

Ethics (Phil. 222): Spring 2010

Instructor: Dr. Arash Naraghi

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Office Hours: Monday 10:30am-11:30am; Wednesday 10:30am-11:30am; and by appointment.

Lectures: MW 8:55am- 10:05, Main St. Campus, Comenius Hall, 309.

Course Description:

This course is concerned with three different types of moral questions: (1) Questions about the nature of moral principles and moral judgments, and whether and how we can get knowledge of them. Questions like: what do we mean by calling something "morally justified", or "good", or "right", etc. (2) Questions about the very general moral principles behind moral judgments, and moral decisions: What principles ought we to live by? What are the basic principles of right and wrong? What makes someone a good person?, etc. (3) Questions about specific moral issues: Is abortion morally permissible? Is there a moral requirement for the affluent to give money to prevent the suffering and death of impoverished people?, What is the moral status of homosexuality? etc.

Course Objectives:

(i) Objectives related to the **subject** of Ethics:

- To understand and clarify some important moral questions, such as the nature or good/bad, right/wrong, the principles behind our moral choices, the moral status of abortion, world hunger, and homosexuality, etc.
- To study major philosophical responses to those 'moral questions'.
- To understand the *complexity* of 'fundamental questions' and *diversity* of rational responses.
- To understand the relevance of those ethical theories to everyday life concerns.

(ii) Objectives related to the **method** of philosophy:

- To understand some basic concepts of reasoning in moral philosophy
- To learn how to distinguish between good and bad pieces of moral reasoning.

(iii) Objectives related to the **goals** of philosophy:

- To diminish the dogmatic assurance which closes our mind against speculation.
- To enrich our intellectual imagination.
- To be able to analyze moral statements and arguments vigorously, to understand them with sympathy, and to evaluate them fairly.
- To learn how to think and write things explicitly, clearly, and succinctly.
- To think creatively, and to be able to imagine alternatives to familiar view and situations.

Required Texts:

- *The Elements of Moral Philosophy*, by James Rachels (Forth Edition). ISBN: 978-0073386713.
- *The Right Thing to Do (Basic Reading in Moral Philosophy)*, by James Rachels and Stuart Rachels (Forth Edition). ISBN: 978-0073407401.

Note 1: These books are available at Moravian College Bookstore.

Note 2: You will find that you get the most out of the course if you read each assignment before lecture and then re-read the assignment after the lecture.

Lecture attendance:

It is not possible to perform well in the course without attending lecture regularly. We will cover substantial amounts of material in lecture not included anywhere in the readings. It is highly unlikely that you will learn this material adequately by, e.g., borrowing your friend's lecture

notes. You have two class sessions you can miss with no questions asked. Beyond those two class sessions, any further missed classes without a really good excuse (involving a note from your doctor, psychiatrist, parole officer, etc.) will cost you 2% of your final grade.

Academic honesty:

Students are required to honor academic integrity. The course imposes the application of Moravian College's Academic Honesty Policy. The policy is to be found at Moravian College's *Student Handbook*.

Course requirements:

A regular final exam, scheduled for, **Wednesday, May 5th, at 1:30pm**, plus a midterm (tentatively scheduled for **Wednesday, Feb. 24th**), and two short papers (500-700 words) due throughout the semester, and some very short reflective papers. Papers should be typed, double spaced, and spell-checked. You are responsible to submit a hard copy of your paper. In some exceptional cases, you may be allowed to submit your papers through email. If so, you must receive a confirmation email from me, otherwise, you must assume that I have not received your paper.

If a paper is turned in late without prior permission, the grade will be adjusted downwards by a third of a grade for each day the paper is late (e.g., A to A-, A- to B+, B+ to B, etc.). Make up midterm and final exams will be administered only under the most extraordinary of circumstances, and only in light of appropriate supporting documents.

Although the papers are rather short, you will find that they require an amount of effort far disproportionate to their length. You are required to discuss the draft of your paper with me before you submit the final version of your paper. You may also want to show a draft to your friends, roommates, or classmates so as to solicit feedback.

Important note: *All two papers, plus the midterm and the final must be completed in order to pass the course. If you miss at least one of them, you will automatically fail the course.*

Grading:

Each paper- 15% (Total 30%)

Midterm exam-30%

Final exam-30%

Participation including reflective papers- 10%

You will be provided with a study guide for the midterm and for the final prior to the exams.

The grading scale is as follows:

Points	Grade	4-point conversion
95-100	A	4
90-95	A-	3.7
87-90	B+	3.3
84-87	B	3
80-84	B-	2.7
77-80	C+	2.3
74-77	C	2
70-74	C-	1.7
67-70	D+	1.3
64-67	D	1
60-64	D-	0.7
0-60	F	0

Tentative Lecture Schedule:

Introduction:

Jan. 18: General features of argument (*Right Thing*, Ch.2)

Part I: Meta-ethics:

Jan. 20& 25& 27: Cultural Relativism (*Elements*, Ch.2 : “Challenge of cultural relativism”).

Feb. 1& 3& 8: Divine Command Theory (*Elements*, Ch.4: “Does morality depend on religion?”; *Right Thing*, Ch.5: “Ethics and natural law”.)

Part II: Normative Ethics:

Feb. 10& 15& 17: Utilitarian Moral Theory (*Elements*, Ch.7: “The utilitarian approach” & Ch. 8: “The debate over utilitarianism”; *Right Thing*, Ch.8: “Utilitarianism”.)

Feb. 17: Study Guide for the Midterm Exam

Feb. 22: Review session for the midterm

Feb 24: Midterm Exam

March 1: Utilitarian Moral Theory (Continued)

March 3: Deontological Moral Theory (*Elements*, Ch.9:”Are there absolute moral rules? & Ch. 10:”Kant and respect for persons”; *Right Thing*, Ch.9:”The categorical imperative”.)

March 8 & 10: Spring Recess

March 15& 17& 22: Deontological Moral Theory (Continue)

March 24: First Paper Assignment

March 24& 29& 31: Virtue Theory (*Elements*, Ch.13:”The ethics of virtue”; *Right Thing*, Ch.4:”The virtue”.)

April 5: Easter Recess

April 7: *First Paper Due.*

Part III: Applied Ethics

April 7&12: Abortion (*Right Thing*, Ch. 10:”Why abortion if immoral?”, & Ch.11:”A defense of abortion”.)

April 14&19: Homosexuality (*Right thing*, Ch.13: “Is Homosexuality Unnatural?”)

April 14: Second Paper Assignment

April 21&26: World Hunger (*Right thing*, Ch.15: “Singer Solution to World Pverty”)

April 21: Study Guide for the final exam

April 26: *Second Paper Due*

April 28: Review Session for the final

Final Exam: Wednesday, May 5th, at 1:30pm, Comenius Hall, 309.

Important Note: Students who wish to request accommodations in this class for a disability should contact Mr. Joe Kempfer, Assistant Director of Learning Services for Disability Support, 1307 Main Street (extension 1510).