

CLASSICS IN MORAL PHILOSOPHY

This course considers central problems of moral philosophy. What is it to live a good life, or to act well? Are there objectively correct answers to practical questions? Is morality a matter of reasoning, feeling, or something else? Which characteristics of human life does a moral theory need to consider, and why are they important? Can morality make legitimate demands on us, and if so, what does it tell us to do? We will try to answer these questions by reading classic works by Aristotle, the British tradition, Kant, and Nietzsche.

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Office hours: Anderson Hall 750, Tuesdays 2:30-4:30pm or by appointment

Course requirements: (1) Approximately 50 pages of difficult reading each week
(2) Reading quizzes (15%)
(3) Three 3-page papers (45%)
(4) Peer feedback assignment (10%)
(5) Final exam (30%)

Required books: Aristotle, *The Nicomachean Ethics* (tr. Terence Irwin)
Kant, *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals* (tr. Mary Gregor)
Mill, *Utilitarianism* (ed. George Sher)
Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals* (tr. Walter Kaufmann)
Other readings will be posted on the Canvas course website.

SCHEDULE OF LECTURES AND READINGS

I. Aristotle

1. Tu 8/27: **Introduction**
2. Th 8/29: **Three Kinds of Life**
Reading: Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book I
3. Tu 9/4: **Virtues Between Two Vices**
Reading: Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book II
4. Th 9/6: **The Voluntary, Decision, and Responsibility**
Reading: Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book III

5. Tu 9/11: **The Virtues of Character**
Reading: Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book IV
6. Th 9/13: **Acting Against One's Better Judgment**
Reading: Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book VII, through Chapter 10
7. Tu 9/18: **Friendship**
Reading: Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Books VIII-IX
8. Th 9/20: **What is the Best Kind of Life?**
Reading: Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* Book X, Chapters 6-9

II. The British Moralists

9. Tu 9/25: **Our Natural State is War**
Reading: Hobbes, *Leviathan*, Chs. 6 and 13
10. Th 9/27: **Tyranny is the Only Solution**
Reading: Hobbes, *Leviathan*, Chs. 17-18
First paper due Friday, 9/28 by 5pm.
11. Tu 10/2: **Reason is the Slave of the Passions**
Reading: Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, II.iii.3; III.i.1, p.458 only; III.i.2
12. Th 10/4: **Sympathy and the General Point of the View**
Reading: Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, III.iii.1,3,6
13. Tu 10/9: **Happiness for Everyone**
Reading: Bentham, *An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation*, Chs. 1 and 4; Mill, *Utilitarianism*, Chs. 1-2 and 4
14. Th 10/11: **Common Sense is Unconsciously Utilitarian**
Reading: Sidgwick, *The Methods of Ethics*, Book IV, from Ch.1 through Ch.3, §4
15. Tu 10/16: **The Methods of Ethics**
Reading: Sidgwick, *The Methods of Ethics*, Concluding Chapter
16. Th 10/18: **Writing Workshop**
No new reading.
Second paper due Friday, 10/19 by 5pm.

III. Kant

17. Tu 10/23: **Acting from Duty**
Reading: Kant, *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*, Preface and Section I
18. Th 10/25: **The Categorical Imperative**
Reading: Kant, *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*, Section II, through 4:424
19. Tu 10/30: **The Kingdom of Ends**

- Reading: Kant, *Groundwork*, Section II, 4:425-440
20. Th 11/1: **Love and Respect**
Reading: Kant, *The Metaphysics of Morals*, 6:448-474
21. Tu 11/6: **Morality as Freedom**
Reading: Kant, *Groundwork*, Sections II-III, 4:440-448
22. Th 11/8: **The Foundation of Morality**
Reading: Kant, *Groundwork*, finish Section III
Third paper due Friday, 11/9 by 5pm.
23. Tu 11/13: **Open discussion**
Reading: Your peer feedback partner's third paper.
Peer comments due Wednesday, 11/14 by noon.
24. Th 11/15: **Peer review**
Peer assignment and rewrite of third paper due Friday, 11/16 by 5pm.

[No class 11/20 or 11/22. Have a great break!]

IV. Nietzsche

25. Tu 11/27: **Morality as Slave Revolt**
Reading: Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals*, Preface and Essay I
26. Th 11/29: **Morality as Bad Conscience**
Reading: Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals*, Essay II
27. Tu 12/4: **Morality as Life-Denying**
Reading: Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals*, Essay III
28. Th 12/6: **Conclusion and exam review**
No new reading.

Final exam Tuesday, 12/18, 10:30-12:30.

COURSE POLICIES

Office Hours: Come to office hours often! Talking one-on-one or in small groups is one of the best ways to get a handle on the material and methods of the course. You'll probably get more out of it if you come with specific questions, but coming to talk about the issues in a more general way is fine too. If you have friends in the class, feel free to come as a small group. If you want to meet but have a schedule conflict, let me know and we can find a different time. I'll also hold extra office hours each time a paper deadline is coming up.

Quizzes: There will be four short reading quizzes, usually at the beginning of class. This is a way of keeping attendance, holding you accountable for doing the readings, and reflecting how you are doing in the course. You won't know in advance which day there will be a quiz. Each quiz will be graded as an A, B, C, D, or F (no plus or minus grades); your three highest grades will be averaged together as 15% of your course grade. There will be no makeup quizzes, but only the best three count, so you can miss one quiz or get one F with no penalty. Your answer does not need to be perfect in every detail to get an A; if you read the text a few times and take some notes on the main ideas, you should have no trouble.

The instructions on each quiz will be as follows: "Reading quiz: Please answer the following question about the reading for today, summarizing the relevant parts of the reading." The question will be a basic question about the main ideas of the reading for that day. At least one quiz will be in Unit I, and will be on one of the following questions:

- For class 2: How does Aristotle think we should choose among the three kinds of life?
- For class 3: What is virtue, according to Aristotle?
- For class 4: What is the difference, in Aristotle, between the voluntary and the chosen?
- For class 5: Describe three Aristotelian virtues and their corresponding vices.
- For class 6: What is incontinence, according to Aristotle?
- For class 7: What is friendship, according to Aristotle?
- For class 8: According to Aristotle, what is the best kind of life, and why?

In the other units, the questions will be similarly basic, but you will not have them in advance.

Plagiarism: *All* written work for this course must be your own. Be sure to cite any works you use, including web sites, books, and articles. Presenting *anyone* else's work as your own is considered plagiarism. Please read Temple University's Policy on Academic Honesty: http://www.temple.edu/bulletin/Responsibilities_rights/responsibilities/responsibilities.shtm

Disabilities: Any student who has a need for accommodation based on the impact of a documented disability, including accommodations for access to technology resources and electronic instructional materials required for the course, should contact me privately to discuss your situation by the end of the second week of classes, or as soon as you can. If you haven't already, please contact Disability Resources and Services (DRS) in 100 Ritter Annex or 215-204-1280 to learn more about the resources available to you. I will work with DRS to coordinate reasonable accommodations for all students with documented disabilities.

Statement on Academic Freedom: Freedom to teach and freedom to learn are inseparable facets of academic freedom. Temple University has adopted a policy on Student and Faculty Academic Rights and Responsibilities (Policy # 03.70.02) which can be accessed through the following link: http://policies.temple.edu/getdoc.asp?policy_no=03.70.02