Course Description:
This course is an overview of the history of ethical theory. It is broken up into three main sections: (1) Governance theories of morality, (2) Morality as world-navigation, and (3) Moral pluralism and the tragic. The first unit explores the various attempts in the history of western philosophy to discover some set of moral first principles that will allow us to confront and solve any moral choice that comes our way. This sounds like a great solution, but coming to find these principles and justifying them to each other has proven to be a difficult project. The second unit explores attempts to shift the conversation away from ethics as first principles towards ethics as a particular mode of existence, one capable of navigating through our challenging world. What should this mode of existence look like, and how should we cultivate it? In the last unit, we will confront the possibility that there is no escape from our condition of moral pluralism. Perhaps we need to learn to accept and deal with one another while recognizing that reasonable people will forever disagree about the good life. What would this recognition entail? How could we recognize this without lapsing into quietism or relativism?

Course Requirements and Expectations
Two essays: 15% of final grade each = 30% final grade
Final Paper: 30% of final grade
Reading quizzes: 20% of final grade
Participation: 20% of final grade

There will be a short reading quiz every day at the start of class that will be graded pass / no pass. The essays topics will be assigned two weeks before the due date. Class attendance is mandatory. Attendance and participation points will be forfeited for the day if you use an electronic device in class (laptop, cell phone, etc), or if you are inappropriately distracting your peers (whispering, etc). You must bring a hard copy of the readings to class to receive attendance credit. More than three unexcused absences, or more than five total absences, will result in an automatic drop of two letter grades.

You are expected to come to each class having read all the day’s assigned material carefully. Philosophy texts deal very subtly with very complex issues, so the material should be read more than once in order to fully grasp the ideas. Furthermore, you should come to class prepared to discuss the material. This means that as you read, take note of parts in the text that confuse you, that seem problematic, that need further clarification, etc, and bring them up in discussion.
Grading Rubric

A = 92% or above  
A- = 90-92%  
B+ = 87-89%  
B = 83-86%  
B- = 80-82%  
C+ = 77-79%  
C = 73-76%  
C- = 70-72%  
D+ = 67-69%  
D = 63-66%  
D- = 60-62%  
F = 59% or below

Essay evaluation rubric

The following rubric reflects the general standards of the Philosophy Department at the University of Oregon:

A = excellent. No mistakes, well-written, and distinctive in some way or other.
B = good. No significant mistakes, well-written, but not distinctive in any way.
C = OK. Some errors, but a basic grasp of the material.
D = poor. Several errors. A tenuous grasp of the material.
F = failing. Problematic on all fronts indicating either no real grasp of the material or a complete lack of effort.

Disability Accommodation
I am committed to providing fair access to all students. Please submit all disability accommodation requests in compliance with University of Oregon policy. Contact the Disability Office for information.

Academic Honesty
Academic dishonesty will absolutely not be tolerated. This includes plagiarism, fabrication, cheating, etc. If you have any questions about what exactly constitutes plagiarism, you must take responsibility. The University Student Conduct Code defines explicitly what is considered student misconduct. Students that fail to meet the expectations of academic honesty will possibly be failed from the class and could face disciplinary action.
**Reading Materials:** Readings will be available on Blackboard, except for the following books, which you will have to purchase (or receive through InterLibrary loan) on your own:

- Aristotle – *Nicomachean Ethics*
- Kant – *Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals*
- Mill - *Utilitarianism*
- Beauvoir – *Ethics of Ambiguity*
- Nietzsche – *Genealogy of Morals*

Recommendation: In the first week of class, print out all the readings for the entire term (5 cents per each double-sided page in Knight Library), and put them in a three-ring binder. In the first week of class, go online and put in your InterLibrary loan order through the UO Library website for each of the above books, so you will ensure yourself to have them all on time (and free!).

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**Course Reading Schedule**

**Unit 1: Governance theories of morality: discovering moral first principles**

*Key Concepts: moral realism, universalism, rationalism, rules*

**Week 1** (Theme: Moral norms from God Himself)

M: Course introduction  
T: Excerpts from *Old Testament, New Testament, Koran*  
W: Aquinas – *Summa Theologica*  
Th: Plato - *Euthyphro*

**Week 2** (Theme: The authority of pure practical reason)

M: Kant – *Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals*  
T: Kant – *Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals*  
W: Kant – *Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals*  
Th: Rawls – “Kantian Constructivism in Moral Theory”

**Week 3** (Theme: Wielding the utilitarian calculator)

M: Mill - *Utilitarianism*  
T: Mill - *Utilitarianism*  
W: Mill - *Utilitarianism*  
Th: Singer – “Famine, Affluence, and Morality”
Unit 2: Morality as world-navigation: *creating an ethical character*
*Key Concepts: self-development, moral character, anti-universalism, relationality

**Week 4** (Theme: Cultivating a virtuous character)

M: Aristotle – *Nicomachean Ethics*
T: Aristotle – *Nicomachean Ethics*
W: Aristotle – *Nicomachean Ethics*
Th: Nussbaum – “Non-Relative Virtues: An Aristotelian Approach”

**Week 5** (Theme: Cultivating a flexible, inquisitive character)

M: Rorty – “Kant vs. Dewey: the current situation of moral philosophy”
T: Dewey – *Human Nature and Conduct*
W: Dewey – *Human Nature and Conduct*
Th: Dewey – *Human Nature and Conduct*

**Week 6** (Theme: Educating the sentiments and practicing care)

M: Hume – *An Inquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals*
T: Annette Baier – *A Progress of Sentiments: Reflections on Hume's Treatise*
W: Eva Fetter Kittay – *Love's Labor: Essays on Women, Equality, and Dependency*
Th: Virginia Held – *The Ethics of Care: Personal, Political, and Global*

Unit 3: Moral pluralism and the tragic: *reconciling ourselves to moral disorder*
*Key Concepts: moral agnosticism, anti-realism, anti-rationalism, ambiguity, pluralism, tolerance

**Week 7** (Theme: Our condition of tragic pluralism)

M: Isaiah Berlin – “Pursuit of the Ideal”
T: James – “The Moral Philosopher and the Moral Life”
W: James – “On a Certain Blindness”
Th: Rorty – “Ethics without Principles”

**Week 8** (Theme: The inescapability of ambiguity)

M: Beauvoir – *The Ethics of Ambiguity*
T: Beauvoir – *The Ethics of Ambiguity*
W: Beauvoir – *The Ethics of Ambiguity*
Th: Beauvoir – *The Ethics of Ambiguity*

**Week 9** (Theme: The primacy of power and conflict)

M: Nietzsche – *Genealogy of Morals*
T: Nietzsche – *Genealogy of Morals*
W: Nietzsche – *Genealogy of Morals*
Th: Nietzsche – *Genealogy of Morals*

**Week 10** (Theme: Overthrowing the moral philosopher-king)

M: Bernard Williams – “Pluralism, Community and Left Wittgensteinianism”
T: Bernard Williams – “Morality, the Peculiar Institution”
W: Bernard Williams – *Ethics and the Limits of Philosophy*
Th: Bernard Williams – *Ethics and the Limits of Philosophy*
*Final essay due on **