

**Philosophy 222: Ethics**  
**Dr. Carol Moeller**  
**Moravian College**  
**Fall 2013**

Class Meets: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 8:55 – 10:05 a.m., Comenius 302  
 Classroom: Comenius 218  
 Office: Comenius 110  
 Office Hours: T, TH: 7:45 a.m. – 8:45 a.m.; T, TH 11:30 – 12:30, and by appointment.  
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 (Please allow at least 24 hours for receipt of emails.)

### **Required Texts**

Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 2nd edition, Terence Irwin, trans., Hackett Publishing Company, 2000. ISBN-10: 0872204642

Arbinger Institute, *The Anatomy of Peace: Resolving the Heart of Conflict*, Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 2006, ISBN-10: 1576753344 or ISBN-13: 978-1576753347

*Basic Writings of John Stuart Mill*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, Random House, ISBN: 9780375759185. (Utilitarianism is the text we will read.)

Kant, Immanuel, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, Cambridge, 1997, ISBN-13: 978-0-521-62695-8

### **Course Description**

This is a course in ethics. It requires each of us to read, think, reflect, speak, and reason critically about how we ought to live, how people are and how we ought to be. Are there any moral truths? We often think not, that people have such divergent views about ethics that they must be a matter of personal choice, or cultural practice. Yet, is not genocide wrong regardless of people's justification for it, even if they think the people they are wiping out are not actually people? If you were given the opportunity, as in a *Twilight Zone* episode, to go back in time and kill the infant Adolf Hitler before he had a chance to grow up and do what he did, would you do it? Should you? Would it be *wrong* to kill him? Would you merely be committing "the lesser of two evils" – and still wrong to some degree – or would you be doing something truly morally good? Would it matter if you found it painful to kill him but did so simply to save millions, as opposed to killing him out of delight in inflicting pain and death? These are simply a few of the classic questions we will pursue in Ethics.

It would be impossible to 'cover' major thinkers of each ethical tradition, particularly to look at thinkers around the world (for each part of the world has philosophy! – as do individuals – whether or not they make these philosophies explicit), and to look at a great diversity of voices in these conversations. European and U.S. traditions have tended to claim their own philosophical traditions as if they represented philosophy on the whole. Yet even to touch on the influential streams of thought of from Europe and the U.S. could easily take eight

semesters. Since we are limited to one semester, we must limit ourselves to certain of the key texts, from such thinkers as Aristotle, Mill, and Kant. Though we are focusing on Western texts, we will address questions of how voices that are not male, white, and upper class have tended to be excluded.

Philosophy requires each of us to read, think, reflect, speak, and reason critically about what the world is like, what matters, what people are like, and how we ought to live. The course will consist of dialogue with the texts and with each other. We must:

- a) do all the assigned readings carefully,
- b) read them numerous times in order to grasp them more deeply,
- c) engage deeply with the ideas, positions, arguments,
- d) ask how we might agree or disagree with points in readings and why,
- e) attend class and participate in class discussions, and
- f) through ongoing practice learn to read, write, and think in a philosophical manner.

“Philosophy” literally means “love of wisdom,” when the word is translated from the Greek language. The principal aim of the course is to learn, to learn not only *what* philosophers have thought, but also *how* they have thought, with what methods and approaches. We seek to find strengths and weaknesses in their approaches, as well as in their views. We seek to discover, evaluate, and reflect critically upon our own views. It’s not enough to have opinions; we must learn to examine our views for their adequacy, to give reasons for and against them.

Doing all the assigned work is indispensable. The readings are often not long, but they are deep. One learns philosophy by doing it: reading what philosophers have written, following their lines of thought, asking our own questions of the texts and of each other, and thinking critically about their ~ and our ~ ways of thinking about the world. One cannot learn how to do philosophy just by listening to anyone else talk about it or by reading what they have written. We learn it mostly by doing it – just as we must learn by doing when we learn to play a sport or to play a musical instrument.

Readings: Before each class meeting, read and reflect upon everything assigned for class.

Fair warning: there is no way to master the material except by doing lots of reading, discussing, and reflecting upon the material.

Seeing Me: If you have any trouble with any of the material, come see me. Don't wait. Come to my office hours. If you cannot make these, let me know and we can set up another time to meet. Try to identify what your specific difficulties are, e.g., motivation, interest, reading comprehension, note taking, writing, quiz and test-taking skills, philosophical reasoning. I can best help you get on track by seeing where in particular you are facing challenges. If you need to get something to me, leave it at my office.

### Course Outcomes

This course can count for the Ultimate Questions LinC requirement. As such, it seeks the following outcomes:

1. Ability to think and write about “ultimate questions” – issues people have asked themselves and each other across such boundaries as time, place, and culture;
2. Understanding of the relevance and importance of such “ultimate questions” to individuals and to society;
3. Ability to critically evaluate the student's own and others’ answers to “ultimate questions.”

By the end of the course, students should achieve the following outcomes specific to this course:

- 1) To understand and explain important concepts and views related to ethics such utilitarianism, duty-based ethics, and virtue ethics;

- 2) To be familiar with several main traditions of ethical theory, as well as their strengths and weaknesses;
- 3) To develop greater facility in reading, writing, thinking, and speaking about ethical positions, reasoning, and arguments;
- 4) To strengthen critical reflection one's own ethical views and those common in one's culture (as well as those of others), but particularly our own. Though we sometimes take our own cultures and social locations for granted like a fish does the water around it, we are significantly impacted our views by such contexts.

### **Course Requirements** (as possible points of final grade)

Attendance and discussion participation, and oral presentation,

quiz average and presentation:	5
Exam 1	20
Exam 2	15
Exam 3	20
Final Exam	20
5-6 Page Essay	<u>20</u>
	100

Attendance and Participation: Attendance is required, as is actual participation, not simply being a warm body in the room. Unexcused absences (beyond one) will detract from your final grade, pushing your course average ~ and final grade ~ down by .5 points per miss from the course average. For example, if you have 3 unexcused absences (which would be 2 beyond the 1 "freebie" allowed); your final average will be lowered by  $2 \times .5$ , which equals 1. If your grade would otherwise be an 80.1 ( B - ), it will become a 79.1 ( C + ). If the final score remains right on the borderline between two letter grades, your participation level will be taken into account (as opposed to simply attendance).

Occasional quizzes, worksheets, collective work projects and/or other brief in-class assignments, (some graded by letter or number, some simply for credit as satisfactory or unsatisfactory).

Quizzes: There may be pop quizzes, every few chapters or so, to check to see how well students understand the material from the text and from class as we go along. There will be no make-up quizzes except for those recognized as official College absences (e.g., athletic matches and religious observance, serious illness documented with doctor's note). Unexcused absences on quiz occasions will result in a mark of 0 for that quiz.

The lowest single quiz score for each student will be dropped. That is, if you miss a quiz, that one zero will be dropped; if you are present for all of them, the lowest score will be dropped.

Presentation: Further required is a single oral presentation. You may do this in a presentation giving an overview of the readings for that day.

Four Exams (20 points

each): These will cover material from the text and from class, and it will also go beyond those to ask you to apply these ideas and skills further. (In other words, you will need to go far beyond mastery of the written and verbal material from class.)

Essay (20 points): 5-6 double-spaced pages on topic selected from those I distribute, or your own proposed topic with my written approval. Please use 10-12 font (no decorative fonts please), use 1-inch margins (top/bottom/sides) and properly document sources. Use a complete bibliography and references, according to MLA, Chicago, or another standard style. Come see me (well in

advance of the deadline) for any help, and for feedback on outlines and/or drafts of your essay.

Presentation: Students will sign up for a section of reading to present in class. In this presentation of about 10 minutes (on assigned class days), you should provide an overview of the main points of the readings for that day explained in your own words (though you may point to sections of the text for clarification and support). Offer your own overviews, analyses, questions, and responses to them.

#### Academic Integrity:

The rules of academic integrity for Moravian College must be followed. Please take them seriously. Any suspicion of violations will be actively pursued. Moravian College standards on academic integrity and plagiarism are available in Academic Honesty at Moravian College, available from the Office of the Dean of the College (in Monocacy Hall, first floor). Plagiarism is very serious, resulting in automatic failure on the relevant assignment, even if the action is unintentional, such as the failure to cite the source of paraphrased ideas. For more information on these policies, please see the student handbook, the professor, or the academic dean's office.

For this course, the following pointers may be helpful. Follow instructions on graded assignments, doing your own work unless the assignment is explicitly given as a group project or as allowing for open-book work. In doing essays, be sure to give references and credit for any ideas that are not entirely your own. That is, when quoting or paraphrasing or even referring to the idea(s) of another, cite the source. If you are not sure whether a reference is required, give a reference anyway. If in doubt, err on the side of overly generous reference giving, and consult with the professor for guidance.

#### Doing Well:

It is imperative that students keep up with their work in this course and get help any time they have trouble. Each chunk of material builds upon the previous chunk, and so holes in understanding will continue to cause problems. Similarly, missing even a single class can disrupt the learning process and leave a student feeling hopelessly lost very quickly. Please be on top of your work, come to class, ask questions, and achieve an excellent level of understanding of all the material covered, together with the developed ability to apply that understanding independently.

Further, students tend to have wide variation in how long it takes them to read and understand philosophy. It might seem that you spend eight hours on work that a friend completes in one hour. Everyone needs to spend as much time as it takes to master the material.

#### Disabilities /Learning Disabilities:

Students with disabilities/learning disabilities should contact the Learning Services Office as soon as possible to arrange for any necessary accommodations.

Official authorization is necessary for accommodation eligibility. If you know or suspect you might be in need of Learning Services assistance, in anything from study skills or time management to possible disability issues, please contact Learning Services as soon as possible. This is particularly urgent if you know or suspect you might need accommodations to negotiate disability issues with the class. The office would simply contact me about the accommodation requested; they respect privacy.

#### Potential Syllabus Changes:

This syllabus is subject to change at the professor's notice.

#### Further Note on Grading:

As in other courses, grading is at the professional judgment of the professor. For example there may be an element of discretion in how much partial credit is given to a response. You may appeal grades to the department chair, Dr. Cantens, and to the Dean's Office.

Grading and academic integrity policies for this course are in accordance with Moravian College standards, as expressed in the Catalog (p. 43). Please note the following about grading.

Grading scheme: 97-100=A+ 93-96.9=A 90-92.9=A- 87-89.9=B+ 83-86.9=B 80-82.9=B- 77-79.9=C+ 73-76.9=C 70-72.9=C- 67-69.9=D+ 63-66.9=D 60-62.9=D- 0-59.9=F

A (4.00 points) and A- (3.67): "These grades indicate achievement of the highest caliber. They involve expectations of independent work, original thinking, and the ability to acquire and effectively use knowledge."

B+ (3.33), B (3.00), and B- (2.67): "These grades indicate higher than average achievement. Evidence of independent work and original thinking is expected."

C+ (2.33), C (2.00), and C- (1.67): "These grades are given when the student has devoted a reasonable amount of time, effort, and attention to the work of the course, and has satisfied the following criteria: familiarity with the content of the course, familiarity with the methods of study of the course, and active participation in the work of the class."

D+ (1.33), D (1.00), and D- (0.67): "These grades indicate unsatisfactory work, below the standard expected by the College. They indicate work which in one or more important aspects falls below the average expected of students for graduation. The work is, however, sufficient to be credited for graduation, if balanced by superior work in other courses."

F (0.00): "This indicates failure."

Intellectual Environment: Teaching and learning, on all of our parts, requires consistent effort. An atmosphere supporting high intellectual levels of discussion and written work is invaluable.

Class Protocol: Since we are all adults, I need not specify all of the various ways in which we ought to treat each other with respect, being silent (especially while another person is speaking), being on time, having cell phones and pagers turned off, etc. Treat one another with kindness and respect. Be sure to make any criticisms as constructive as possible, challenging an idea without attacking a person. Anyone appearing to be disruptive or disrespectful will be asked to leave class. On a second occurrence the person would be dismissed from the course altogether. No cell phone use, including texting, during class, and no computer use. If you prefer to use a computer to keep notes, please check with me about it and note that it will only work if it is not distracting to me or to the other students.

Course Schedule: Readings are to be done prior to that day's class

Tuesday August 27 First Day

Thursday, August 29 Aristotle, Book I, pp. 1 - 17

Tuesday, September 3 Aristotle, Book II - III, pp. 18 - 49

Thursday, September 5 Aristotle, Book IV - V, pp. 49 - 85

Tuesday, September 10 Aristotle, Book VI - VII, pp. 86 - 119

Thursday, September 12 Aristotle, Book VIII - IX, pp. 119 - 153

Tuesday, September 17 Aristotle, Book X, pp. 153 - 171

Thursday, September 19 Further discussion

Tuesday, September 24 **Exam 1**

Thursday, September 26 *Anatomy of Peace*, pp. 3 - 68

Tuesday, October 1 *Anatomy of Peace*, pp. 69 - 140

Thursday, October 3 *Anatomy of Peace*, pp. 141 - 224

Tuesday, October 8 No Class, Fall Break

Thursday, October 10 *Anatomy of Peace*, pp. 141 - 224 (continued)

Tuesday, October 15 Further Discussion

Thursday, October 17 **Exam 2**

Tuesday, October 22 Kant, editor's introduction: pp. vii - xxx

Thursday, October 24 Kant, pp. 1 - 19

Tuesday, October 29 Kant, pp. 19 - 51

Thursday, October 31 Kant, pp. 52 - 66

Tuesday, November 5 Kant, pp. 52 - 66 (continued)

Thursday, November 7 **Exam 3**

Tuesday, November 12 Mill, *Utilitarianism*, Introduction, Ch. 1 - Ch. 2

Thursday, November 14 Mill, Ch. 2 (continued) **ESSAY DUE**

Tuesday, November 19 Mill, Ch. 3

Thursday, November 21 Mill, Ch. 4 - 5

Thursday, November 26 No Class

Thursday, November 28 No Class

Tuesday, December 3 Mill, Ch. 5 (continued)

Thursday, December 5 Further Discussion

Monday, December 9 8:30 a.m. **FINAL EXAM**