

# Introduction to Ethics

## Philosophy 110e-02

### Spring 2016

M/W/F 10:10-11:00 a.m.

McGill #210

Pat Burke

Office: DHC 106

Office Hours: Tuesday and Thursday 1:30-2:30 p.m. or by Appt.

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This course carefully examines the three major traditions of western ethics as expressed in the writings of Aristotle, Immanuel Kant and J.S. Mill. Each of these traditions gives an account of right action, the good life and the possibility of enduring happiness that has profoundly influenced the way in which we take up with ethical issues today. Throughout the course contemporary ethical issues will be examined in light of these traditions with a particular emphasis on those issues surrounding social justice and our environmental crisis. The strengths and possible inadequacies of each tradition will be discussed with the goal of enabling students to both understand the ethical arguments underlying controversial issues and express their own ethical convictions.

#### **Required Texts:**

Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Translated by Martin Ostwald, (1962 Macmillan/Library of Liberal Arts), 316 pp.

Immanuel Kant, *Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals*, Translated by Lewis White Beck, Macmillan/ Library of Liberal Arts, 128 pp.

John Stuart Mill, *Utilitarianism*, (1979 Hackett Publishing), 63 pp.

Katherine Boo, *Behind the Beautiful Forevers: Life, Death and Hope in a Mumbai Undercity*, (2012 Random House), 256 pp.

Additional required readings are designated by a \*M and are available on the class moodle site.

**Supplemental Readings on Reserve at the Mansfield Library:**

Steven Cahn, *Ethics: History, Theory and Contemporary Issues*, (2011 Oxford University Press). 992 pp.

Albert Borgmann, *Real American Ethics: Taking Responsibility For Our Country*, (2006, University of Chicago). 245 pp.

**Voluntary Discussion Section:** There will be a voluntary discussion section that will provide the opportunity for students to engage in dialogue about the issues raised in class with the graduate teaching assistants. The discussion section is tentatively scheduled for **Wednesdays 4-5:00 p.m.** beginning the second week of the semester at a location that will be announced in class.

**Requirements:**

There will be **Eleven 20-minute Quizzes on Fridays**. The first quiz will be on Friday, February 5<sup>th</sup>. Each quiz will cover the prior 1-2 weeks of lecture and reading material and consist of: (A) three questions that test your basic understanding of the course content and are to be answered with brief responses of approximately 30 words each; (B) a quotation from the readings which you are to carefully read and then identify the philosophical point that is being made in the quotation. Your answer should again be about 30 words in length; (C) An essay question that asks for *your* thoughtful response of 150-200 words to an ethical issue. The answers to the three questions in (A) will together be given a single letter grade. The answer to (B) will be graded either “P” (passing) or “U” (unsatisfactory). The answer to (C) will be graded “P”, “U”, or “E” (excellent). A “P” will raise the grade for part (A) by one step (e.g. B to B+); a “U” will lower it by one step (e.g. B to B-); an “E” will raise it by two steps (e.g. B to A-). The tests will be returned on the following Wednesday and you will be expected to pick them up on that day. Your lowest quiz grade will be dropped and not be counted toward your final grade.

**Paper:** A four (4) page paper on an ethical issue will be due on Friday, April 15<sup>th</sup>. Alternative topics for the paper will be passed out on Friday, March 25<sup>th</sup>.

The **Final Exam will be on Thursday, May 12<sup>th</sup> 10:00-12:00**. The final exam will include 9 course content questions drawn from previous weekly quizzes and 3 course content questions from the final two weeks of classes.

**Class Grade:** The weekly quizzes, final exam and attendance will be weighted as follows: 10 weekly quizzes = 50%; paper = 20%; final exam = 20%; attendance/participation = 10%. There will be no make-ups for missed quizzes without (1) a written excuse from your physician/health center; (2) documented official university business, or (3) real hardship.

**Electronic Devices:** No electronic devices (cell-phones, laptops, notebooks, I-pods etc.) are allowed during class. If you are using an electronic device I will ask you to leave. If you require an electronic device because of a disability, please contact me in advance. However, everyone should take careful written notes in class. The material is often difficult and good written notes are key to doing well in the class.

**Absences:** I will take roll. Four (4) or more unexcused absences will automatically result in failing the class.

**Plagiarism:** Plagiarism is representing another's work as one's own and is a serious violation of academic integrity. Please review the University's plagiarism definition and policy in the catalog; "*Students who plagiarize may fail the course and may be remanded to Academic Court for possible suspension or expulsion.*" If you have any doubts about plagiarism and attribution of others' work, please consult your Instructor.

**Students with Disabilities:** The University of Montana assures equal access to instruction through collaboration between students with disabilities, instructors, and Disability Services for Students [DSS]. If you think you may have a disability adversely affecting your academic performance, and you have not already registered with DSS, please contact DSS in Lommasson 154. (406) 243-2243.

**Course Schedule and Readings:**

This schedule is only approximate and may change depending on class discussion of the readings and their application to contemporary issues. I will update you in class regarding changes to the schedule. It is your responsibility to know of any revisions to the schedule.

**Week 1** (January 25, 27, 29): Introduction and \*M Rachels, "The Challenge of Cultural Relativism"

**Week 2** (February 1, 3, 5): \*M Rachels, "Ethical Subjectivism", Aristotle, Book I

**Week 3** (February 8, 10, 12): Aristotle, Books II, III

**Week 4** (February 15—Presidents Day, 17, 19): Aristotle, Books IV

**Week 5** (February 22, 24, 26): Aristotle, Book V; \*M Plato, *The Republic*, Book I

**Week 6** (February 29, March 2, 4): Kant, pp. 3-22

**Week 7** (March 7, 9, 11): Kant, pp. 23-40

**Week 8** (March 14, 16, 18): Kant pp. 41-63

**Week 9** (March 21, 23, 25): Mill, Chapters 1 & 2

**Week 10** (March 28, 30 & April 1): Mill, Chapters 3, 4, 5

**Week 11** (April 4, 6, 8): SPRING BREAK

**Week 12** (April 11, 13, 15): Social justice, ethics & the good life—Boo, pp. IX-132.

Paper Due on Friday

**Week 13** (April 18, 20, 22): Social justice, ethics & the good life—Boo, pp. 133-254

**Week 14** (April 25, 27, 29): Environmental Ethics: \*M McKibben, "Global Warming's Terrifying New Math"; \*M Gardiner, "The Perfect Moral Storm"

**Week 15** (May 2, 4, 6): Environmental Ethics: \*M Borgmann, "The Setting of the Scene"; \*M Abram, "Reciprocity."

**Final Exam will be on Thursday, May 12<sup>th</sup> 10:00-12:00**