

PHIL 190: Ethics & the Good Life
Fall 2008
Prof. Hannah Phelps
11:50-1:35 T/R, Admin 214

Living Ethics: An Introduction
Michael Minch & Christine Weigel, eds.

Ethics & The Good Life is an introduction to ethics, focusing on two elements: general theoretical ethical theories, and more specific ethical dilemmas. By investigating what the good life is (or should be), you will be in a better position to then decide how to approach and attempt to resolve particular ethical dilemmas. More importantly, you can grapple with how to incorporate these values into your own life, and which values might be more important than others to respect. Another important goal of the course is to help you improve your ability to write persuasive, consistent arguments for and against thoughtful claims. Being able to clearly set out an argument will help you in turn more clearly understand your own position and will also help those who disagree with you nevertheless understand what you believe and why. Understanding why you value what you value, why the good life is what it is, and how you apply those value systems to your individual decisions will help you to in turn determine what kind of life you should lead as a person, citizen, and community member.

But not only is this a philosophy course: most importantly, it is a course as part of the First Year Experience Program. The FYE Program prepares students for successful participation in Pacific Lutheran University's distinctive academic and co-curricular culture by promoting critical thought, impassioned inquiry and effective expression in learning communities that are both supportive and challenging. We will use critical thought to evaluate and engage various philosophical theories, we will use our own experiences and convictions as an opening into inquiry, and we will do these things in our own class community, where we will support and challenge each other! In its western and non-western origins, philosophical questions were questions about how to live as an integrated, thoughtful human. Over the semester, we will think of philosophy in this same way: as a set of questions about how to live.

Contact Information/Office Hours

Office location: Blomquist House #4 (Blomquist is across 121st from Admin; my office is in the basement at the bottom of the stairs)

Email: phelpsh1@plu.edu or hannahp79@gmail.com

Office phone: x8409

Cell phone: 206-708-3282

Office hours: Friday 10-3 or by appt. If you would like to use GChat or iChat to discuss a question, we can set up a time to chat. Sakai also includes a chat feature.

Course Policies

Attendance

You may miss three class meetings (no questions asked, no differentiation between excused/unexcused). Each missed meeting beyond those three will result in a 1/3 grade deduction of your **final** grade (so four absences would change a final grade from a B+ to a B). Missing six classes is grounds for failing the course. Since discussion and active engagement are crucial to individual and group success in philosophy courses, you need to be in class! If you must miss more than three class meetings due to medical or family emergencies, I will make those appropriate accommodations.

Communication

Please make sure you check your PLU email, and familiarize yourself with Sakai. I use email and Sakai to communicate with you, to send links I might want you to read, and so on. Your assignments will be posted on Sakai, and you will submit them through Sakai, so it's up to you to keep on top of due dates. If you have any questions about how to use Sakai, please feel free to ask me, or the support staff in the library.

Late Work

I will only accept late work if you have made prior arrangements with me. If you know that some part of the semester will be very busy for you, talk to me and we will try to come to a workable solution. Please talk with me at least **three** days before the due date for an assignment.

Disability Information

If you need course adaptations or accommodations because of a disability, if you have emergency medical information to share with me, or if you need special arrangements in case the building must be evacuated, please make an appointment with me as soon as possible. If you have questions concerning the services available for students with disabilities at PLU, please contact Ruth Tweeten in Ramstad 106 or call x7206.

Academic Integrity

As students, you must not plagiarize or copy the work of others and present it as your own, nor should you assist any other student in doing so. For a more extensive description of PLU's academic integrity policy, please go to <http://www.plu.edu/academics/integ>. If you have any questions about what constitutes plagiarism, please ask!

Course Assignments

Please submit your assignments through Sakai unless otherwise directed.

Three papers (20 pts each): Five to six page papers defending a particular claim, thoughtfully evaluating at least (but not limited to) one philosophical argument in support of that claim, and providing your own defense of your claim. Optional drafts are just that: optional, and drafts! A draft is a working paper, meaning nearly the length of the assigned final paper, and meaning that it already includes the structure of a thoughtful argument.

First paper: due Friday Oct. 10, midnight (Optional draft due Tuesday Sept. 30, 5 pm).

Second paper: due Friday Nov. 7, midnight (Optional draft due Tuesday Oct. 28, 5 pm).

Third paper: due Monday Dec. 15, midnight (Optional draft due Monday Dec. 8, 5 pm).

Weekly reading response (10 pts): Response paragraph, including your thoughts or questions about one of the week's readings, to be submitted **before** the class for which that reading is assigned. The first weekly reading response is due the week of September 15.

Writing workshops (10 pts): Involves commenting on classmates' papers and written work to enable the revision process. On days with writing workshop assignments, there will be neither reading nor a class meeting (although your workshop assignment will be due over Sakai at the end of class time).

Class participation (20 pts): Includes smaller writing assignments (which act as paper preparation), class attendance and thoughtful contribution to discussion (which will be a large component of the course). Everyone will begin the semester with a B for class participation. Your grade will increase, decrease, or remain the same depending on your performance.

Reading/Class Schedule

Readings and assignments listed are to be completed before class unless otherwise noted. All readings are from *Living Ethics*.

Sept. 9

Introduction (1-14)

Sept. 11 – *Learning*

Plato, "Allegory of the Cave" (17-21), Krishnamurti, "The Function of Education" (21-24) & Foucault, "Truth and Power" (24-28)

Sept. 16 – Reasoning

Kant, “Transition from Ordinary Rational Knowledge of Morality to the Philosophical” (45-51) & Mill, “What Utilitarianism Is” (51-54)

Sept. 18

Nietzsche, “Beyond Good and Evil” (55-63) & Ibsen, “An Enemy of the People” (79-85)

Sept. 23 – Feeling

Ayer, “Language, Truth and Logic” (87-90), Damasio, “Who’s There?” (94-100) & cummings, “Since Feeling is First” (110)

Sept. 25 – Flourishing

Aristotle, “The Object of Life” (113-121)

Sept. 30

Kupperman, “The Place of Character in Ethics” (137-141) & Nussbaum, “Victims and Agents” (143-149)

Oct. 2 – Believing

Augustine, “Morality and the Love of God” (162-165) & Nielsen, “Ethics without Religion” (165-171)

Oct. 7 – Writing Workshop Assignment

Oct. 9 – The Social Contract

Hobbes, “Of the Natural Condition of Mankind as Concerning their Felicity and Misery” (216-220), Locke, “Of the Beginning of Political Societies” (220-222) & Rousseau, “The Social Contract or Principles of Political Right” (222-224)

Oct. 14 – Equality and Justice

Singer, “Famine, Affluence, and Morality” (248-252) & Pogge, “The Moral Demands of Global Justice” (252-258)

Oct. 16

Newton, “Reverse Discrimination as Unjustified” (261-262), Fish, “Reverse Racism, or How the Pot Got to Call the Kettle Black” (263-266) & Bales, “The New Slavery” (278-285)

Oct. 21 – Confronting

Johnson, “Threats, Values, and Defense” (294-303) & Holmes, “The Alternative to War” (310-315)

Oct. 23 – Loving

Aristotle, “Nichomachean Ethics - Book VIII” (347-351) & Thomas, “Living Morally” (368-372)

Oct. 28 – Caring

Gilligan, “In a Different Voice” (386-393) & Noddings, “Caring: A Feminine Approach to Ethics & Moral Education” (393-400)

Oct. 30 – Writing Workshop Assignment

Nov. 4

Hursthouse, “Virtue Theory and Abortion” (427-433) & Warren, “The Moral Significance of Birth” (434-439)

Nov. 6 – Working

Locke, “Second Treatise of Government” (465-467), Smith, “The Wealth of Nations” (468) & Marx/Engels, “The Communist Manifesto” (469-475)

Nov. 11

SAPET Presentation

Nov. 13 – Consuming

Twitchell, “Two Cheers for Capitalism” (498-504) & Durning, “How Much Is Enough?” (505-513)

Nov. 18 – No Class

Nov. 20 – Creating

Nietzsche, “Twilight of the Idols” (538-539) & Dewey, “The Living Creature” (540-545)

Nov. 25 – Existing

Kierkegaard, “The Present Age” (559-564) & Nietzsche, “The Problem of Socrates” (565-566)

Nov. 27 – Thanksgiving Break

Dec. 2

Sartre, “Existentialism Is a Humanism” (567-570) & Tillich, “The Courage to Be” (571-575)

Dec. 4 – Dying

Frankl, “Man’s Search for Meaning” (591-593) & Revel/Ricard, “Buddhism and Death” (597-604)

Dec. 9 – Writing Workshop Assignment

Dec. 11 – Extending Ethics

Taylor, “The Ethics of Respect for Nature” (616-628) & Hiebert, “The Human Vocation” (679-685)