INTRODUCTION TO ETHICS BLHS 100-03

Wednesdays, 12 noon – 3:55 PM

Course Description
Ethics is the philosophical study of morality. We study ethics to ask fundamental questions about the good life. By studying ethics we engage human values, rules and justifications. Ethics and morality are intimately connected; however, a distinction exists between the two. Whereas morality concerns itself with rules of conduct, ethics focuses on why certain actions are judged to be right, while others are wrong.

This course is an introductory course in ethics. We will begin by asking the basic question -- what is ethics, and move on to look at the connection between ethics and religion, the history of ethics, and attempt to answer questions about the “good life.” The major concepts, theories and approaches to the academic study of ethics will be examined. Our survey will use classic texts from ancient, medieval and modern writers, secular and religious.

The second half of the course will attempt to place theory into practice, as we look at several contemporary ethical/moral issues confronting the world. By design the course is interdisciplinary, as various themes will enter into our discussion from ethical, philosophical and religious paradigms, as we attempt to compare/contrast traditional views with contemporary issues.

Students will have the opportunity to select either a major ethicist or contemporary ethical issue to research and prepare an oral presentation for the class.

Instructor
Gregory Havrilak, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor of Liberal Studies
Email: gch9@georgetown.edu; phone: 703-994-8360
Office Hours: Wednesday, 11:30 – 12:00 PM, and by appointment

Course Goals
To provide an intellectual framework and analytical tools for students to discuss, reflect upon, understand, and propose solutions to a variety of ethical and moral issues confronting society today. By examining the foundations of Western ethical tradition, students will be able to better evaluate questions of virtue and moral character.

Course Requirements
1. Reading assignments
2. Three take-home essays. Questions will be distributed one week in advance. Due dates are indicated on the course outline below.
3. 15 minute class presentation on a major ethicist (list & guidelines to be distributed)
4. Class participation

Learning Objectives
Built into the pedagogy of this course are the following learning objectives, each of which should become manifest upon completion of the course.
1. Students will have knowledge of the history, language and concepts of moral philosophy
2. Students will have knowledge of major ethical theorists and their systematic schools
3. Students will have the building blocks to develop and articulate their own belief systems on modern ethical issues confronting society
4. Students will have a sense of tolerance for other people’s moral viewpoints – even if they disagree
5. Ability to offer intelligent contributions to on-going moral debate & discussion
6. Ability to explain the difference between what is good and what is right
7. Ability to reason well in ethics by understanding the various structures of ethical arguments
8. Ability to intelligently discuss Motive, Act and Consequences in ethical theories
9. Ability to recognize the difference between teleological and deontological theories and when/how to apply them
10. Students will have an understanding of differing and conflicting values in comprehending relativism, absolutism and pluralism
11. Students will see the connection/relationship between moral values and religious beliefs

Evaluation
Students are expected to attend lectures, read assigned texts, submit three take-home essays, deliver a 10-15 minute oral presentation, participate in discussions, as well display an ability to absorb, comprehend, and analyze the course material.

Final grades will be based on the following:
- Class Participation 10% (5 points for group project; 5 points field trip)
- Take Home Essays 60% (20 X 3)
- Oral Presentation 20%
- Low Risk Evaluation 10%

Grade Table
93-100 % = A
90 - 92 % = A-
87 - 89 % = B+
83 - 86 % = B
80 - 82 % = B-
77 - 79 % = C+
73 - 76 % = C
Disabilities Statement
If you believe you have a disability, then you should contact the Academic Resource Center (arc@georgetown.edu) for further information. The Center is located in the Leavey Center, Suite 335. The Academic Resource Center is the campus office responsible for reviewing documentation provided by students with disabilities and for determining reasonable accommodations in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and University policies.

Late Assignments
No credit will be given for any assignment that is submitted late without the prior approval of the instructor. Prior Approval means the student has communicated with the instructor before the assignment deadline. An assignment that is submitted late with the instructor’s approval will have its grade reduced by 10 percent for every day it is late.

Work is due at the beginning of class.

Incompletes
Incompletes will not be available for this course and are not an option for any reason.

Readings Assignments
Required readings for each class are listed below, and should be completed before the class period. All others are highly recommended, and may be referred to in class. Power-Point slide, shorter articles and important documents will be uploaded to Blackboard. Additional websites will be announced, and official documents will be made available in class.

Attendance and Late Arrival
Attendance is mandatory, and roll call will be taken at the beginning of each class. Being late by 10 minutes or more will constitute an absence. Students with two absences for any reason may receive a failing grade for the course. If you miss a class it is your responsibility to make up any assignments on time and obtain class handouts. Students are expected to behave in class in accordance with the Code of Campus Conduct.

Plagiarism
The presentation of someone else’s ideas or work as your own, without proper acknowledgment is the worst crime a scholar can commit. The sources for all information and ideas in your papers that are not your own must be documented using the documentation system followed by the American Psychological Association or the Modern Language Association. In addition, all quotations must be identified as quotations, using quotation marks and documentation of the source of the quotation. Anything less than these standards is plagiarism and will be treated as such.
Work that appears to have been plagiarized or otherwise violated the Honor Code (see below) will be reported to Georgetown’s Honor Council. If the Council finds that the work violates the university’s standards of academic honesty, the work will receive a grade of zero for the assignment for the first offense; a second infraction will earn an F for the course. The Honor Council may impose sanctions of its own as well.

**Georgetown Honor System**

All students are expected to follow Georgetown’s honor code unconditionally. We assume you have read the honor code material located at [www.georgetown.edu/honor](http://www.georgetown.edu/honor), and in particular have read the following documents: *Honor Council Pamphlet*, “What is Plagiarism?”, “Sanctioning Guidelines”, and “Expedited Sanctioning Process.”

Submitting material in fulfillment of the requirements of this course means that you have abided by the Georgetown honor pledge:

> In the pursuit of the high ideals and rigorous standards of academic life, I commit myself to respect and uphold the Georgetown Honor System: To be honest in any academic endeavor, and to conduct myself honorably, as a responsible member of the Georgetown community, as we live and work together.

**Oral Class Presentation**

Students will have an opportunity to select from a list of contemporary ethicist (Wittgenstein, Hick, Moore, Spencer *et al.*), or a contemporary ethical issue, for their class presentation. Depending on class size, there will usually be four 10-15 minute presentations each class period, beginning week 13. Since only one presentation may be given for each ethicist/issue, students must obtain approval from the instructor for their selection.

**Presentation Groups**

Depending on class size, the class will be divided into study groups to prepare for a 15 minute group presentation on a contemporary ethical issue. Each group will be free to select a topic of their own choice and utilize audio/visual aids. Group presentations are separate from individual student presentations.

**Electronic Devices**

All electronic devices will be turned off at the beginning of class.

**Texts**

**Required**


**Recommended**

Shorter articles and relevant documents will be uploaded to Blackboard.

**Course Syllabus**

**Week 1, Sept 3**
Introduction to the Course
*The Elements of Moral Philosophy*
Ethical Questions: What is the Good Life? Why Be Good? Why Be Rational?
**Readings:**

**Week 2, Sept 10**
*Ethical Concepts, Theories and Approaches*
**Readings:**
Blackboard postings

**Week 3, Sept 17**
*The Challenge of Cultural Relativism*
**Readings:**
Rachels, 14-31.
MacIntyre, 14-25.
Landau, 276-291.
Blackboard postings
**First Analytical Essay Distributed**

**Week 4, Sept 24**
*Subjectivism in Ethics; Does Morality Depend on Religion?*

**Readings:**
Rachels, 32-47.
MacIntyre, 110-120.
Landau, 65-70
Blackboard postings

First Analytical Essay Due

Week 5, Oct 1
**Ethical Egoism**
Readings:
Rachels, 62-79.
MacIntyre, 33-50.
Landau, 100-111.
Blackboard postings

Week 6, Oct 8
**Utilitarianism**
Readings:
Rachels, 97-123.
Landau, 112-124.
Blackboard postings

Second Analytical Essay Distributed

Week 7, Oct 15
**The Ethics of Virtue. Do Absolute Moral Rules Exist? What is the Good Life?**
Readings:
Rachels, 124-135; 158-172.
MacIntyre, 57-83.
Landau, 240-258.

Second Analytical Essay Due

Week 8, Oct 22
**Normative Ethics; Rational Absolutism; Human Dignity, Punishment and Retributivism**
Readings:
Rachels, 136-145.
MacIntyre, 190-198
Passages from Jean-Jacques Rousseau’s *The Social Contract* will be distributed.

Low Risk Evaluation: In-Class Writing Exercise
Week 9, Oct 29  
**Normative Ethics; Rational Absolutism; Human Dignity, Punishment and Retributivism**  
Readings:  
Rachels, 130-140.  
MacIntyre, 190-198.  
Passages from Jean-Jacques Rousseau’s *The Social Contract* will be distributed.

Week 10, Nov 5  
**The Social Contract**  
**Study Group Presentations**  
Readings:  
Rachels, 80-96.  
MacIntyre, 130-140.  
Landau, 176-201.

Week 11, Nov 12  
**Natural Law**  
**Third Analytical Essay Distributed**  
Readings:  
MacIntyre, 110-120.  
Saint Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, Question 94, Articles 2, 3, 4; Question 95, Articles 2, 3; 1265-1272, will be distributed.

Week 12, Nov 19  
**Modern Ethics Theories**  
**Final Student Oral Presentations**  
**Third Analytical Essay Due**  
Landau, 71  
MacIntyre, 249-269.  
Jean-Paul Sartre, Existentialism is a Humanism (excerpts), in Solomon-Martin, 411-419; and Being and Nothingness (excerpts) ibid., 419-429.

Week 13, Nov 26: NO CLASS – Eve of Thanksgiving

Week 14, Dec 3  
**Modern Ethical Theories**  
**Final Student Oral Presentations**
FINAL RESEARCH PAPER DUE: Dec 19, 2014

FIELD TRIP
On Wednesday, December 10 (tentative), we will conduct a field trip to the Ethics and Public Policy Center, 1730 M St, NW, Suite 910, Washington, meeting out front of at 2:00 PM. This is a mandatory field trip for all students.

Reading List

Recommended, but not required readings:

Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief. http://www.ohchr.org/english/law/religion.htm


Humanae Vitae, Pope Paul VI, Vatican, 1968.

Additional Reading
The following titles are highly recommended for further reading in the field of ethics and moral philosophy. Although not required for the course, some of the ideas presented by these authors may be discussed in class.


This Syllabus may be revised/updated.