Introduction to Philosophy: Beliefs & Values
Philosophy 101.003 (MWF, 10-10:50, ECTR 111)

Ned Hettinger
Spring 2006
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Course Description and Goals

This course will introduce you to philosophy through an examination of issues in ethics, philosophy of religion, aesthetics, environmental philosophy, social and political philosophy, and feminism. The focus is on ethics, both theoretical and applied. Topics in theoretical ethics include the nature of morality, ethical relativism, egoism, utilitarianism, the ethics of respect, the ethics of care, and virtue ethics. Topics in applied ethics include homosexuality, the treatment of animals, and the justification of punishment. In the philosophy of religion, we will examine arguments for and against the existence of God, a humanistic criticism of religion, and a defense of the idea that it is permissible to believe that one religion is better than others. Topics in social and political philosophy include the limits of governmental authority over the individual and the idea that government is based on a social contract. We will examine whether science is important for the aesthetic appreciation of nature and the tensions between animal liberation and environmental ethics. We will also examine the ideas of radical feminism.

The aim of this course is to get you to think, speak, and write clearly, critically, and imaginatively about a number of important philosophical issues. Rigorous philosophical thinking encourages the development of these skills. I encourage you to become involved with the course questions and to relate them to your own life and thought. This is the best way to begin thinking philosophically for oneself and to actually do philosophy. This is the most important goal of the course.

Texts

James Rachels, The Elements of Moral Philosophy, 4th edition
Articles available on the Library’s Electronic Reserves (http://ereserve.cofc.edu/) (password: hettinger) and on the course webpage

Requirements

Major Paper (including a description of the project) (34%)
5-7 page paper exploring a topic you choose in the areas of philosophy covered by the course. The paper must relate your topic to the course material that is relevant to it. A paper proposal is due on Thursday, March 23th. The final paper is due on Thursday, April 13rd.

Midterm Exam (23%)
March 1st. On all assigned readings, lectures, and class discussions. May also include questions on important material from the reading that was not discussed during class.

Final Exam (23%)
On May 3rd, 8-11am. The exam will stress the material from the second half of the course but may also include relevant material from the first half.

Reading Quizzes (10%), Class Participation (5%), and Attendance (5%) (20%)
There will be brief quizzes at the beginning of class on the reading for that class period, typically one per week. There will be no make-ups for these quizzes, but you can send me an email before the class you miss briefly describing the reading for that class and this will count for the quiz. I also offer “free quizzes” that allow students to replace missed quizzes. Class participation includes general quality of class involvement. Attendance is particularly important in this class. I want you to learn from each other. Also, developing the skill of thinking philosophically requires practice and following examples. These can't be adequately done on your own. Poor attendance will lower your grade; extremely poor attendance (missing over two weeks of class) is sufficient grounds for failing the course. If you have a good reason for missing class, please write it on a piece of paper (with the date missed and your name) and give it to me. I give
assignments and distribute an attendance sheet at the beginning of class. Please come to class on time. It is your responsibility to sign the attendance sheet.

Schedule of Assignments, Philosophy 101, Spring 2006

Jan 9: Introduction

Nature of Morality
Jan 13: Same as above

Objectivity, Subjectivity, and Relativism in Ethics and Aesthetics
Jan 18: CH 2, Cultural Relativism, EMP 16-31
Jan 25: Same as above
Jan 27: CH 3, Subjectivism, EMP 32-47

Homosexuality
Jan 30: Two readings:
Course Web Page: Recent Issues Concerning Gays (Extra prison time for gay criminals, prohibition on adoption for gays, a pattern of abuse, Matt Shepard, and Gay survey raises a new question)
Feb 1: Same as above

Philosophy of Religion
Feb 10: Same as above
Feb 15: Course webpage: Can Nonbelievers Be Saved?
Feb 20: Two readings
Feb 22: Same as above.
Feb 24: CH 4, Does Morality Depend on Religion? EMP 48-62
Feb 27: Same as above
Mar 1: MIDTERM EXAM

Egoism
Mar 3: CH 5, Psychological Egoism, EMP 63-75

SPRING BREAK
Mar 13: CH 6, Ethical Egoism, EMP 76-90
Mar 15: Same as above

Utilitarianism, Ethics and Animals, and Environmental Ethics
Mar 17: CH 7, The Utilitarian Approach, EMP 91-101
Mar 22: Same as above and Holmes Rolston videoclips “Challenges in Environmental Ethics”

PAPER PROPOSAL DUE (Thursday, March 23th, 3pm, 14 Glebe mailbox)
Mar 24: CH 8, Debate over Utilitarianism, EMP 102-116
Mar 27: Same as above

Punishment and the Ethics of Respect
Mar 29: CH 9, Are There Absolute Moral Rules, EMP 117-129
Mar 31: CH 10, Kant and Respect for Persons, EMP 130-140
Apr 3: Same as above

Social and Political Philosophy
Apr 5: CH 11, The Idea of a Social Contract, EMP 141-159
Apr 10: Same as above

Feminism and Feminist Ethics
Apr 12: CH 12, Feminism and the Ethics of Care EMP 160-172

PAPER DUE (Thursday, April 13, 3pm, 14 Glebe mailbox)
Apr 17: Same as above

Conclusions about Moral Theory
Apr 19: CH 13, The Ethics of Virtue EMP 173-190
Apr 24: Same as above

FINAL EXAM