universe beyond your control!

PLAGIARISM/CHEATING

Plagiarism and cheating are serious academic offences which will not be tolerated in this class. Assignments in which plagiarism or other forms of cheating are found will at the least be graded at 0 (not just an F). ALL incidents of cheating and 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 know and comply with the University's Academic Honesty Policy*** <http://www.csus.edu/umannual/student/UMA00150.htm>.

REASONABLE ACCOMMODATION

Students who have a documented disability (visible or invisible) and require accommodation or assistance with assignments, tests, attendance, note taking, etc., must see the instructor by the ***end of the third week of semester*** so that arrangements can be made. Failure to notify and consult with the instructor by this date may impede her 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. All information will remain confidential.

Students with other types of accommodation requirements, such as English as a second language, are invited to discuss them with the instructor to facilitate understanding and the best learning experience for all. All information will remain confidential.

Weekly Schedule

Week	Topic	Readings and Assignments
Au 28	Welcome & Introduction	
Au 30	History of Ethics Brief Synopsis	Learning Module 1 (LM1) in Blackboard; read included material.
Unit 1: Ancient Foundations: Plato, Aristotle		
Se 3	Labour Day – No Class, Campus Closed.	
Se 4-20	Plato: On Virtue, Gods, & Good	LM2: <i>Euthyphro</i> and <i>Republic</i> , Bk I, II, VI, VII; Henderson, et. al., “What Plato Knew About Enron.”
Se 25-Oct 11	Aristotle: On Happiness, Action, & Character	LM3: from <i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> , Bk I, II-III iv, & X; <i>Politics</i> , Bk, I; Mackay, “Aristotle’s Dilemma,” Hursthouse, “Virtue Theory and Abortion.”
Unit 2: Enlightenment Insights: Hume and Kant		
Oct 16-25	Hume: On Moral Sentiments & Ideal Observers	LM4: Excerpts from <i>Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals</i> , Section 1-3, Appendix; <i>Essay on Taste</i> ; Baier, “Hume, the Women’s Moral Theorist.” Essay Stage 1: Explication and Thesis due Tuesday October 16 at 11pm (comments returned by October 23).
Oct 30-Nov 15	Kant: On Duty, Imperatives, & Freedom	LM5: Excerpts from <i>Metaphysics of Morals</i> , Sec 1, 2, 3; Korsgaard, “Self-Constitution in the Ethics of Plato and Kant.” Essay Stage 2: Argument due Tuesday October 30 at 11pm (comments returned by Nov 6).
Unit 3: Modernity: Mill		
No 20-Dec 6	Mill: On Utility, Justice, & Equality	LM6: Excerpts from <i>Utilitarianism</i> , Ch 1, 2, 4; <i>On Liberty</i> , Ch 1; <i>On the Subjection of Women</i> , Ch 1; Anderson, “J.S. Mill and Experiments in Living.” Essay Stage 3: Revision of Explication, Thesis, Argument due Tuesday Nov 20 at 11pm (final comments returned by Nov 30).
No 21-25	Thanksgiving Break – No Classes, Campus Closed.	
De 10-14 Exam Week – No classes. Completed Final Essay (Stage 4) Due at NOON on Thursday, De 13, Time Certain. Discussion Topic closes.		