
ETHICS

SECTION T2

INSTRUCTOR: COLENA SESANKER

MEETING TIMES: Friday 2:00-4:45 KTRCC D109

CONTACT INFO: csesanker@trcc.commnet.edu

TEXT: ETHICS: History, Theory and Contemporary Issues. By Steven Cahn and Peter Markie. Fifth Edition

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

This course is designed as an introduction to the most influential ethical theories in western philosophy. We will also address the western approach to ethical theory by considering some metaethical issues, feminist critiques and some traditional Eastern approaches. We will test our understanding of our theories by attempting to apply the theories to contemporary issues.

OBJECTIVES:

To recognize the principles by which we currently live our lives and to subject them to rational scrutiny

To become familiar with the classical answers to the questions of how we ought to live and what constitutes a just society and to explore how they have influenced our lives and our country.

To appreciate and critique the Western project of ethical analysis.

COURSE OUTCOMES:

Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

- . give accounts of major types of ethical discourse
- . apply ethical concepts (language/analysis) to ethical questions and dilemmas
- . read philosophical works with greater ease and skill
- . explain major types of ethical argument and understand key arguments of selected figures in philosophical ethics;
- . more clearly communicate their ethical stance on particular issues

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

position papers (50%), participation including sporadic quizzes and written responses (5%), Midterm Exam (20%), Final exam (25%)

MISSED ASSIGNMENTS:

If there are special circumstances which make it necessary for a student to make up an assignment at a time other than the date scheduled, please be sure to contact me by email or in person *before* the missed assignment so that special arrangements can be made. Make-up writing assignments must be completed within a week of the originally scheduled date. A doctor's note or excuse of equivalent importance must be provided in order to be allowed a make-up exam.

SCHEDULE (subject to further modification)

Jan 23: Welcome and Introduction. What is Ethics?

Jan 30: Subjectivism and Cultural Relativism
Reading: *James Rachels. The Challenge of Cultural Relativism. P.747*

Feb 6 : Relativism Continued. Divine Command Theory and Natural Law theory begin.
Reading: *Epicetus Enchiridion p.203 and Aquinas Summa Contra Gentiles p.221, first sections esp.*

- Feb 13: Natural Law Theory continued.
Reading: *Hobbes. Leviathan p.236*
Position Paper on Relativism
- Feb 20: Utilitarianism
Reading: *Bentham and Mill selections. Chapters 12 and 13*
- Feb 27: Utilitarianism continued. Libertaranism, Confucius Ethical Egoism.
Reading: *Bernard Williams. A Critique of Utilitarianism p. 657*
[begin with section NEGATIVE RESPONSIBILITY AND TWO EXAMPLES on page 662
- Mar 6: Consequentialism vs Deontology and Kantian Ethicsreview
Reading: *Thomas Nagel. Moral Luck. P.803*
Position Paper on Utilitarianism
- Mar 13: **MIDTERM**
- Mar 20: *******SPRING BREAK*******
- Mar 27: Kantian Ethics continued
Reading: *Kant. Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals. P.313*
- Apr 3 : **SPRING RECESS. NO CLASSES**
- Apr 10: Social Contract Theory
Reading: *Rawls. A Theory of Justice. P.551*
- Apr 17: Social Contract Theory Continued and Virtue Theory
Reading: *Gauthier. Why Contractarianism? P.573 & G.E.M Anscombe. Modern Moral Philosophy*
Position Paper on Social Contract Theory
- Apr 24: The Fact-Value Problem and Feminist Critiques
Reading: *G.E Moore p.459 & A.J. Ayer p.485 & Virginia Held p.775*
- May 1: Classical Asian approaches (Upanishads and Bhagavad Gita, Chuang Tzu, The Dhammapada)
Reading: *Handouts will be provided.*
- May 8: Sum up and review
Position Paper on MetaEthics

FINAL: Friday May 15th