

Syllabus

I. This course will be devoted to a study of major philosophical theories of ethics and morality. We will be concerned with the nature of moral experience, the status of moral standards, the justification of moral judgments and actions, the nature of moral virtue and vice, and so forth. We will be concerned primarily with theoretical problems that underlie moral reasoning and not with developing a particular code of ethics. As this is a philosophy course, we will be particularly concerned with understanding and evaluating the reasons and arguments which serve to justify diverse moral and ethical theories.

II. Course Learning Objectives: By the end of this course:

1. The student will be able to state and provide reasons for the basic positions of the major philosophical theories of Western ethics, including virtue theory, natural law theory, deontology, and utilitarianism.
2. The student will be able to state and provide reasons for principled objections to major Western ethical theories, including ethical egoism and various forms of moral relativism.
3. The student will be able to discuss a significant alternative to traditional Western ethics—feminist ethics—as it relates to Western ethics,
4. The student will be able to compare and contrast positions of the ethical theories studied in the course.
5. The student will be able to take and defend a position regarding an problem in ethical theory.

III. Texts (In the order they will be used):

E. J. Bond, *Ethics and Human Well-Being* (in bookstore)

Jacques Thiroux, "Ethical Egoism" from *Ethics: Theory and Practice* (e-reserve)

Thomas Keneally, *Schindler's List* (selection; e-reserve)

John Stuart Mill, *Utilitarianism* (selections posted on my website)

Immanuel Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals* (selections posted on my website)

Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* (selection posted on my website)

Mark Murphy, "The Natural Law Tradition in Ethics," at

<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/natural-law-ethics/>

David T. Ozar, "Rights: What They Are and Where They Come From", in

Philosophical Issues In Human Rights: Theories and Applications (Patricia H. Werhane et al. eds., 1986) (e-reserve)

Virginia Held, Feminist Transformations of Moral Theory, *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* > Vol. 50, Supplement (Autumn, 1990), pp. 321-344 (JSTOR)

IV. Requirements:

Your grade will be based on two in-class non-cumulative exams (worth 100 points each). The exams will be a mixture of 10 "short answer" and essay questions on readings and lectures. The essays will be worth a total of 60 points; the "short answer" questions will be worth a total of 40 points. You will be held responsible for material presented in class (which will involve lectures on the readings and presentation of material supplemental to the readings) as well as the readings themselves. (Some "short answer" questions will be drawn from material presented in the readings that has not been covered in lectures).

Also, I will ask you to write a 2-page position paper on a theme I will propose (worth 30 points). This exercise will require you to analyze the theme and indicate whether or not you agree with it. Of course, you must defend your view. The theme will be assigned toward the middle of session. It will be due on Wednesday, June 21.

The two exams will be graded on a "curve" in the sense that the grade cutoff points will be determined in part by performance on the exam. The scale for the position paper is: A/29, AB/27, B/25, BC/23, C/21, CD/19, D/17 points. The cutoff point for each grade level on the final grade will be equal to the sum of the cutoff points for that grade level on exams and the paper. Quality class participation will be taken into account in case of borderline grades.

V. Course Schedule -- Tentative (except for exam dates)

Monday May 22 -- Introduction -- Status of Moral Standards (class handout)

Tuesday May 23 -- Psychological Egoism (Bond, 7-12)

Wednesday May 24 Cultural Relativism (Bond, 21-25; 37-48)

Thursday May 25 Cultural Relativism (Bond, 21-25; 37-48)

Friday May 26 Subjectivism (Bond, 48-63; 72-78); Selection from *Schindler's List*

Monday -- Memorial Day NO CLASS

Tuesday May 30 Subjectivism/Divine Command Theory

Classification of Normative Ethical Theories (Bond as above and class handouts)

Wednesday May 31 Ethical Egoism/Utilitarianism (Thiroux; Mill, selections on website)

Thursday June 1 Utilitarianism (Mill as above)

Friday, June 2 Utilitarianism (Mill as above)

Monday, June 5 Utilitarianism and Review (Mill as above)

Tuesday, June 6 Deontological Ethics (Kant, selections on website)

Wednesday, June 7 Midterm Exam (on material through June 5)

Thursday, June 8 Deontological Ethics (Kant, as above)

Friday, June 9 Deontological Ethics (Kant, as above)

Monday, June 12 Virtue Ethics (Aristotle, Sections on website; Bond, Chapter 6 and 8)

Tuesday, June 13 Virtue Ethics (Aristotle, Sections on website; Bond, Chapter 6 and 8)

Wednesday, June 14 Virtue Ethics (Aristotle, Sections on website; Bond, Chapter 6 and 8)

Thursday, June 15 Natural Law (Murphy)

Friday, June 16 Natural Law (Murphy)

Monday, June 19 Rights (Ozar and Bond, chapter 11)

Tuesday, June 20 Rights (Ozar and Bond, chapter 11)

Wednesday, June 21 Feminist Ethics (Held)

Thursday, June 22 Feminist Ethics (Held)

Friday, June 23 Final Exam

VI. Miscellaneous Info.

(A) My office is located in Coughlin Hall 137; tele. ext is 85938. Office hours by appointment. My email is John.Jones@mu.edu. My website is: <http://academic.mu.edu/phil/jonesj/> .

(B) You are expected to take exams and turn in assignments by the due dates. No makeup exams will be given except for serious reasons such as illness, a death in the family, etc. Missing the deadline on the position paper will be penalized at 5 points. I expect to be notified in advance that you will miss a due date or exam date.

(C) It will be necessary for you to complete readings in a timely manner. Remember that in philosophy we are very concerned with justifying positions through careful argumentation and precise use of language. It is not enough to know just what positions people hold; you must also know why they hold those positions and how and for what reasons one position differs from others. You cannot understand this without reading the material; you will not get it if you only read the material one time.

(D) Attendance is required. I follow the college policy on plagiarism. This is an ethics class, so don't even think of it.