

Ethics

Course Syllabus

Johns Hopkins University
Center for Talented Youth

A. Course Objectives:

- This course will serve as an introduction to philosophy in general and to philosophical ethics in particular.
- You will learn to read and interpret philosophical material having to do with such topics as how we ought to live, how we should treat others, and how we should think about our relationships with the larger communities in which we live.
- You will learn to recognize arguments and to assess them critically.
- You will gain practice in employing the philosophical tools of critical analysis in your own thinking and writing.
- You will learn to conduct research in philosophy and to organize the findings of your research into written form.
- You will learn about the historical development of philosophical ethics, from the Ancient Greeks right up through the present.
- You will gain understanding of specific topics in moral theory, such as moral objectivism, relativism, utilitarianism, deontology, and virtue ethics.

B. Books for the Course:

- 1) Aristotle. *Nicomachean Ethics*/2e. Hackett, 2000. ISBN: 087220-464-2
- 2) Mill, John Stuart. *Utilitarianism*/2e. Hackett, 2002. ISBN: 0-87220-605-x
- 3) Plato. *The Trial and Death of Socrates*/3e. Hackett, 2001. ISBN: 0-87220-554-1
- 4) Pojman, Louis. *The Moral Life*/2e. Oxford, 2004. ISBN: 0-19-516608-6

There will also be various handouts.

C. Course Requirements and Criteria Used for Evaluation:

You will each receive a narrative evaluation that will be mailed to you after the end of the course. This will discuss your accomplishment in the course, including both the aspects in which you had the greatest success and those in which you may have had to struggle a bit. The following are among the most important criteria for purposes of evaluation:

- Class attendance – required.
- Active participation in all class activities, including discussions, debates, research, and writing.
- Reading: You will be asked to read a large amount of material in this course. Reading will take place both at various times during the daily class sessions and especially during the evening study hall sessions. In fact, the evening sessions will usually be devoted entirely to reading material that will be discussed in class the following day. **It is understood that different people read at different rates, but what is expected is that you will make**

good use of the time that is allotted for reading, and will make a serious effort to get through as much of the material as possible *while still retaining understanding*. Extra readings will be provided for those who complete the regular assigned readings before the end of study hall. However, it is more important that you read the regular assignment with understanding than to rush through it in order to get to the extra reading.

- Essay Test: Since you will not be receiving a traditional letter grade or numerical grade for the course as a whole, this learning assessment is intended primarily so that the instructor and assistant can keep track of your progress – and to help *you* gain a better sense of your achievement in learning the course material.
- Research Paper: You will write one paper, 4-6 pages in length. You will choose a topic within the area of ethics, submit your topic for instructor approval, and then do appropriate research on the topic. Library time will be scheduled for you to research your topic and write your paper. More details about the paper will be provided when you begin to work on it during Week 2.
- In-class Writing / “Minute Papers”: You will be asked to complete several brief writing exercises. These will typically involve responding to some question or issue that arises from discussion or is drawn from the day’s reading assignments.

D. Academic Honesty

As CTY students, you are expected to uphold the high standards of academic integrity that are embodied in the program’s Honor Code. Cheating on tests would clearly constitute academic dishonesty. So would plagiarism, which is the handing in of any work that is not your own as if it was. Having someone else complete writing assignments for you – or completing assignments for someone else – counts as plagiarism. Any instances of academic dishonesty will be taken very seriously and will be brought to the immediate attention of the CTY administration.

E. Tentative Schedule of Topics, Readings, and Activities

	Topics	Activities
Day 1 Monday Morning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introductions • CTY Honor Code & Computer Use Policy • Pre-test • Pace of course • Expectations for behavior in class, hallways, study hall • Discuss syllabus • Subfields of Philosophy • Plato’s “Ring of Gyges” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete pre-test • Discuss expectations • Read “Ring of Gyges” selection out loud, discuss
Day 1 Monday Afternoon	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Issues, claims, arguments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overhead slides on issues, claims, arguments • Practice exercises on arguments

	Topics	Activities
Day 1 Monday Evening	Study hall	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Read: Plato's Apology & Crito</i> (pp. 20-54 in <i>The Trial and Death of Socrates</i>)
Day 2 Tuesday Morning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Socrates, Plato, & Ancient Greek Philosophy • Greek view of individual & society • <i>The Apology</i> – Discuss setting, characters, arguments, implications • Socrates as exemplar of one who takes moral life seriously 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lecture • Class discussion • Small groups to work on question sheets from previous night's study hall
Day 2 Tuesday Afternoon	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The Crito</i> – Arguments & implications 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussion
Day 2 Tuesday Evening	Study hall	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Read: From Pojman anthology: (a) selection from Lord of the Flies</i> (pp. 8-31), (b) Pojman "On the Nature & Purpose of Morality" (pp. 31-40)
Day 3 Wednesday Morning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is there such a thing as human nature? If so, is it good, evil, or mixed? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Minute paper" on whether Socrates made right decision • 20 minutes to finish reading from previous evening • Debate: Does <i>Lord of the Flies</i> reveal the truth about human nature or not?
Day 3 Wednesday Afternoon	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pojman's reflections on <i>Lord of the Flies</i> • General rationale for Ethics 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Small group discussions • Read and discuss handout "The Psychologist's Tale"
Day 3 Wednesday Evening	Study hall	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Read: From Pojman anthology: (a) Selection from Hobbes' Leviathan</i> (pp. 41-52), (b) Ruth Benedict's "The Case for Moral Relativism" (pp. 157-165)

	Topics	Activities
Day 4 Thursday Morning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What life might be like without ethics • Is evil due to flawed human nature or flawed social structures? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lecture • TA leads discussion of Hobbes • Chart on board of positions on the origins of moral evil
Day 4 Thursday Afternoon	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Moral relativism • Historical connection between relativism and cultural anthropology 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss Benedict piece
Day 4 Thursday Evening	Study hall	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Read:</i> From Pojman anthology: (a) Louis Pojman's "The Case Against Moral Relativism" (pp. 166-190), (b) "Seaman Holmes and the Longboat of the William Brown" (pp. 229-230)
Day 5 Friday Morning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Subcategories of relativism: Subjectivism & Conventionalism • Subcategories of objectivism 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Small group discussion of Pojman article
Day 5 Friday Afternoon	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assess learning from Week 1 • Begin coverage of utilitarianism 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Essay test 1
Sunday Evening	Study hall	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Read:</i> (1) Selection from Jeremy Bentham (pp. 231-236), (2) <i>Read:</i> J. S. Mill's <i>Utilitarianism</i>, Chapters I & II, pp. 1-25
Day 6 Monday Morning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brief overview of rule-centered moral theories: utilitarianism & deontology • Bentham & Classical Utilitarianism (emphasis on quantity of pleasure) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss "Seaman Holmes" piece, Bentham piece • Small group discussion • Dialogic writing: Can one be a moral objectivist and still show respect for other cultures?
Day 6 Monday Afternoon	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Begin coverage of Mill's version of utilitarianism (emphasis on quality of pleasures) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lecture • Group discussions on Mill, Chapters I & II • Read Mill, Ch. III (30 minutes)

	Topics	Activities
Day 6 Monday Evening	Study hall	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Read:</i> (1) Le Guin's "The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas" (pp. 265-271), (2) Short story by Bixby (handout), (3) Bernard Williams's "Against Utilitarianism" (pp. 252-264)
Day 7 Tuesday Morning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Utilitarianism set in context of action-focused theories & contrasted with character-focused theories • Mill Ch. I & II • Theories of happiness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Small group discussion: How might Mill differ from Bentham in terms of the sort of societal reforms each might propose? • TA presents on theories of happiness
Day 7 Tuesday Afternoon	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue coverage of Mill's utilitarianism (Ch. II & III) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lecture • Discussion
Day 7 Tuesday Evening	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anti-utilitarian themes in literature • Common criticisms of utilitarianism 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Join with Sci Fi Writing class to discuss Bixby and LeGuin short stories and Williams article
Day 8 Wednesday Morning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Value & limitations of thought experiments • Finish coverage of Bernard Williams' criticisms of utilitarianism • Library resources for research papers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overview of library resources by research librarian • Begin research for paper
Day 8 Wednesday Afternoon	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Library time to work on papers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Library research using electronic and print journals and books
Day 8 Wednesday Evening	Study hall	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Read:</i> From Pojman anthology: Immanuel Kant "On the Moral Law" (pp. 297-316)

	Topics	Activities
Day 9 Thursday Morning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kant in context of objectivism, deontology, rationalist deontology • General intro to Kant • The good will, rationality, & autonomy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lecture with overhead slides • Small group discussion: Two people do volunteer work for different reasons • Begin close analysis of text: Small groups each assigned portion of text to analyze and present
Day 9 Thursday Afternoon	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Library time to work on papers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Library research • Writing of papers
Day 9 Thursday Evening	Study hall	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Read</i>: Reading from David Hume's <i>Treatise</i> (handout)
Day 10 Friday Morning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The first & second formulations of the Categorical Imperative • Hume, empiricism/rationalism, is/ought problem • Hume contrasted with Kant 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TA leads discussion of Hume
Day 10 Friday Afternoon	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Library time to work on papers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Writing of papers
Sunday Evening	Study hall	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • From Pojman anthology: (a) R. M. MacIver "The Deep Beauty of the Golden Rule" (pp. 332-336), (b) Whatley "A Critique of the Golden Rule" (pp. 337-339)
Day 11 Monday Morning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finish coverage of Kant & Hume • The Golden Rule as another version of deontology 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Small group discussion on applicability of Golden Rule
Day 11 Monday Afternoon	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finish work on papers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In library to finish papers
Day 11 Monday Evening	Study hall	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Read</i>: Aristotle's <i>Nicomachean Ethics</i>, Bk. I, pp. 1-18
Day 12 Tuesday Morning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applied topic: Ethical issues & artificial intelligence • Begin coverage of Aristotle 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Join with MIND course to watch & discuss Star Trek episode "The Measure of a Man" • Discuss Aristotle, Bk. I

	Topics	Activities
Day 12 Tuesday Afternoon	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aristotle and virtue ethics 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lecture • Small group discussions
Day 12 Tuesday Evening	Study hall	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Read: Plato's Euthyphro</i> (from <i>The Trial & Death of Socrates</i>, pp. 1-19)
Day 13 Wednesday Morning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relationship between religion & morality (the "Euthyphro problem") • Virtue & the "Aristotelian mean" 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listen to dramatic reading of <i>Euthyphro</i> on tape • Discussion
Day 13 Wednesday Afternoon	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How character is developed, modeled 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lecture • Discussion
Day 13 Wednesday Evening	Study hall	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Read: From Pojman anthology: William Frankena, "A Critique of Virtue-Based Ethical Systems"</i> (pp. 447-457)
Day 14 Thursday Morning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finish discussion of Aristotle, teleology, <i>eudaimonia</i> • Post-test • Criticisms/concerns regarding virtue ethics 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussion of Aristotle • Post-test • Discussion of Frankena article
Day 14 Thursday Early Afternoon	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Class serves as judges in debate between MIND and LOGC classes on topics of cloning & genetic manipulation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Class serves as judges in debate between MIND and LOGC classes on topics of cloning & genetic manipulation
Day 14 Thursday Late Afternoon	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students complete program evaluations • Concerns about virtue ethics, continued 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SPEs • Finish discussion of Frankena article
Day 15 Friday Morning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scope & limits of our moral responsibility 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussion of thought experiment from Peter Singer • Clean up classroom • Class party!