PHIL 102: Ethics  
Summer 2012

Course Syllabus

Instructor: Aaron Rodriguez  304 PLC
Phone: (541) 346-3910  2:00pm – 3:50pm MTWRF
Email: arodrig1@uoregon.edu  CRN: 41499
Office Hours: W 11:00am – 1:00pm (or by appointment)

*
*  
*  
*  
*  
*  
*  
*  
*  
*  
*  

"We must now examine...whether just people also live better and happier than unjust ones. I think it’s clear already that this is so, but we must look into it further, since the argument concerns no ordinary topic but the way we ought to live.” – Socrates

“Convictions are more dangerous enemies of the truth than lies.” – Friedrich Nietzsche

*
*  
*  
*  
*  
*  
*  
*  
*  
*  
*  

Course Description: Socrates, the “father” of the Western philosophical tradition, genuinely believed that philosophy could indeed answer the question of how a human being ought to live. In a sense, this question is the fundamental question underwriting the entire history of philosophy, and it has manifested itself in various forms. What do we owe ourselves? What do we owe others? Does life have meaning and how do the potential answers to this question affect morality? Do moral and ethical prescriptions need to be absolute to oblige us? What can a better understanding of “human nature” tell us about our moral selves? The answers to these questions differ as much as the thinkers who have proposed them, thus this course will seek to introduce students to some of the most significant issues within moral/ethical philosophy and the various ways they have been approached. This introduction will also include a survey of some of the most influential moral theories within the history of the Western tradition. Moreover, this course will aim to cultivate students’ deliberative, argumentative, and critical thinking skills and therefore hope to awaken of a sense of wonder regarding our human experience.

Attendance: Philosophy is a conversation. The more voices heard in this conversation, the richer the growth in meaning and understanding. For this reason, regular attendance and participation are strongly encouraged.

Grading: The grades for the course will be based on the following:

- Reflection paper (2-3 pp)  10%
- Midterm paper (4-5 pp)  20%
- Group project  20%
- Final exam  30%
- Reading responses  10%
- Attendance and participation:  10%

Paper extensions and make-up exams will not be given without appropriate documentation.
Academic Honesty: Cheating and/or plagiarizing will not be tolerated. Not only is such dishonesty a poor reflection of one’s character, but the harshest penalties possible will be sought for students who violate the integrity of the course. For more information or examples of academic dishonesty please see the university website.


Course Schedule:

**Week 1: The Nature of Morality and The Egoism/Altruism Debate**
M: Syllabus, introduction, formation of groups
W: *A Clockwork Orange*
F: James Rachels – “A Critique of Ethical Egoism” (14 pp), Jesus of Nazareth – “Sermon on the Mount” and “The Good Samaritan” (4 pp), group work

**Week 2: Deontology and Utilitarianism**
T: Kant cont’d, Thomas Nagel – “Moral Luck” (12 pp), discussion
W: Jeremy Bentham – “Classical Utilitarianism” (4 pp), John Stuart Mill – “Utilitarianism Refined” (7 pgs),
F: Aristotile – selections from *Nicomachean Ethics*

**Week 3: Aristotle and Naturalized Ethics**
M: Aristotle cont’d, discussion
T: John Dewey – Introduction to *Human Nature and Conduct* (13 pp), group work
R: Friedrich Nietzsche – selections, discussion
F: Paper workshop

**Week 4: Relativism and the Problem of Evil**
T: Pojman – “The Case against Moral Relativism” (24 pp)
W: Group Presentations
R: Optional review day
F: *Final Exam* -