Philosophy 102: Ethics
Fall 2013/ Monday – Thursday 9 – 9:50 A.M./ 360 Condon Hall
Instructor: Russell Duvernoy / russelld@uoregon.edu

Course Description:
This course is an introduction into the rich philosophical tradition of ethics and ethical theory. It is structured primarily as a survey of differing traditions. The goal of the course is to familiarize students with the central themes of philosophical ethical enquiry as well as to introduce a range of theoretical approaches to this enquiry. Central questions framing our examination will include how to negotiate the tension between a diverse and pluralistic world and moral relativism, as well as considering the relationship between theory and life practices. Additionally, we will consider contemporary developments in feminist care ethics and discuss the ways in which gender may or may not impact our ethical decision making. Finally, we will consider the application of traditional ethical theories to contemporary questions of ecology and the environment.

Course Goals:
At the conclusion of this course, students should:
- Have a basic understanding of classic structures of ethical theory (deontological ethics, consequentialist (utilitarian) ethics, virtue ethics, and feminist care ethics).
- Be able to articulate ways in which different ethical theories may prescribe different responses to situations.
- Have a greater awareness of the complexity of problems which arise in ethical choice.
- Understand the tensions inherent in pluralism and relativism, and be able to articulate a view of the relationship between theory and practice.

Policies and Expectations:
Students are expected to attend all class sessions and to complete the entirety of reading assignments before the session in question.

For many of you, this may be your first course in college level philosophy and the readings may be more dense, technical, or challenging than you are used to. A few words of advice and encouragement are therefore in order: it is extremely important that you do the reading, even when it is difficult! You will become a better reader only if you practice reading. Moreover, a good part of the discipline of philosophy involves developing critical skills. You should read actively and closely, with a pencil for notes and underlining. Time permitting, reading articles twice, once before lecture, and once after, is an excellent habit to establish. Finally, class will frequently involve discussions of the readings. If students do not complete the reading before the class in which it is discussed, then they will not be able to participate profitably in the class discussion, and their participation grade will suffer accordingly.

Student work for the course will consist of the following: (1) Weekly discussion questions (1) Two short argument analysis papers; (2) Midterm exam; (3) Final paper.
(1) Two argument Analysis papers: Students choose a reading and write a short (4 page max) paper in which they explain the central argument of the reading and offer a brief critical response. These papers are due at the beginning of week 4, and the end of week 7. More detailed guidelines will be distributed in class.
(2) In class midterm exam: This will cover main themes, arguments and philosophers. It will include multiple choice, fill in the blank, short answer, and one essay question.
(3) Final Paper: For the final paper, students will be expected to develop a thesis and write a polished and thoughtful work of 5-7 pages. More detailed guidelines will be distributed in class.
(4) Weekly discussion questions: Students are required to bring a written question to class every Thursday. We will use these questions to help guide discussions and they will be collected at the end of class. No late questions will be accepted and questions will not receive a grade. Missing discussion questions will negatively impact your participation grade.
(5) Attendance and Participation: Weekly discussion questions and participation in all classes will be evaluated for this portion. As noted above, completion of the reading is essential to earning full participation credit.
(6) Quizzes: I reserve the right for unscheduled pop quizzes should it become apparent that students are not completing the assigned readings. Such quizzes will count towards the participation grade.

**Grading Scheme/Rubric:**
Weekly discussion questions/ Attendance/ Participation 15%
Argument Analysis Paper 1 15%
Argument Analysis Paper 2 20%
Midterm Exam 20%
Final Paper 30%

**Technology:** Cell phones must be turned off and lap-top computers should be silent.

**Late work/Make Up:** Assignments are due at the beginning of class and will only be accepted late in the case of documented emergencies or uncontrollable circumstances. Late papers will be marked down 5 points for every day late and will not be accepted after 5 days past the due date. **Discussion questions** will not be accepted late. There are no make-ups for the midterm unless you know in advance that you will be unavoidably absent on the day the exam is scheduled. In such cases, you must see me before to arrange an alternative.

**Intellectual safety, Discussions:** This is a course in ethics and as such there may be times in which people feel strongly about the issues or arguments being discussed. During discussions, students will be expected to maintain an atmosphere of mutual respect.

**Plagiarism/Intellectual Honesty:** All written work must be yours and yours alone. Any instances of plagiarism or intellectual dishonesty will result in an **automatic failure** and
will be reported to the university administration. For more information, please review the
following website as to how to ensure against committing plagiarism:
http://library.uoregon.edu/guides/plagiarism/students/index.html

Additionally, information on policies with regard to academic misconduct can be found
here:
http://uodos.uoregon.edu/StudentConductandCommunityStandards/AcademicMisconduct/
tabid/248/Default.aspx

**Accessibility / Accommodations:** All students will be provided with fair and equal
access. If you encounter obstacles to full participation, please make arrangements to meet
with me to discuss these obstacles. In addition, you may contact the Accessible Education
Center at http://aec.uoregon.edu/.
Please submit all disability accommodation requests in compliance with University of
Oregon policy. Contact the Disability Office for information.

**Blackboard:** Class hand-outs, documents (such as this syllabus), and readings will be
posted on Blackboard. Students must bring a copy of the reading to class on the date it is
scheduled to be discussed.

**Lecture Topics/Reading Schedule/Assignments:**

The following schedule is tentative and subject to change over the course of the
semester.

**Unit 1: What is Ethics? Human Nature and the Good**
Framing concepts: relativism and pluralism / rationalism / theory and practice / nihilism

**Week 1:** What is Ethics?
M 9/30: Introductory lecture: What is Ethics?
T 10/1: Plato *Euthyphro*
W 10/2: Plato *Euthyphro*; excerpts from *The Republic*
Th 10/3: James Rachels: “The Challenge of Cultural Relativism” / Discussion
Optional Reading: Tom Regan “How Not to Answer Moral Questions”

**Week 2:** Is there a Human nature?
M 10/7: Mencius “Are Humans good by Nature?”; Darwin “The Origin of the Moral
Sense”
W 10/9: Carol Gilligan “In a Different Voice”
Th 10/10: Jean Grimshaw “The Idea of a Female Ethic” Discussion / Argument
analysis paper guidelines distributed in class

**Unit 2: The Three Traditional Ethical Approaches**
Key Concepts: consequentialism / utilitarianism / moral decision making / deontology /
virtue ethics / moral education / care ethics / Stoicism

Week 3: Utilitarianism / Consequentialism
M 10/14: Guest Lecturer Phil Mayo: Bentham “The Principle of Utility”; J.S. Mill
Utilitarianism: “What Utilitarianism Is”
T 10/15: Mill Utilitarianism: “What Utilitarianism Is” (cont.) and “Of the Ultimate
Sanction of the Principle of Utility”
W 10/16: Mill “Of What Sort of Proof the Principle of Utility is Susceptible to”
Th 10/17: Peter Singer: “Famine, Affluence, and Morality”; Discussion
Optional Reading: Bernard Williams “Jim and the Indians”

Week 4: Deontology
Imperative”
W 10/23: Kant: “On a supposed right to Lie from Altruistic Motives”; Rae Langton
“Maria von Herbert’s Challenge to Kant”
Th 10/24: Mary Midgley “Duties Concerning Islands”; Discussion

Week 5 Virtue
M 10/28: Aristotle Nicomachean Ethics (excerpts) Book 1,2
T 10/29: Aristotle Nicomachean Ethics (excerpts) Book 6, 10
W 10/30: Maclntyre After Virtue (excerpts)
Th 10/31: Gina Berriault: “Who is it who can tell me who I am?”; Discussion

Week 6: Forms of Virtue
M 11/4: Epicurus “Letter to Menoeceus”; Epictetus Enchiridon
T 11/5: Eva Feder Kittay – Love’s Labor – “Introduction”
W 11/6: Virginia Held – The Ethics of Care – “The Ethics of Care as Moral Theory”
Th 11/7: Midterm in class. 20%

Unit 3: Navigating Pluralism and Ambiguity: Theory and Practice
Key Concepts: skepticism / pragmatism / existentialism / engaged action / quietism /
incommensurability

Week 7: What are the limits of Theory? How does theory affect our Lives?
T 11/12: William James: “On a Certain Blindness in Human Beings”
W 11/13: John Dewey: The Quest for Certainty selections
Th 11/14: 2nd Argument Analysis Paper due 20% // Discussion

Week 8: Can we know the ‘Good’? Moral and Ethical Skepticism
M 11/18: Kierkegaard Fear and Trembling (selections)
T 11/19: Wittgenstein: “A Lecture on Ethics”
W 11/20: Nietzsche – *Genealogy of Morals* – “‘Good and Evil,’ ‘Good and Bad’”
(aphorism 1-17) **Film Screening:** 7 p.m. “Happiness” Agnes Varda (Location TBA)
**Th 11/21 Discussion**

**Week 9:** Freedom and Action

**M 11/25:** **Final Paper Prompts distributed in class** / Sartre “Existentialism is a
Humanism”; Camus “The Myth of Sisyphus”

**T 11/26:** Simone de Beauvoir: ‘The Antinomies of Action’; ‘The Present and the Future’

**W 11/27:** Beauvoir, cont.: ‘Ambiguity’ from *The Ethics of Ambiguity*

**Th 11/28:** **NO CLASS THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY**

**Week 10 Closing Thoughts on Engaged Ethics**

**M 12/2:** **Guest Lecturer Jon LaRochelle**: Foucault: “The Ethics of the Concern for Self
as the Practice of Freedom”

**T 12/3:** MLK “Letter from a Birmingham Jail”

**W 12/4:** William Edelglass: “Thich Nhat Hanh’s Interbeing: Fourteen Guidelines for
Engaged Buddhism”

**Th 12/5:** Joanna Macy “The Ecological Self”

**Week 11 Finals Week**

**Final papers due by 5 p.m. on Wednesday, Dec. 11th.**
Phil 607-Philosophy and Teaching
Instructor: Scott Pratt
Fall 2013
Office: 237 Susan Campbell Hall
CRN: 15811
Phone: 346-5971
8:30-9:30 Thursday
Email: spratt@uoregon.edu
211B SCH
Office Hours: 1:30-3:30 Thurs & by Appt.

Purpose: This course runs for the entire year, each quarter offering a different focus. The first quarter concerns pedagogical technique, the second course design, and the third broader issues in the philosophy of education. This quarter, our goal is to improve your effectiveness as instructors and to provide you with a forum for discussing some of the challenges you’re facing in the classroom.

Schedule:

Week One: Introductions, “the first class”
Week Two: Leading discussions
Week Four: Teaching Writing
Week Six: Mid term evaluations
Week Seven:
Week Eight: Preparing for finals, understanding teaching evaluations.
Week Nine: No Class

Assignments: There will be four readings (see above) but no other outside assignments unless the class collectively decides to add some.

Attendance: Mandatory

Grading: This course is only available a P/NP course. If you are enrolled for a grade, change your status to P/NP.