Philosophy 310
Ethics

Spring 2017
Amherst College

Professor: Rafeeq Hasan
Email: rhasan@amherst.edu
Meeting: M/W 12:30-1:50pm
Office: 209 Cooper House
Office Hours: Tu 2:00-3:30pm,
Wed 3:30-5:00pm (or by apt)
Class Room: BARR 102

Course Description

We will be concerned to see whether there is anything to be said in a principled way about right and wrong. The core of the course will be an examination of three central traditions in ethical philosophy in the West, typified by Aristotle, Immanuel Kant, and John Stuart Mill. We will also look at criticisms of morality, and well as investigations into the nature of friendship, happiness, and personal welfare.

Required Texts [Available at Amherst Books and at Frost Reserve]


Other readings will be made available via Moodle and/or email. Please make sure that you bring hard copies of the relevant readings to class.

Requirements

1. Academic Honesty

Please read the Statement of Intellectual Responsibility, as well as the other information contained in ‘Academic Honesty and Plagiarism’ on the Dean of Students website <www.amherst.edu/campuslife/deanstudents/acadhonesty>. If you have any questions about what constitutes academic honesty or dishonesty, come speak to me about them.

2. Deadlines

If you find that you are unable to complete an assignment by the deadline because of a crisis or emergency, do contact me and let me know what is going on. Contact me on or before the deadline, for, once the deadline has passed, there is much less I can do to help. Do not assume, without contacting me, that you may turn an assignment in late.

Papers that are submitted late and without an extension will be marked down .3 down (see #7 for grading scale) for every day of lateness.
3. Attendance/Participation

You should attend class regularly, on time, and well-rested. If you should miss a class because of illness or family emergency, or some other pressing matter, please let me know ahead of time by email.

Attendance/participation will count for 20% of your grade. You may miss up to 1 class session without a legitimate excuse. There will be a .2 reduction in your overall participation grade for each subsequent day missed without a medical excuse.

Your participation grade turns on the quality, not the quantity of your contributions, and the extent to which you exhibit the respect and care necessary to promote good discussion. Contributions do not have to be in the form of “answers” or completed “theories” about a text or position—thoughtful questions are highly encouraged, and you will certainly not be penalized for a spirit of humility. While good contributions obviously vary immensely, I especially value comments and questions that pay close attention to the relevant text and those that build on, and reflect attention to, others’ contributions.

In addition to class meetings, there will be two mandatory film screenings, on 3/6 and 4/25.

Office hours: I will hold regular office hours from 2-330pm on Tuesdays and 330-500pm on Wednesdays. On Monday of each week by 10am I will post a sign-up sheet for those times blocked off in 20-minute slots. If you cannot make my posted office hours because of a work or class conflict, or if they are full, email me to schedule another meeting time. Please come by to sign the sheet yourself rather than emailing me to do so on your behalf.

4. Reading

This is a course about making, analyzing, and evaluating arguments, many of which are carefully laid out in our readings. Many of these readings are dense, and several are written in outdated language. Leave yourself ample time to complete the readings.

Take the reading process seriously: read actively, doing your best to think about, and respond to, the works you are reading. Active annotation (e.g., underlining, tabbing, note-taking) will help you track down important passages when you come back to them later, such as in class or when writing a paper. If you encounter a passage that you don’t understand, re-read it a few times. If you still don’t understand it, pass over it! Try to get a sense of the whole instead of getting lost in the part. But do jot down any questions or confusions you have about any particular passage or argument and raise them in class. (Note: if you’re nervous about speaking up in class, having a prewritten question on hand can help.) Second, skim over the reading again after class discussion. It should be much easier to understand at this point. If you’re still unclear about something, get help: ask other classmates, come by my office hours, etc.

10 times over the semester you will be given a short response assignment on the next session’s readings. Your response should be between ¾-1 page, double-spaced, 12 pt. font. Please print it out and bring it to class. I will not accept them via email.

These assignments will be graded on a √+, √, and √- basis. To receive a √+ you need not provide the “right” answer. Rather, a √+ indicates your having put serious effort into engaging with the text and organizing your response in a clear manner. The responses altogether will be worth 20% of your grade.
5. Assignments/Grading
1 5-page paper on Mill/Consequentialism 20%
1 5-page paper on Kant/Deontology 20%
1 5-page self-generated paper on Unit 3 or 4 20%
10 ¾-1-page expository response papers 20%
Class participation 20%

You will be given both a number grade and a letter grade for each assignment. Only the numerical grade is taken into account in determining your final grade. Numerical grades correspond to letter grades as follows: A 10-9.5; A- 9.4-9.0; B+ 8.9-8.7; B 8.6-8.3; B- 8.2-8.0; C 7.9 or below.

6. Electronic Devices in the Class
All devices with an ON/OFF switch—laptops, phones, etc.—must be switched off during class, unless they are serving a medical purpose, or you have special accommodations. All forms of electronic social commerce (e.g., texting, internet-surfing, emailing, and gaming) are strictly forbidden.

7. Disability Statement
This course is open to all students who meet the academic requirements for participation. Any student who has a need for accommodation based on the impact of a disability should contact Charri Boykin-East, Senior Associate Dean of Students, at cboykineast@amherst.edu or in Converse Hall 105. Only those students with a documented disability can arrange for accommodations, and it is the student’s responsibility to inform the professor of those accommodations once Dean Boykin-East has documented a disability. For more info, see: www.amherst.edu/campuslife/deanstudents/disability.

Reading Schedule
Note: This schedule is entirely provisional. We may speed up, slow down, skip readings, or add readings, depending on where our discussion leads and the interests of members of the class.

Unit 1: Consequentialism

Week 1:
M 1/23: Introduction to the course
W 1/25: John Stuart Mill: Utilitarianism, chapters 1 and 2

Week 2:
W 2/1: Mill, *Utilitarianism*, chapters 3 and 4; **Essay 1 Assigned**

**Week 3:**

M 2/6: Joel Feinberg, “Psychological Egoism”


**Week 4:**

M 2/13: **Essay 1 Draft Due for Revision Exercise**; R.M. Hare, “What’s Wrong with Slavery?”

W 2/15: John Rawls, “Two Concepts of Rules”

**Unit 2: Deontology**

**Week 5:**

M 2/20: Immanuel Kant 1: The Good Will and Moral Worth

*Groundwork*, Preface and §1, pp. 3-15 [4:387-400]

T 2/21 **Essay 1 Due**

W 2/22: Kant 2: Moral Worth, Maxims, Duty

*Groundwork*, §1, pp. 15-20 [4:400-405]

**Week 6:**

M 2/27: Kant 3: Morality and Human Nature; Essay 2 Assigned

*Groundwork*, §2, pp. 34-38 [4:421-426]

John Rawls, “Themes in Kant’s Moral Philosophy” (excerpts)

Barbara Herman, “Mutual Aid and Respect for Persons” (excerpts)

**Essay 2 Assigned**

W 3/1: Missed class (conference travel) [use class time to work on essay!]

**Week 7:**

M 3/6: Kant 4: Respect and Humanity

*Groundwork*, §2, pp. 39-43 [4:427-431]

Screening of Michael Haneke, *Amour* (2012). 7-915pm Keefe Campus Center Theater

W 3/8: Kant 5: Autonomy

*Groundwork*, §2, pp. 43-55 [4:431-445]
F 3/10  

Essay 2 Due

Spring Break: 3/11-3/19

Week 8:

M 3/20:  
No new assignment: review of Kant

W 3/22:  
Christine Korsgaard, “The Right to Lie: Kant on Dealing with Evil”

Unit 3: Against Morality

Week 9:

M 3/27:  
Friedrich Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morals*, Preface and First Treatise

W 3/29:  
Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morals*, Preface and First Treatise (continued)

Week 10:

M 4/3:  

W 4/5:  
Susan Wolf, “Moral Saints,” pp. 419-427

Week 11:

M 4/10:  
Wolf, “Moral Saints,” pp. 427-439 and excerpt from David Foster Wallace *The Pale King*

Unit 4: Ethics without ‘Morality?’

W 4/12:  
Aristotle: Teleology

*Nicomachean Ethics*, Bk. 1, pp.3-7; 10-22

Week 12:

M 4/17  
Aristotle: Teleology

*Nicomachean Ethics*, Bk. 1 (continued)

W 4/19:  
Aristotle: Virtues and the Mean

*Nicomachean Ethics*, Bk. 2, pp. 23-36; Bk. 3, pp. 37-48

Week 13:

M 4/24  
Aristotle: Virtues of Character, Bk. 4, pp. 60-78
Philippa Foot, “Virtues and Vices”

T 4/25: Screening Carol Reed, *The Third Man* (1949). 7-9pm Keefe Campus Center Theater

W 4/26: Aristotle: Virtues of Character (Friendship); **Self-generated paper topic on Unit 3 or 4 due**

*Nicomachean Ethics*, Bk. 8, pp. 143-154

**Week 14 (Make up class)**

M 5/1 Aristotle: Virtues of Character (Friendship)

*Nicomachean Ethics*, Bk. 9, pp. 164-182

**Finals Week:**

M 5/8 **Final paper due**