



Ethics

PHIL 181 – Fall 2019

Instructor: Dr. Stefano Giacchetti

M/W 5.15-6.30 – Office hours M/W Noon-1pm (by appointment)

E-Mail: sgiacch@luc.edu

SUMMARY

Short Description: This course will investigate some of the central questions of philosophy and ethics: How should we, as human beings, live together? Are moral decisions the outcome of free choice or socially and naturally determined? What is the role of rationality in decision making? What are the social implications of moral evaluations?

Outcome Statement: Students will be able to demonstrate understanding of the major philosophical questions in the area of ethics with attention to the historical and conceptual development of these questions, and be able to articulate some of the major problems and responses central to this area of philosophy.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Students should be able to demonstrate

- (a) understanding of the relationships among cultural, economic, political, and social forces, and their impact on human behavior.
- (b) understanding of the processes and components of societies, states and cultures.
- (c) understanding of the differences of class, gender and race in societies, states and cultures.
- (d) awareness that human values and behavior, ideas of justice, and methods of interpretation are influenced by culture and time
- (e) ability to differentiate among historical and contemporary perspectives about the world with a view to fashioning a humane and just world.

Students should also be able to demonstrate

- (a) understanding of the major philosophical questions in the area of moral philosophy with attention to the historical and conceptual development of these questions

(b) ability to articulate some of the major problems and responses central to this area of philosophy.

Students will learn to

- (a) recognize the way in which the basic principles governing how one ought to live are conditioned by one's involvement in and responsibilities toward the socially organized community in which one lives
- (b) understand different positions on this issue, to appreciate the concerns that account for these differences, to look for the reasons given in support of the different views, and to assess the forcefulness of the challenge that each poses for the others and for our own culture.

This course enables the student to

- (a) appreciate the profound issues involved in social relations, such as dignity and diversity
- (b) engage in dialogue with great philosophers, paying close attention to their meaning, their reasons, their concerns, their vision
- (c) examine the way different philosophically defended views challenge each other and see how they also challenge unexamined presuppositions in our own culture
- (d) include their own reflections into the dialogue
- (e) recognize reasons supporting a view, identify unexamined presuppositions, appreciate astute insights, expose vulnerabilities in established positions.
- (f) recognize the need for ethical judgment
- (g) distinguish alternative courses of action.
- (h) articulate the relevant ethical values, principles, rights, and virtues from the point of view of each stakeholder
- (i) formulate and support an ethical judgment
- (j) compare and contrast ethical theories and evaluate them in terms of strengths and weaknesses.

PROCEDURES

Full Course Description:

The course provides an overview of the theoretical background of ethics. The first part of the course will cover the theory of Kant, and his innovative perspective regarding the role of rational decisions and categorical imperatives. In the second part of the course we will examine the ethical approach of Schopenhauer who, starting from a Kantian perspective, developed his original ethical system based on the suppression of the will. The third part of the class will examine Nietzsche's critical approach to morality; his genealogical method and his radical criticism of rationality. In the final part of the class we will investigate contemporary issues in ethics; from the concrete analysis of case studies we will focus on crucial topics such as cultural relativism, subjectivism, religious influence, egoism and utilitarianism.

The aim of the course is to lead students to autonomously judge fundamental issues related to ethical decision making, with special reference to justice, fairness, adherence to norms and civil disobedience, rules and duties, cultural and social influences. This will provide students with the basic critical skills for recognizing different ethical approaches and for judging their feasibility and correctness. The analysis of the philosophies which most consistently influenced the development of ethical and moral theories will be the tool for understanding moral dilemmas and constructing ethically informed decisions.

Required Texts:

- Kant's *Grounding for the Metaphysics of Moral*. (available online)
- Schopenhauer's *The World as Will and Representation. Vol.I* (available online)
- Nietzsche's *On the genealogy of morals*. (available online)
- Rachel's *The Elements of Moral Philosophy*.

Assessment Components:

Student's final grade will be based on:

- One in-class test (Midterm): 40% of the final grade.
- One take-home paper (Final): 40% of the final grade.
- In-class presentations and participation: 20% of the final grade. Students will be requested to make presentations (15-20 min.) for one of the scheduled readings assigned.

Grading Policy:

The following grading scale will be applied for determining the final grade:

Presentation: A=20; A-=18; B+=17; B=16; B-=15; C+=14; C=13; C-=12; D+=12; D=11; F=10

Midterm and Final (each): A=40; A-=37; B+=36; B=34; B-=33; C+=32; C=30; C-=29; D+=27; D=26; F=24

Final Grade: A = 94-100; A- = 90-93; B+ = 87-89; B = 84-86; B- = 80-83; C+ = 77-79; C = 74-76; C- = 70-73; D+ = 67-69; D = 60-66; F = 59 and below

Attendance Policy:

Students should plan to regularly attend the class, since we will often broaden the topics contained in the texts to contemporary issues, and since this class is mainly intended to the rousing of students' personal thoughts and ideas.

In accordance with the JFRC mission to promote a higher level of academic rigor, all courses adhere to the following absence policy:

- For all classes meeting once a week, students cannot incur more than one unexcused absence.

- For all classes meeting twice a week, students cannot incur more than two unexcused absences.
- For all classes meeting three times a week, students cannot incur more than two unexcused absences.

This course meets twice a week, thus a total of two unexcused absences will be permitted. Unexcused absences beyond these will result in 1% lowering of the final course grade, for every absence after the “approved limit”.

Academic Honesty: Plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty are unacceptable at the JFRC and will be dealt with in accordance with Loyola University Chicago’s guidelines.

Please familiarize yourself with Loyola’s standards here:

http://www.luc.edu/academics/catalog/undergrad/reg_academicintegrity.shtml. You are responsible for understanding what constitutes plagiarism according to the LUC Student Handbook.

Accessibility Accommodations

Students registered with the Student Accessibility Center requiring academic accommodations should contact the Office of the Dean at the John Felice Rome Center, the first week of classes

Course Schedule:

09/02 Introduction

09/04 Introduction to Kant

09/09 Kant pp. 7-17

09/11 “ “ pp. 19-32

09/16 “ “ pp. 33-48

09/18 “ “ pp. 49-62

09/20 Movie

09/23 Introduction to Schopenhauer

09/25 Schopenhauer Ch. 54, 56

09/30 “ “ Ch. 57, 58, 63

10/02 “ “ Ch. 65, 66

10/07 “ “ Ch. 68

10/09 Midterm Exam

10/21 Introduction to Nietzsche

10/23 Nietzsche First Essay, Sections 1 to 10

10/28 “ “ First Essay, Sections 11 to 17

10/30 “ “ Second Essay, Sections 1 to 7

11/04 “ “ Second Essay, Sections 8 to 15

11/06 “ “ Second Essay, Sections 16 to 25

11/11 “ “ Third Essay, Sections 8, 9, 14 and 15

11/13 “ “ Third Essay, Sections 18, 23, 24, 26, 27 and 28

11/18 Movie

11/20 Rachels Ch. 1, 2

11/25 “ “ Ch. 7, 8

11/27 “ “ Ch. 9, 10

12/02 “ “ Ch. 13, 14

12/04 Study Day

Final Exam