Instructor Information

A. Name  Terry Sullivan

Course Objectives

*We are discussing nothing trivial but how a man should live (Plato)*

Ethics is a branch of Philosophy which in itself is an exercise in being self-aware; it is a radical and critical questioning of assumptions upon which beliefs are based. It requires us to be clear and careful in assessing our views and those of others. Ethics invites us to criticise radically assumptions about good and bad, right and wrong and how they may be applied both to the private lives of individuals and to the wider realms of organised social and political life.

Aims and Learning Outcomes

The course aims to introduce you to the nature of philosophy and the philosophical contributions to ethics by examining the ideas of certain major thinkers and schools of ethical and political thought from the times of the ancient Greeks to modern times. It will also invite you to consider the possible relevance of classical ethicists to contemporary ethical controversies.

On successful completion of the course you should:

- Have become aware of the purpose and reach of philosophy
- Have become aware of the of the main arguments of the major ethicists in Western thought
- Be able to apply some of the criteria of classical ethicists to on-going moral issues.

Assessment

You are required to submit a 2000 word (maximum) paper critically evaluating the ethical thought of one of the thinkers covered in the course up to the deadline. You are required to draw on the thinker’s original arguments (found in your class reader), and draw explicitly with precise referencing on evaluations of the thinker found in at least two secondary sources (e.g. Arrington and another book in the bibliography or elsewhere). In addition, where relevant, you are encouraged to demonstrate the relevance of the thinker’s ideas to a contemporary ethical issue.

The deadline for the paper is Tuesday October 28th. The paper counts for one third of the grade for the course.
In the final examination on Tuesday December 3rd (11am to 1pm) you will be required to answer two questions in essay format from a choice of about twelve questions. You are not allowed to answer a question on the thinker chosen for your previous paper; however, you are allowed answer a question on a thinker who you may have offered a presentation in seminars. The final examination counts two thirds of the grade for the course.

Attendance

Classes
All Boston University Study Abroad London Programme students are expected to attend each and every class session, tutorial, and field trip in order to fulfill the required course contact hours and receive course credit. Any student that has been absent from two class sessions (whether authorised or unauthorised) will need to meet with the Directors to discuss their continued participation on the programme.

Authorised Absence:
Students who expect to be absent from any class should notify a member of Academic Affairs and complete an Authorized Absence Approval Form 10 working days in advance of the class date (except in the case of absence due to illness, for which students should submit the Authorised Absence Approval Form with the required doctor’s note as soon as possible). Please note: Submitting an Authorised Absence Approval Form does not guarantee an authorised absence.

Students may apply for an authorised absence only under the following circumstances:
• Illness, supported by a local London doctor’s note (submitted with Authorised Absence Approval Form).
• Important placement event that clashes with a class (verified by internship supervisor)
• Special circumstances which have been approved by the Directors (see note below).

The Directors will only in the most extreme cases allow students to leave the programme early or for a significant break.

Unauthorised Absence:
Any student to miss a class due to an unauthorised absence will receive a 4% grade penalty to their final grade for the course whose class was missed. This grade penalty will be applied by the Academic Affairs office to the final grade at the end of the course. As stated above, any student that has missed two classes will need to meet with the Directors to discuss their participation on the programme as excessive absences may result in a ‘Fail’ in the class and therefore expulsion from the programme.

Lateness
Students arriving more than 15 minutes after the posted class start time will be marked as late. Any student with irregular class attendance (more than two late arrivals to class) will be required to meet with the Assistant Director of Academic Affairs and if the lateness continues, may have his/her final grade penalised.

Grading
Please refer to the Academic Handbook for detailed grading criteria and policies on plagiarism: http://www.bu.edu/london/current-semester

* Final Grades are subject to deductions by the Academic Affairs Office due to unauthorised absences.
Course Chronology

(In each seminar two or three students per week will be expected to make a short presentation based on the readings for each class. The whole class, of course is expected to read thoroughly as well and support the presenters). You will be divided into two seminar groups, A & B for the whole semester).

Part A of the Semester:

Lecture: 1.30-3.30pm Mondays, Discussion Groups A & B: 1.30-2.30 or 2.30pm-3.30pm Thursdays

Prior to the first class students are expected to have read:

T. Denise et al  
Great Traditions in Ethics (Chapter 1 introduction and Chapter 2 Knowledge and Virtue. Chapter on Plato.

R. L. Arrington  
Western Ethics: A Historical Introduction (Chapter 1 Socrates and the Sophists: An Introduction to Ethics. Also chapter on Plato.

Monday September 1st  
11.00am-3.00pm. Introduction to the course and brief meetings with groups A & B to allocate presentations. Introduction to philosophy and ethics.  
Why start with the Greeks? The importance of Socrates and especially Plato

Thursday September 4th  
Seminars on Plato

Monday September 8th  
Aristotle: Ethics and the Virtuous Character

Thursday September 11th  
Seminars on Aristotle

Monday September 15th  
The Impact of Christian Theology on Western Ethics: St Augustine’s Christianised Platonism

Thursday September 18th  
Seminars on Augustine

Monday September 22nd  
Christianised Aristotelianism: St Thomas Aquinas.

Thursday September 25th  
Seminars on Aquinas

Monday September 29th  

Thursday October 2nd  
Seminars on Hobbes

Mid-Semester Break 6th - 10th October
Part B of the Semester

Lectures and seminars: 9am-1pm Tuesdays

Tuesday October 14th  David Hume’s Passionate Ethics and Seminars
Tuesday October 21st  No Class this week
Tuesday October 28th  Kant’s deontological Ethics and Seminars (Paper Due)
Tuesday November 4th  Karl Marx on Capitalism and Seminars
Tuesday November 11th  Utilitarianism: Jeremy Bentham and Seminars

Wednesday November 12th  "2071" at the Royal Court Theatre, 7.45pm

Tuesday November 18th  Utilitarianism: John Stuart Mill
Tuesday November 25th  Reflection Time: Bentham versus Kant versus Aristotle and Modern Dilemmas: Film and Discussion. All students together.

Tuesday December 2nd  11.00am Final Examination (two hours)

Course Reading

Required Course Texts:

T. C. Denise, N. P. White & S.P. Peterfreund  Great Traditions in Ethics
R. L. Arrington  Western Ethics: An Historical Introduction

There are enough copies of these texts in the BU library and you will be allowed to borrow them for the whole semester. Make sure that you do not deface these texts and also ensure that you return them at the end of the semester.

You are expected to draw on both of these books for all seminar discussion and for your papers.

Other References on Ethics in the BU London Library

Please note all of the books in this section make references to all or most of the thinkers covered in the course:

G. Graham  Eight Theories of Ethics
M. Baron (et al)  Three Methods of Ethics
M. L. Morgan  Classics of Moral and Political Theory
J. E. Gracia (ed)  Classics of Western Philosophy
D. Collinson (ed)  Fifty Major Philosophers
N. White  A Brief History of Happiness
M. Timmons  Conduct and Character: Readings in Moral Theory (Very good detailed extracts plus commentary on the great thinkers)
H. Lafollette (ed)  Ethics in Practice (3rd edition, section 1)
G. Larmore  The Morals of Modernity
R. Norman  The Moral Philosophers
S. Darwell  Virtue Ethics
D. Wiggins  Ethics: Twelve Lectures on the History of Morality
A. Quinton  Utilitarian Ethics
G. Santas (ed)  The Blackwell Guide to Plato's Republic
H. West (ed)  The Blackwell Guide to Mill's Utilitarianism
T. Hill (ed)  The Blackwell Guide to Kant's Ethics

References on Applied Ethics

J. Nuttall  Moral Questions
D. Robinson  Ethics for Beginners
J. Driver  Ethics: The Fundamentals
J. Thiroux  Ethics: Theory and Practice
R. Trigg  Morality Matters
D. Raphael  Moral Philosophy
P. Singer (ed)  A Companion to Ethics (Excellent section on religion and ethics)
P. Singer  The Life You Can Save
P. Singer  Practical Ethics
P. Singer  Applied Ethics
P. Singer  Unsanctifying Human Life
J. P. Sterba  Ethics: The Big Questions
J. P. Sterba  Morality in Practice
M. Warnock  An Intelligent Person’s Guide to Ethics
E. Bond  Ethics and Human Well-Being
J. L. Mackie  Ethics: Inventing Right and Wrong
R. Billington  Living Philosophy: An Invitation to Moral Thought
J. Glover  Causing Death and Saving Lives
J. Glover  What Sort of People Should there Be?
A. Cohen and C. Wellman (eds)  Applied Ethics
B. Almond  Introducing Applied Ethics
J. Evans  Moral Philosophy and Contemporary Problems
B. Williams  Morality: an introduction to Ethics
D. Koehn  Rethinking Feminist Ethics
M. Cohen  101 Ethical Dilemmas
A. MacIntyre  A Short History of Ethics (Difficult read but makes good critical points)
H. Lafollette (ed)  Ethics in Practice (Excellent discussions of modern moral problems).
H. Lafollette  The Practice of Ethics
C. Clement  Care, Autonomy and Justice
J. Teichman  Social Ethics: a Student’s Guide
P. Kitcher  Lives to Come: The Genetic Revolution and Human Possibilities
References on Philosophy in General

J. Nuttall  
An Introduction to Philosophy

J. Cottingham (ed)  
Western Philosophy

P. Facione  
The Student’s Guide to Philosophy

B. Almond  
Exploring Philosophy

J. Rosenberg  
The Practice of Philosophy: A Handbook for Beginners

K. Appiah  
Thinking it Through

N. Bunnin (ed)  
The Blackwell Companion to Philosophy

M. Cohen  
101 Philosophy Problems

N. Warburton  
Thinking from A-Z

A. Morton  
Philosophy in Practice

J. Gaader  
Sophie’s World: an adventure in Philosophy

Additional readings may be posted on Blackboard: https://lms.bu.edu

Good Luck, Terry Sullivan September 2014