

**Moravian College / Fall 2007 / Philosophy 122B, Introduction to ETHICS**  
**Mon/Wed 2:20-3:30 in Rm302Memorial**

**Instructor: Dr. Harold Weiss**

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**OfficeHours:** 30minutes before + 30minutes after class, in Rm.102 Zinzendorf

**Website:** [www.northampton.edu/faculty/hweiss](http://www.northampton.edu/faculty/hweiss)

**Required Text:** The Moral of the Story, by Nina Rosenstand (*FIFTH Edition*)

**Course Description & Requirements:** A survey of major ethical theories, ideas and arguments, mainly from Western philosophical history, but this course will have unique multicultural and inter-disciplinary aspects. We will examine ethics with the aid of narrative theory, and moral themes and problems as found in literature, movies, and television. Major course concepts covered include: Virtue, Vice, Duty, Character, Egoism, Hedonism, Rationalism, Relativism, Deontology, Utilitarianism, Existentialism, Authenticity, and Feminism. The course will conclude with several weeks of *applying* theories to a variety of concrete and contemporary dilemmas and issues, through research and reports.

*Students are expected to perform the following, to the best of their ability--*

- 1) To gain objective cognitive mastery of the many specific theories and themes found in an historical survey of various moral traditions and texts, and in narratives – religion, myths, movies, novels, TV
- 2) To accurately and persuasively *apply* those theories, to explain how they would assess or dictate right and wrong conduct, or good and bad character, in a variety of situations – personal, hypothetical, professional, actual, artistic.
- 3) To question, clarify, justify, and articulate your own moral position on a variety of topics, as well as develop open-minded respect for the complexity and ambiguity of morality and human nature, and the variety of ethical ideas and values in world culture and history.
- 4) To develop clarity, concision, cognitive depth, creativity, and critical thought, in reading, speaking, ethical reasoning, and especially in written work.
- 5) To learn how to use the Internet and software as resources, to evaluate and apply that information; to cooperate and collaborate with others in small groups; to communicate and educate others through verbal and visual presentations.
- 6) To write essays and Papers in consultation with Instructor and Tutor, with Plans and Revisions, and in these papers to show strong knowledge and application of course Textbook, and strong formal academic research & composition skills.

**Absence Penalties:** (*regardless of reason!*) – 1/2 pt. per class, subtracted from total...

A legitimate excuse allows you to make up pts. lost, you're "allowed" 5 absences (with penalties), with 6<sup>th</sup> unexcused absence, you Will be dropped from class.

## **ETHICS - Guidelines for Writing Papers**

- Your first step is to pick a film from the List provided and 1 or 2 text chapters relevant to it.
- A good paper should show me that 1.) you comprehend course concepts, theories, arguments; 2.) you can appropriately and persuasively apply them to the narrative you choose; 3.) you have a main thesis or argument to make, and 4.) you can structure all this in proper expository (essay) form.

1.) Course Theories – Your main job is to examine the *philosophical* elements in a narrative, not just to generally discuss a movie. Therefore you must explain yourself clearly and completely, define ethical terms used, and demonstrate your comprehension and interpretation of how various authors and ideas relate to the issues or dilemmas in a film. Our course text should be a sufficient source for the first paper (either 2 chapters or I chapt. & 1-2 sources), your second paper should have 2 chapters, and at least two more sources, one primary, one secondary, to supplement text material.

2.) Application to the Narrative – In order not to waste space on simple plot summary, you may assume that your audience has seen the film, but they are NOT familiar with the relevant ethical terms and issues. So you can just briefly refer to film scenes or characters but credit comes from a complete and clear explanation of relevant philosophy ideas, arguments, chapter sections. (How does the book *relate* to characters or events, does the moral of the story confirm or question a theory?) Make links, connections, compare, contrast.

3.) On Having a Point – The variety of possible philosophical implications of most films makes it hard for me to steer you here; hopefully this is where you'll be most original, creative, or personal. You could try to establish the main meaning or *message* of a film, or the ethical *transformation* of a character or relationship, identify key *conflicts* or dilemmas, any of these *done showing the relevant connections, relations to ideas & arguments, theories & philosophers* from our text & course. (How would a philosopher explain or evaluate a film? Are characters illustrations of, or counterexamples to, a given theory?) Whatever your thesis, make a clear and convincing case for it, by analyzing at least three specific items of evidence (speeches, scenes, events, etc.) in relation to course concepts and your conclusion(s).

4.) Proper Essay Form – You must start with an introductory paragraph, which sets up the issues, indicates the conclusion you will defend, and briefly outlines how this will be accomplished. The body of the paper should accomplish some of the tasks mentioned above, while the last paragraph should culminate your presentation. While conceptual content is paramount here, style also matters... Format, Quotations, Bibliography must all be done exactly right!

- ***Use software or proofreader - Goal is NO spelling or grammar errors in final draft!***
- ***Don't just mention text ingredients – define, explain, summarize sections – show new knowledge!***

**Group Reports:** We begin with choice of topics and materials. You should not research anything without first gaining Instructor's approval & suggestions. I must be able to see you identify objectives, learn, then teach new material. Use video & Internet as resources & visual aids, present outlines or handouts for class, use debate structure, etc. These should be as collaborative & creative as possible, but main job is to educate class on a clearly framed topic. You must use Technology! (3-6 people, one hour in length, 15 possible points)

## ***MOVIES***

Related to The Moral of the Story

**Ch.3:** Last of the Mohicans / Dances with Wolves / The Black Robe / Higher Learning  
Passage to India / Joy Luck Club / Crash

**Ch.4:** Wall Street / Regarding Henry / Madame Bovary / Hero / Pay It Forward  
Rain Man / Casablanca / Lord of the Flies / Lord of the Rings / Return to Paradise

**Ch.3 & 4:** Do The Right Thing / American History X / Seven Years in Tibet  
Bulworth / Emerald Forest

**Ch. 5 & 6:** Outbreak / Outland / Copland / Quiz Show / Air Force One  
Extreme Measures / High Noon / Bridges of Madison County  
Abandon Ship / Saving Private Ryan / To Kill a Mockingbird  
Runaway Jury / Million Dollar Baby / A Few Good Men

**Ch.10:** Breakfast Club / American Beauty / Ghost World / Dead Poets Society  
Good Will Hunting / Ordinary People / The Graduate / Garden State

**Ch.12:** Little Women / Tootsie / Swing Shift / A League of Their Own / G.I. Jane  
A Doll's House / Boys Don't Cry / Baby Boom / Disclosure / Mona Lisa Smile

**See Guidelines on Academic Honesty and Plagiarism Policy  
in Moravian College Student Handbook**

# ASSIGNMENT SCHEDULE



## Ethics / Fall 2007

**READ the Book!**      **LATE WRITTEN WORK IS PENALIZED! (one point per day)**

CheckClassWebpage regularly for specific **instructions**[www.northampton.edu/faculty/hweiss/Philos122B.htm](http://www.northampton.edu/faculty/hweiss/Philos122B.htm)  
My whole website available at [www.northampton.edu/faculty/hweiss](http://www.northampton.edu/faculty/hweiss)  
Mon. / Wed.

Aug. 27 / 29	Syllabus / Text Contents /	<b>Ch.2 - Read pages 68 - 76, 84 - 102</b>	
Sept. 5	READ Chapter 3	<b>2-4page essay DUE Sept.6<sup>th</sup>,</b>	<b>(5 points)</b>
Sept. 10 / 12	READ Chapt. 4		
Sept. 17 / 19	READ finish 3 + 4		
Sept. 24 / 26	READ Chapters 5 + 6	<b>3-4page essay DUE Tues.Feb.25</b>	<b>(10 points)</b>
Oct. 1 / 3	READ Chapters 5 + 6		
Oct.10	READ Chapters 5 + 6	<i>Meet with Teacher or Tutor on paper Outline</i>	
Oct. 15 / 17		Paper OUTLINES DUE Tues.16 <sup>th</sup> !	
Oct. 22 / 24	<b>Paper DUE OR Mid-Term EXAM, Tues.Oct.23<sup>rd</sup>!</b>		<b>(22 points)</b>
Oct. 29 / 31	<b>Guest Speaker / READ Text Pages 632-641</b>		
Nov. 5 / 7	READ Chapter10	<i>meet with Teacher or Tutor on paper Outline</i>	
Nov. 12 / 14	READ Chapter 12	<i>Bibliography / Outline / 1<sup>st</sup> ¶ DUE Mon.12th</i>	
Nov. 19	<b>3-4page essay DUE and GROUPS Meet</b>		
Nov. 27 / 29	READ Chapter 13, pages 642 - 655 and 669 - 692		
Dec. 4 / 6	<i>Group Reports - Animal Rights / Feminism / Euthanasia / Death Penalty</i>		
Dec. 11	last class		

**Final Exam ! in-class, open-book, 2 hour time limit,**      **(24 points)**

+ at least 2 meetings with teacher outside of class + outlines/group prep/effort/participation      (10 points)

+ last essay OR group report (15 pts.) + Attendance (15 points) = **semester possible total of 101 pts!**