Jonathan Dixon Office Hours: Fri After Class

Email: [J2Dixon@vt.edu](mailto:J2Dixon@vt.edu) Office: 706 Fairfax St., E105

**Philosophy 112(05): Ethics and Society (22069)**

Spring 2012

MWF, 12:00-12:50pm, Waldron College Hall 225

**Course Description**

The purpose of this course is to provide an introduction to some classic and contemporary issues in ethical theory. We will look such issues as: Is there a connection between religion and morality? Are there everlasting ethical truths or is morality determined by one’s culture? Are the consequences of your actions what determine which actions are right? Or, are there other considerations that determine which actions are right and wrong, such as duties? What is the moral status of animals/fetuses? Do we have moral duties to the poor and charities? And other questions. The goal of this class is to give students a firm understanding in these and related ethical issues to provide a basis for deeper ethical thinking in one’s everyday life.

**Required Texts**

James Rachels, *The Elements of Moral Philosophy* (6th Edition) (REQUIRED)

Cahn and Markie (eds.), *Ethics: History, Theory, and Contemporary Issues* (4th Edition) (OPTIONAL)

\*Additional readings will be posted on our Scholar website, under “Reading Assignments,” which can be found in the “Resources” folder.

**Course Requirements**

1. Class Participation (20%)
2. Two Class Examinations (A Midterm and a Final, 20% each)
3. Two Papers (20% each)

Class Participation: It is crucial to understanding the material in this course (and any philosophy course) to actively engage with the material. I will actively keep track of students who come to class prepared to discuss the reading for the week by answering and raising questions brought up in class. No laptops or cell phones are permitted in this class. Students will be asked to leave class if either of these electronic devices is used or makes noise in class, and these devices use will affect student’s participation grade.

Examinations: Each exam will consist only of True/False, Multiple Choice and Short Answer Questions. Books and notes may not be used during either exam. In cases of illness, university sponsored club or athletic events out of town, or genuine emergencies, you may make a request, prior to the regularly scheduled exam, for a makeup exam. Requests received during or after the exam time will not usually be considered.

Papers: Two 3-4 page papers will be assigned. Papers must be typed (Times New Roman, 12-point font, double spaced, with 1” margins on all sides). Topics will be given at least a week before the papers are due and a discussion of how to write a philosophy paper will be given. Any paper received after the day it is due will be reduced by TWO letter grades for each day that it is overdue. Thus, if an A quality paper is due on Monday but received any time on Tuesday, it will be marked a B+.

Cheating and Plagiarism will not be tolerated. It is a violation of the University Honor Code to use material from any source (other than yourself) in your papers without adequate citation. All suspected cases of cheating and Plagiarism will be referred to the Honor Court. Visit <http://www.radford.edu/content/student-affairs/home/dean-of-students/academic-integrity.html> if you are unclear about what constitutes these Honor Code violations.

Disabilities: Any student who feels that he or she may need an accommodation because of a disability (learning disability, attention deficit disorder, psychological, physical, etc.), please make an appointment to see me during office hours. If the student requires special arrangements (due to disability or other circumstances), she or he must contact the instructor ASAP.

**Course Schedule**

All reading should be completed before class on the day listed.

“Ethics” refers to “Ethics: History, Theory, and Contemporary Issues.”

“Rachels” refers to “The Elements of Moral Philosophy.”

1st class 1/18 - Introduction

1/20 Rachels – What is Morality?

1/23 Rachels – Does Morality depend on Religion?

1/25 Ethics = Plato (*Euthyphro*)

1/27 Plato (Again)

1/30 Rachels – The Challenge of Cultural Relativism

2/1 Cultural Relativism (Again)

2/3 Rachels – Selection on Egoism

2/6 Rachels – Selection on Egoism (Paper Topics Given)

2/8 Ethical Egoism (Again)

2/10 No Reading -- How to Write a Philosophy Paper

**2/13** Rachels – Are There Absolute Moral Rules? **= First Paper Due**

2/15 Rachels – Kant and Respect for Persons

2/17 Rachels on Kant (Again)

2/20 Ethics = Kant –Selections from the *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*

2/22 Ethics = Kant (again)

2/24 Kant (Again)

2/27 Rachels -- The Utilitarian Approach; and 8.1 from The Debate Over Utilitarianism

2/29 Ethics = Bentham –selection from the “…Principles of Morals and Legislation”

3/2 Bentham (Again)

Spring Break (3/5 – 3/9)

3/12 Ethics = Mill – Selections from *Utilitarianism* (Review Sheet Given).

3/14 Rachels – The Debate Over Utilitarianism

3/16 Utilitarianism (Again) (Review for Midterm)

**3/19** **First Test**

3/21 Ethics = Thomson – A Defense of Abortion

3/23 Ethics = Don Marquis – An Argument that Abortion is Wrong

3/26 Thomson vs. Marquis

3/28 Article = Singer – All animals are Equal

3/30 Ethics = Cohen –The Case for the Use of Animals in Biomedical Research

4/2 Singer vs. Cohen (Again)

4/4 Youtube Singer Video( <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UHzwqf_JkrA> )(Paper Topics)

4/6 Ethics = Thomson – The Trolley Problem

4/9 Trolley Problem (Again)

**4/11** Article = Fitzpatrick – Thomson’s Turnabout on the Trolley (**SecondPaperDue)**

4/13 Finish the TROLLEY PROBLEM

4/16 Ethics = Singer “Famine, Affluence and Morality”

4/18 Ethics = Arthur “Famine Relief and the Ideal Moral Code”

4/20 Singer vs. Arthur

4/23 Ethics = Nagel – Moral Luck (Review Sheet Given)

4/25 Nagel (Again)

4/27 Wiggle Room – (Review for Final)

**Finals** (Monday, 4/30 @2:45pm) **Non-Cumulative Final**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Percentage | Letter Grade |
| 94+ | A |
| 90-93 | A- |
| 87-89 | B+ |
| 83-86 | B |
| 80-82 | B- |
| 77-79 | C+ |
| 73-76 | C |
| 70-72 | C- |
| 67-69 | D+ |
| 63-66 | D |
| 60-62 | D- |
| -59 | F |