

PHIL 112
The History of Ethics
Sacramento State University, Fall 2019
Tues/Thurs, 9:00 am-10:15 am
Mendocino Hall 3009

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Western moral philosophy is a rich intellectual tradition. As the inheritors of this tradition, students of its history have an opportunity to gain a deeper understanding of their place in the world and how they might live a good life. But what is a good life? Is living a good life the same thing as living an ethical life? Is morality about fulfilling ethical duties? Or does morality fundamentally depend on good or bad consequences? Also, is morality universal and binding on all? Or is morality just a way of pushing others around and expressing our feelings? These are some of the big questions raised in the history of ethics. In this course, we will discuss these (and other) questions by studying works by Plato, Aristotle, David Hume, Immanuel Kant, John Stuart Mill, and other philosophers. The course is divided into three parts. Part One focuses on ancient Greek ethics and its central theme of living a good life in accordance with virtue. Part Two turns to modern ethics and its central project of rationally justifying morality. Part Three considers more recent reactions to this history, whether, for instance, the modern project succeeds, or whether we should reconsider the ancient theme of living well.

Catalogue Description: “Investigation of the main approaches to ethics in Western moral philosophy. Emphasis on Plato, Aristotle, Hume, Kant and Mill.” See prerequisites [here](#).

Required Texts (available in Bookstore or online):

Plato, *Five Dialogues: Euthyphro, Apology, Crito, Meno, Phaedo*, 2nd ed. (Hackett)
Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 2nd ed. (Hackett)
David Hume, *Moral Philosophy* (Hackett)
Immanuel Kant, *Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals* (Hackett)
John Stuart Mill, *Utilitarianism*, 2nd ed. (Hackett)

All other texts both (required and optional) will be available in PDF format on Canvas.

Learning Objectives: By the end of the course, the student should have the ability to

- ✓ Develop competence in philosophical language and literature on the history and transformations of ethical theories. *Practical Goals associated with this objective:*
 - Accurately describe and distinguish a variety of concepts, theories, and positions in the history of ethics;
 - Express one's own ethical judgments in a cogent and clear fashion;
 - Engage in respectful discussion of difficult and sometimes controversial ethical issues;
 - Analyse specific ethical arguments for consistency and credibility (including one's own).
- ✓ Develop written and oral communication skills as those are associated with argumentative writing and public speaking. *Practical Goals associated with this objective:*
 - Write competently in concise, precise and well-developed logical style;

- Express of a point of view through the formulation of a coherent and consistent argument;
 - Present an exposition of text in a coherent manner to an audience of peers.
- ✓ Meet the learning objectives associated with all General Education area C2 (Humanities) courses at CSUS:
- Demonstrate knowledge of the conventions and methods of the study of the humanities.
 - Investigate, describe, and analyze the roles and effects of human culture and understanding in the development of human societies.
 - Compare and analyze various conceptions of humankind.
 - Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the historical development of cultures and civilizations, including their animating ideas and values.

Assessment:

40% - Philosophical Analysis Papers

There will be four short analysis papers (1000-1250 words), each on one of six major philosophers. The papers should follow the format detailed [here](#). We will discuss this further in class. Due dates on the schedule below.

20% - Final Paper

The final paper follows the same format as above, but should be more expansive (1500-2000 words), develop an original thesis, and may be written on any philosopher/topic from the course. Students are encouraged to discuss their final paper with me, and I will help you formulate your ideas.

20% - Quizzes

There will be two quizzes at the end of Parts One and Two. They will focus on comprehension of the major philosophical ideas of each part. Online and multiple choice. Due dates on the schedule below.

15% - Study Questions

Except for the first class, at the beginning of class, I will collect written answers to the Study Questions posted online for that day's assigned readings. Answers will be graded as Check (15)/Check-Plus (20)/Check-Minus (10), depending on thoroughness and accuracy. You must be present for the duration class to receive credit. No late or absentee work will be accepted, but three lowest scores are dropped.

5% - Course Engagement

You cannot learn if you do not participate and take ownership of your own success. Course engagement (via attendance) will be partly accounted by your responses to the study questions. Three absences will be allowed without penalty, but after 1% per absence will be deducted. I also expect you to engage in class discussion, either voluntarily or when called on. I will do my best to make this fun and stress-free.

Grading Schema:

A = 93-100%, A- = 90-92%, 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 = 0-59%

Late work policy: As a rule, work will not be accepted late except in cases of documented emergency or illness. You may make a written petition in advance if you feel an exception is warranted.

Course conduct: You are expected to be respectful toward your fellow students and myself. This course requires discussion of controversial and emotionally charged issues. If you are not comfortable

rationally discussing them in a thoughtful and respectful way, you should not take the course. Additionally, please refrain from using your phones (e.g. texting, email, YouTube videos, listening to music, etc.), and otherwise acting in an inappropriate or distracting way (e.g. chronic lateness, talking, sleeping, playing games, etc.). Responsible use of laptops/tablets (e.g. note taking, viewing reading) is permitted provided it does not degenerate into any of the above. Failure to abide by the above will result in forfeiting the participation portion of the grade and you may be asked to leave class.

Plagiarism: Plagiarism is a violation of University policy and seriously undermines your integrity as a student. Penalties may be severe. It is your responsibility to understand the University’s plagiarism policy. When in doubt, ask me. See <https://www.csus.edu/umannual/student/stu-0100.htm>

Reasonable Accommodation: Should any student need accommodation because of a disability, please let me know to discuss options (documentation to SSWD, Lassen Hall 1008, 916-278-6955).

Week	Dates	Topics	Readings/Assignments
PART ONE: Ancient Ethics			
Week One – Introductory Week	Tues, Aug 27	Introduction to the Course: Why Ethics? Why <i>History</i> of Ethics?	Coles, “The Disparity Between Intellect and Character” (PDF)
	Thurs, Aug 29	The Tradition of Ancient Greek Ethics	Julia Annas, “The Happy Life, Ancient and Modern” (PDF)
Week Two – Plato	Mon, Sept 2	Labor Day, NO CLASSES	
	Tues, Sept 3	What is the Good?	<i>Euthyphro</i> (all)
	Thurs, Sept 5	Wisdom and the Good Life	<i>Apology</i> , thru line 24b
Week Three – Plato	Tues, Sept 10	Virtue and the Good Life	<i>Apology</i> cont., 24b-end
	Thurs, Sept 12	Justice and the Good Life	<i>Crito</i> (all)
	Sun, Sept 15	Plato Paper Due	Submit via Canvas
Week Four – Aristotle	Tues, Sept 17	Happiness and the Human Telos	<i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> , Bk.1, Ch. 1-6
	Thurs, Sept 19	Aristotle’s Conception of Happiness	<i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> , Bk. 1 cont., Ch. 7-13
Week Five – Aristotle	Tues, Sept 24	The Character of Virtue	<i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> , Bk. 2, Ch. 1-5

	Thurs, Sept 26	The Doctrine of the Mean	<i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> , Bk. 2 cont., Ch. 6-9
Week Six – Epicureanism and Stoicism	Tues, Oct 1	Pleasure and the Good Life	Epicurus, “Letter to Menoeceus” (PDF)
	Thurs, Oct 3	Is Virtue <i>Sufficient</i> for a Good Life?	Excerpt from Cicero, <i>On Moral Ends</i> (PDF)
	Sun, Oct 6	Aristotle Paper Due	Submit via Canvas
	Mon, Oct 7	First Quiz Due	Online

**PART TWO:
Modern Ethics**

Week Seven – David Hume	Tues, Oct 8	Reason, Emotion, and Morality	<i>A Treatise of Human Nature</i> , Bk. III, Pt. 1, Sec. 1
	Thurs, Oct 10	Morality and Sentiment	<i>Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals</i> , Sec. 1-2
Week Eight – David Hume	Tues, Oct 15	Natural vs. Artificial Virtues	<i>A Treatise of Human Nature</i> , Bk. III, Pt. 2, Sec. 1
	Thurs, Oct 17	The Utility of Justice	<i>Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals</i> , Sec. 3
Week Nine – Immanuel Kant	Tues, Oct 22	Introduction to Kant	<i>Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals</i> , Editor’s Intro, pp. v-xiii
	Thurs, Oct 24	Reason and Morality	<i>Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals</i> , Preface and Section 1
Week Ten – Immanuel Kant	Tues, Oct 29	The Good Will and Categorical Imperative	<i>Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals</i> , Section 2
	Thurs, Oct 31	Freedom and Autonomy	<i>Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals</i> , Section 3
	Sun, Nov 3	Hume or Kant Paper Due	Submit via Canvas

Week Eleven – John Stuart Mill	Tues, Nov 5	Introduction to Mill	<i>Utilitarianism</i> , Editor’s Intro, pp. vii-xiv
	Thurs, Nov 7	Morality and Happiness	<i>Utilitarianism</i> , Ch. 1-2
Week Twelve – John Stuart Mill	Mon, Nov 11	Veteran’s Day, No Classes	
	Tues, Nov 12	The Principle of Utility	<i>Utilitarianism</i> , Ch. 3-4
	Thurs, Nov 14	Utility and Justice	<i>Utilitarianism</i> , Ch. 5
	Mon, Nov 18	Second Quiz Due	Online
PART THREE: Reactions to the History of Ethics			
Week Thirteen – Friedrich Nietzsche	Tues, Nov 19	Critique of Traditional Ethics	Selection from <i>Beyond Good and Evil</i> (PDF)
	Thurs, Nov 21	Master and Slave Moralities	Selection from <i>On the Genealogy of Morals</i> (PDF)
	Sun, Nov 24	Mill or Nietzsche Paper Due	Submit via Canvas
Week Fourteen – Logical Positivism and The Meta-Ethical Turn	Tues, Nov 26	Emotivism	A.J. Ayer, “Critique of Ethics and Theology” (PDF)
	Thurs/Fri, Nov 28-29	Thanksgiving Break, No Class	
Week Fifteen – Virtue Ethics: Decline and Rebirth	Tues, Dec 3	The Decline of Virtue Ethics	Elizabeth Anscombe, “Modern Moral Philosophy” (PDF), Alasdair MacIntyre, <i>After Virtue</i> , Ch. 1 & 5 (PDF)
	Thurs, Dec 5	The Rebirth of Virtue Ethics	Timothy Chappell, “Virtue ethics in the twentieth century” (PDF)
	Sun, Dec 8	Final Paper Due	Submit via Canvas