

BOSTON UNIVERSITY: LONDON

HU 201 THE HISTORY OF WESTERN ETHICS

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 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.

Reading.

Required Purchases (for sale in the BU library at the start of the course)

T. C. Denise, N. P. White &

S.P. Peterfreund (editors)

R. L. Arrington

Great Traditions in Ethics

Western Ethics: An Historical Introduction

Other References on Ethics in the BU London Library

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	<u>The Morals of Modernity</u>
R. Norman	<u>The Moral Philosophers</u>
S. Darwell	<u>Virtue Ethics</u>
D. Wiggins	<u>Ethics: Twelve Lectures on the History of Morality</u>
A. Quinton	<u>Utilitarian Ethics</u>

References on Applied Ethics

A. Nuttall	<u>Moral Questions</u>
D. Robinson	<u>Ethics for Beginners.</u>
J. Driver	<u>Ethics: The Fundamentals.</u>
J. Thiroux	<u>Ethics: Theory and Practice.</u>
R. Trigg	<u>Morality Matters.</u>
D. Raphael	<u>Moral Philosophy.</u>
P. Singer (ed)	<u>A Companion to Ethics.</u> (Excellent section on religion and ethics)
P. Singer	<u>Practical Ethics</u>
P. Singer	<u>Applied Ethics</u>
P. Singer	<u>Unsanctifying Human Life</u>
J. P. Sterba	<u>Ethics: The Big Questions</u>
J. P. Sterba	<u>Morality in Practice</u>
M. Warnock	<u>An Intelligent Person's Guide to Ethics</u>
E. Bond	<u>Ethics and Human Well-Being</u>
J. L. Mackie	<u>Ethics: Inventing Right and Wrong</u>
R. Billington	<u>Living Philosophy: An Invitation to Moral Thought</u>
J. Glover	<u>Causing Death and Saving Lives</u>
J. Glover	<u>What Sort of People Should there Be?</u>
A. Cohen and C. Wellman (eds)	<u>Applied Ethics</u>
B. Almond	<u>Introducing Applied Ethics.</u>
J. Evans	<u>Moral Philosophy and Contemporary Problems.</u>
B. Williams	<u>Morality</u>
D. Koehn	<u>Rethinking Feminist Ethics</u>
M. Cohen	<u>101 Ethical Dilemmas</u>
A. MacIntyre	<u>A Short History of Ethics</u> (Difficult read but makes good critical points)
H. LaFollete (ed)	<u>Ethics in Practice</u> (Excellent discussions of modern moral problems, section 2 onwards).
H. LaFollette	<u>The Practice of Ethics.</u>
C. Clement	<u>Care, Autonomy and Justice</u>
A. Nuttall	<u>Moral Questions</u>
J. Teichman	<u>Social Ethics</u>
A. Nuttall	<u>Moral Questions</u>

References on Philosophy in General

J. Nuttall	<u>An Introduction to Philosophy</u>
J. Cottingham (ed)	<u>Western Philosophy</u>
P. Facione	<u>The Student's Guide to Philosophy</u>
B. Almond	<u>Exploring Philosophy</u>
J. Rosenberg	<u>The Practice of Philosophy</u>
K. Appiah	<u>Thinking it Through</u>
N. Bunnin (ed)	<u>The Blackwell Companion to Philosophy</u>
M. Cohen	<u>Philosophical Problems</u>
N. Warburton	<u>Thinking from A-Z</u>
A. Morton	<u>Philosophy in Practice</u>
J. Gaader	<u>Sophie's World</u>

Teaching and Learning Strategy

There will be two hour interactive lectures, where students are invited to ask questions and make observations and will in turn be questioned on their reading, on Wednesday mornings 11am to 1pm and on Thursdays from 11am to 1pm and 2pm to 4pm. Some of the Thursday afternoon sessions will be replaced by field trips and there will also be opportunities to discuss some films that raise ethical questions

The Teaching Program.

Weeks 1 and 2: Ethics in Ancient Greek Thought

- : The Nature of Philosophy and Ethics. Film and Discussion, *What is Philosophy*
- : Plato: The Theory of Forms, the Allegories and *the Good*.
Reading: Denise, chapter 2; Arrington chapters 1& 2.
- : Aristotle and Virtue Ethics
Reading: Denise chapter 3; Arrington chapter 3
- : Stoics and Epicureans
Reading: Denise chapters 3&4, Arrington chapter 4
- : **Visit to the British Museum: The World of the Greeks.**

Week 3: Mediaeval Ethics

- The Medieval World View and Augustine of Hippo
Reading: Denise chapter 6, Arrington chapter 5
- : Thomas Aquinas' Christianised Aristotelianism
Reading, Denise chapter 7, Arrington chapter 5
Visit to Westminster Abbey: Mediaeval Christian Legacies.

Weeks 4 to 6: Renaissance to the 19th Century.

- : Hobbes: Contractualism and Egoism
Reading: Denise Chapter 8, Arrington chapter 6
- : David Hume: Reason, Passion and Ethics
Reading: Denise chapter 11; Arrington chapter 9
 - : Kant's Deontological Ethics
Reading: Denise chapter 12; Arrington chapter 10.
- : Rousseau and Marx
Reading, Extracts from Rousseau's Second Discourse and
Denise, chapter 17 on Marx.
**Visit to the National Gallery to see aesthetic shifts in the periods
under study.**

Nietzsche and the Transvaluation of Values

Reading: Denise chapter 17; Arrington chapter 13.

Student Presentations: Each student is required to make a presentation of 10 minutes on a chosen thinker. Further details of what is required will be discussed in class.

Student presentations continued

Student presentations and revision

: Final Examination

How the Course is Assessed

You are required to submit a 1500 word paper, drawing on the primary source extracts in Denise as well as at least two secondary sources and correctly referenced by . Please address the following question:

Choose the readings of one thinker from the course text or and analyse them in the light of what judgements are made of them in secondary sources and in the light of your own experience. Strategic illustration, where relevant, from contemporary ethical issues is welcome **The paper counts 30% of the grade for the course.**

The class presentation counts 20% of the grade for the course, Students are required to hand in the written up version of the presentation. The presentation must not be on the same thinker covered in the first paper.

In the **final examination** you are required to answer two questions in essay form from a choice of several questions. **The final examination counts 50% of the grade for the course.**

Attendance:

You are expected to attend every session and any absence, through illness or other legitimate reason should be reported to the Academic office as soon as possible. Poor attendance without adequate reason will be used to moderate your grades downwards. Excellent attendance will be used to moderate final grades in borderline cases.

Please note: I will be available on Fridays between 1.30 and 2.30 by appointment (or at other announced times some weeks) to discuss this course and your studies in general.

Grading.

<u>Grade</u>	<u>Honour Points</u>	<u>Usual %</u>	<u>Definition</u>
A	4.0	93-100	Excellent
A-	3.7	89-92	
B+	3.3	85-88	
B	3.0	81-84	Good
B-	2.7	77-80	
C+	2.3	73-76	
C	2.0	69-72	Satisfactory
C-	1.7	65-68	
D	1.0	60-64	Low pass
F	0.0	Unmarked	Fail

“Incomplete” or I grades are not permitted to be issued by faculty, because of the obvious difficulty in making up missed work once the student has left the country. All work must be completed on time. The grades reflect the quality of the work.

It is also important to realise that grades below C may not be transferable to non BU students' home institutions. Lecturers and students should use the following criteria for an understanding of what each grade means.

“Withdrawn” The Boston University Provost has announced that faculty members may no longer assign grades of "W" (Withdrawn). In supporting this policy, the Registrar's Office will no longer assign W grades on individual students' official Boston University records, even if the grade sheet has a "W" recorded for a student. Alternative grades to "W" are "F" (Failing) or "MG" (Missing Grade).

A This exceptional grade is assigned only to work that has persistently outstanding quality in both substance and presentation. The student must demonstrate a sustained capacity for independent thought and extensive study, producing rigorous and convincing analyses in well-ordered prose.

A- Awarded to work that is clearly focused and analytical, and based on wide reading. The student must cover all the principal points of a question and systematically develop a persuasive overall thesis, allowing for one or two venial omissions or inapt expressions.

B+, B, B- This range of grades indicates that the student has shown some evidence of original thought and intellectual initiative. The student has cited sources beyond the class

materials, and shown a degree of originality in perception and/or approach to the subject. The work will show thoughtful management of material, and a good grasp of the issues. The differences between a B+, a straight B and a B- may reflect poor presentation of the material, or mistakes in punctuation, spelling and grammar.

C+, C, C- Work in this grade range is satisfactory, but uninspiring. If the work is simply a recitation of the class materials or discussions, and shows no sign of genuine intellectual engagement with the issues, it cannot deserve a higher grade. Should an essay fail to provide a clear answer to the question as set, or argue a position coherently, the grade will fall within this range. Quality of presentation can lift such work into the upper levels of this grade range. Work of this quality which is poorly presented, and riddled with errors in grammar, spelling and punctuation, will fall into the lower end of the range. To earn a C grade, the work must demonstrate that the student is familiar with the primary course material, be written well enough to be readily understood, be relevant to the assignment, and, of course, be the student's own work except where properly cited.

D A marginal pass can be given where some but not all the elements of the course have been completed satisfactorily.

F The failing grade indicates the work is seriously flawed in one or more ways:

- *Obvious lack of familiarity with the material
- *So poorly written as to defy understanding
- *So brief and insubstantial that it fails to properly address the subject
- *Material presented is not relevant to the assignment
- *Demonstrates evidence of plagiarism (see below)

Boston University's Code of Student Responsibilities

All students are responsible for having read the Boston University statement on **plagiarism** that is available in the *Academic Conduct Code*. Students are advised that the penalty against students on any Boston University Program for cheating in examinations or for plagiarism may be expulsion from the program or the University; or such other penalty as may be recommended by the *Committee on Student Academic Conduct*, subject to approval by the Dean.

The value of any grade, credit, honour or degree received by a student presupposes that all work is her or his own. A student who uses or relies upon work of others or who, except under conditions expressly permitted by the instructor, furnishes assistance to another student, violates the standards of the University. Students must insist on academic honesty and integrity from their fellow students and must report promptly any case of alleged violation of academic conduct. Failure to do so is a violation of this code.

Plagiarism can take many forms, including the reproduction of published material without acknowledgement or representing the work of others as your own. This includes the increasingly common practice of obtaining and downloading *internet* sources. Students should be extremely careful when producing work for this course that all work is correctly sourced.

Good luck TJS