Instructor: Michael Mannino
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Dept: Arts and Philosophy
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Course Description

This course develops skills in critical thinking by examining various topics in ethics. This course is designed to achieve two broad objectives: first, to enable students to reason more effectively, enhancing their problem-solving abilities; and second, to provide students with a foundation in ethics, enabling them to think more constructively about ethical issues. This course combines these two objectives by using ethics as a vehicle for developing critical thinking skills. In accomplishing the course objectives, students will study methods of effective reasoning and reflect critically upon their own values and ethical standards. With this foundation, students will apply their critical thinking skills to various problems that arise in ethics, such as abortion, the death penalty, discrimination, affirmative action, and environmental ethics.

That being said…

Philosophy/ethics is a social enterprise. What does this mean? It means that one of the principal methods of studying and doing philosophy is with each other. Thus, this class will consist of lectures, but it will also focus on classroom discussion. (Some of this discussion will get heated and intense as some issues may be emotionally charged. However, we will always maintain respect for our interlocutors and challenge them with the reasoning skills we will learn.) This will require you to come to class fully prepared, that is, having read all materials in a serious manner. This will also require your attendance to each class and strong participation. An important note on participation: sometimes, even for me, this can be hard and intimidating. I understand this. We will be covering some difficult and sensitive issues. In philosophy and even ethics, there are no exact answers, like in math, [2+2 may equal 5 in this subject, if you know what I mean]. But we will be learning how to defend our opinions with well-reasoned arguments! So go ahead and feel free to share your own and unique thoughts with the class!! If you don’t understand something, please ask, I guarantee you that at least 3 other people in the class also don’t understand!
On the lighter side…

From time to time, I may (by accident) sprinkle in a bit of my own views. Generally, however, I will refrain from this activity since that is not the goal of this course. But as you will find, while doing philosophy it is hard not to express your own views while in discussion.

In this class, we will be learning how to argue! But not the way you think. There will be no fists thrown in this class, (hopefully ;), and no yelling back and forth. No, we will learn another, calmer, more reasoned way to argue, and you will see that it is even more effective than yelling, and fist throwing!!

I also hope to be showing you some interesting and thought-provoking websites, clips from films, etc. Hopefully these will spark discussion and thought!

Assignments

There will be two tests: one midterm and one final.

One paper (4-5 pages, 12 font, Times New Roman) Paper topics and requirements will be discussed in class. However, you be probably expected to choose an ethical issue in the public domain (news, internet, etc.), take stance on it, and defend your stance with the skills learned in class.

There will be 5 (and one extra credit) in class quizzes. They will cover material that was presented the previous classes. (note: studying for these quizzes will significantly help midterm and final.)

I will offer some extra credit, to be discussed in class.

Grading

5 quizzes 6 pts each = 30 pts
Paper 20 pts
Midterm 20 pts
Final 20 pts
Participation 10 pts

90-100 A
80-89 B
70-79 C
60-69 D
0-59 F
Policies and Classroom Rules

As stated above, attendance is mandatory. IF YOU MISS CLASS, then it is your responsibility to acquire lost notes. If you want an A, do not miss more than four classes! Absences will only be excused with doctor’s notes, court appearances, professional reasons, etc.

Plagiarism will not be tolerated (will receive no credit) and will be reported to the Dean. If a good argument is offered (and we will know what that means towards the beginning of the course!) then late work and absences may be excused. However, if a good argument is not presented, late work will receive a lower grade (one letter grade).

As a (moral and ethical) courtesy to other students (and the instructor!!) please DO NOT use any technological device such as a beeper or a phone. These devices make me turn into THE HULK….TURN THEM OFF. AND LAST, please DO NOT 1) bring food and eat during class. 2) talk to other students while instructor is lecturing, 3) chew gum loudly, etc… Drinks permitted.

If you fall asleep on me, please don’t snore!! Noises like that also make me turn into the hulk! But we’ll probably get a marker and write on you.

Course Schedule (subject to change)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date (week of)</th>
<th>Subject Matter</th>
<th>Reading</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1/4</td>
<td>T : Intro to Philosophy / Logic  R: more logic</td>
<td>N/A</td>
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<tr>
<td>1/11</td>
<td>T,R : More Critical Thinking</td>
<td>N/A</td>
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<td>1/18</td>
<td>T,R : What is Morality, Podcast</td>
<td>Rachels 3</td>
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<td>1/25</td>
<td>T,R : Cultural Relativism</td>
<td>N/A</td>
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<tr>
<td>2/1</td>
<td>T,R : Morality and Religion</td>
<td>Handout</td>
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<tr>
<td>2/8</td>
<td>T,R : Morality and Religion</td>
<td>Handout</td>
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<tr>
<td>2/15</td>
<td>T,R : Morality and Religion / Psychological Egoism</td>
<td>Handout</td>
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<tr>
<td>2/22</td>
<td>T,R : Psychological Egoism / Ethical Egoism</td>
<td>Handout</td>
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<tr>
<td>3/1</td>
<td>T,R : Ethical Egoism</td>
<td>Handout</td>
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<td>3/8</td>
<td>T,R : Midterm / Film: Lord of the Flies</td>
<td>N/A</td>
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<tr>
<td>3/15</td>
<td>T, R : Social Contract</td>
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<tr>
<td>3/22</td>
<td>T,R : Social Contract</td>
<td>6</td>
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<td>4/5</td>
<td>T,R : Sexual Ethics, Same sex marriage / Homosexuality</td>
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<td>4/12</td>
<td>T,R : Animal Rights</td>
<td>19,20</td>
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<td>4/19</td>
<td>T,R : Social Justice</td>
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<td>T,R: Social Justice</td>
<td>N/A</td>
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**Students with Disabilities**

Students with disabilities are by state law entitled to accommodation. Please let me know about any needs you may have and we can contact Disabled Student Programs/Services on campus.

**Contacting Instructor**

Office hours will be announced in first class. Or email me. I check it very regularly and I will get back to you usually very shortly.

**Doing well**

Why not? It is a good idea to plan, now, to do really well. Set your expectation high: to have an enjoyable experience, meet interesting classmates, meet some challenges and do lots of thinking!!

Well, that’s all folks! Thanks, and looking forward to meeting and getting to know you all!!!!!! Get ready for an awesome class!!!