

☞ Course Description

The purpose of this course is to explore some of the fundamental issues that arise in philosophical discussions of morality and in the formation of ethical systems, that is, systems that attempt to account for and explain why we tend to categorize actions as right or wrong. We will also explore the relationship between literature and ethics with an eye to discerning the role the literary imagination can and ought to play in our ethical deliberations. The majority of our time together will be spent discussing both literary texts and philosophical texts representative of the major ethical schools of the Western tradition (Aristotle and virtue ethics, Kant and deontology, and Mill and utilitarianism). We will then turn to some extensions of and reactions to these ethical philosophies (Nietzsche, Levinas, Sartre, Beauvior, Camus, Butler, et al) before spending our final classes thinking through some issues in the realm of applied ethics (solitary confinement, mass incarceration and capital punishment).

☞ Course Goals

- To introduce ourselves to and familiarize ourselves with the major Western philosophical ethical theories.
- To sharpen our natural abilities for doing philosophy.
- To become sounder thinkers, more confident writers, and better (that is suspicious, careful and charitable) readers.

☞ Course Requirements (Overview)

- Weekly Blackboard Responses (15%)
- Final Essay (35%)
- Midterm & Final Examination (50%)

☞ Suggestions for Studying Philosophy

Try to learn something from every new text rather than seeking find straightaway how easily it can be dismissed. In a sense, treat every new text as you would a person you have met for the very first time. This is the key to balancing charity with critical rigor.

Read each assignment more than once. Read a passage through quickly once in order to get the “lay of the land.” Then review the passage a second time with a focus on the details: consider outlining it, isolating its argumentative structure and taking notes on it. A third, quick review would not hurt!

If you encounter difficulties come and see me during my office hours or email me with questions!



PHILOSOPHICAL ETHICS

PHIL3000-CO1

“...it requires a strong moral principle to prevent me from deliberately stepping into the street, and methodically knocking people's hats off...”

-Herman Melville, *Moby Dick*

“Two things awe me most, the starry sky above me and the moral law within me.”

-Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*

“I defend the literary imagination precisely because it seems to me an essential ingredient of an ethical stance that asks us to concern ourselves with the good of other people whose lives are distant from our own.”

-Martha Nussbaum, *Poetic Justice*

Fall 2017, Lincoln Center Campus

Tuesdays, 6:00-8:45 PM

Location: TBD

Instructor: David Warren Grunner

Email: grunner@fordham.edu

Skype: david.grunner

Office: TBD

Office Hours: Tuesday, 5:00-6:00 PM
(By appointment or via Skype)

☞ Required Texts

Gordon Marino (ed.), *Ethics: The Essential Writings*
(Modern Library, ISBN 978-0521635462)

Lisa Tessman, *When Doing The Right Thing...*
(Oxford UP, ISBN 978-0190657581)

☞ Important Dates

24 October Midterm Exam

19 December Final Essay Due

19 December Final Exam

☞ Course Policies

(1) Attendance Students are expected to be present and on time for *all* classes. In accordance with University policy, only 3 absences (excused and unexcused) will be tolerated over the course of the semester. ***A fourth absence will result in a failing grade.*** Given the nature of our course (that it meets only once a week and it is structured such that we will cover one to two thinkers per week), it is extremely important that you attend class regularly—catching up after having missed more than a class or two will be very difficult if not impossible.

(2) Participation It is my hope that our class will be run mostly as a discussion rather than a lecture-style course. As such, your participation is essential in making this happen! There is no grade for participation—I only hope that the silence brought about by the absence of participation will result in crippling guilt...

(3) Laptops, et al. In order to foster an atmosphere free from distraction and conducive to class participation, cell phones, laptops, iPads, e-Readers and other such devices are not to be used during class.

(4) Plagiarism or any other type of academic dishonesty will not be tolerated. Plagiarism includes both copying verbatim from a source, paraphrasing from a source, and using ideas from a source not original to you. I am required by Fordham University to report all instances of plagiarism to the Dean, including suspected plagiarism. A student caught plagiarizing will receive, at minimum, a zero for the paper, and, at maximum, fail the course. (For further information, see: [Fordham University Undergraduate Handbook](#))

(5) Missed Examinations or Assignments Late assignments will *not* be accepted. If you fail to turn in your assignment by the beginning of class on the due date, you have failed that assignment. If you think you need an extension on an assigned paper, you must discuss your reasons with me at least one (1) week in advance (and be prepared that I might say no). Missed examinations operate the same way.

(6) Disability Services. As stated in the student handbook, “Fordham University will make reasonable accommodations and provide auxiliary aids and services to assist otherwise qualified persons in achieving access to its programs, services and facilities in accordance with Section 504 of the Federal Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and Title III of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990.” If you believe that you have a disability that may negatively impact your performance in this course, please make an appointment to speak with someone at the Office of Disability Services (O’Hare Hall, Lower Level, 718-817-0655). In order to receive accommodations for your disability, you must declare yourself to the Office of Disability Services, and then bring me a letter from that office.

(7) Email I will regular make use of e-mail in order to send official course announcements, distribute certain texts, etc. Therefore, it is of the utmost importance that you regularly check your Fordham email account.

(8) Texts in class. In order to keep your book costs at a minimum (I know firsthand just how expensive some classes can be!), I have only order two texts for our class. Additionally, I will make a many of the texts we will be reading available to you electronically in .pdf format. In return, I ask that you please bring to class a printed copy of the text we are discussing on a given day.

☞ Course Requirements

It is expected that you will attend every class, read all the assigned texts and participate actively and respectfully in class discussions.

In order to pass the class, you will be required to:

- Compose a final essay due at the end of the semester.*
- Complete weekly Blackboard responses on the assigned readings.**
- Complete a midterm and final examination.***

Your final grade will be calculated in the following manner:

1. Final Essay = 35%
2. Blackboard Responses = 15%
3. Midterm & Final Exam Average = 50%

***A Note on the Essay:**

Your final essay will ask you to either explore the ethical implications of a literary text of your choosing or take up an issue in applied ethics that interests you. A more detailed set of prompts will be distributed prior to your essay being due. I will be happy to meet with you in order to discuss your ideas or help you organize/construct your paper. I will gladly look at outlines but I will not read full drafts.

****A Note on the Blackboard Posts:**

It is important to think through the assigned readings before seminar so as to be prepared to discuss them. While I do not expect you to master a text before coming to class (what then, after all, would be the point of having to take this course?), I do expect you to read carefully and closely enough to become familiar with the basic elements of a given reading. Thus, you will be required to post to Blackboard a thoughtful response of ~400 words to one of the day’s readings. This response should not be a summary of the text but rather is your opportunity reflect on the readings: what struck you? What bothered you? What confused you? Etc. Your posts are due by 12:30PM on the day of our class meetings.

*****A Note on Exams:**

The Midterm and Final exam will be a mixture of multiple-choice, short answer and essay questions. The exams will be *cumulative*.