

PHILOSOPHY 225, HISTORY OF MORAL PHILOSOPHY
SPRING SEMESTER, 2014
AMERICAN UNIVERSITY OF BEIRUT
WEDNESDAYS 3:00 - 5:30 NICELY 321

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Office: 139 Fisk Hall
Office Hours: W 2:00—3:00 PM
F 1:00—2:00 PM and by appoint.

Course Description:

The field of moral philosophy in the western tradition is vast. We will read three of the most influential works on this tradition (by Aristotle, Hume, and Kant) plus a contemporary work that claims to put the history of moral philosophy into perspective (*After Virtue*, by MacIntyre). But this contemporary work goes beyond perspective, by providing a historical argument: That argument is something like this: the current state of moral thinking is confused; it became confused somewhere in the Enlightenment; and it is confused because we have lost an important, ancient sense of what ethics is really about (virtue). That is, the history of moral thinking has developed, both philosophically and culturally, in such a way that we no longer know what we are talking about. Whether MacIntyre is right, we will have to see. But to determine whether he is right, we have to read some of the foundational works of western moral philosophy that form part of his argument.

Basically, you will be reading some difficult books. You are expected to have done the assigned reading ahead of time, so that we can discuss it in class. To encourage you to be prepared, we will have a short reading quiz every week. Occasionally, these quizzes will consist of “group work” where you will answer several questions in a small group and discuss them with the class. There will be a take-home midterm, a paper, and a final paper. Some of the readings are quite difficult. You will need to keep track of complicated arguments, details, and terms. This is not an easy class. It aims to turn you into a more effective thinker and writer, and to give you a historical perspective on a matter central to human life.

This course mainly emphasizes philosophical thinking, which I take to mean the slow, careful, reflective reading and analysis of texts and concepts. Classes will be discussion-driven and centered on the assigned readings. My goal is not only to introduce the student to various problems in the philosophy of morals, but to develop the habit of reading and thinking philosophically.

This course will fulfill a GE humanities requirement (pending). A prerequisite for the course is *one previous course in philosophy or consent of instructor*. If you have no experience with philosophy, or do not like to read difficult material, or find diligent attention to abstract details tedious and boring, then I *urge* you not take this class. But if you want to work hard and learn some interesting and fruitful things (I think) then you are most welcome.

Program Learning Outcomes

- The ability to precisely identify the conclusion for which a writer is arguing.
- The ability to accurately represent the argument(s) which someone is using to support his or her conclusion.
- The ability to identify and assess objections to arguments in our readings.
- The ability to develop, explain, and defend your own views.

Essential: Read this syllabus carefully. By taking this class, you agree to understand and comply with this syllabus. By ‘syllabus’ I mean all of the documents found in the **Syllabus Section** on Moodle. To maintain organization and fairness, I must maintain the policies stated therein. If I make any changes to the syllabus, I will inform you. If you have a question about any policy, I am happy to talk about it. But if it is in the syllabus, you can never say that you did not know.

Required Texts: All texts are available at the AUB Bookstore.
See course schedule below for assigned readings.

- Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*
Penguin Classics; Further Revised Edition, 2004

- Hume, David. *An Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals* Hackett Publishing; Second edition, 1983
- Kant, Immanuel. *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals* Cambridge University Press, 1998 / 2011
- MacIntyre, Alasdair. *After Virtue* University of Notre Dame Press; 3rd edition, 2007

In addition there will be occasional helpful handouts or Moodle postings.

Graded Requirements:

- Quizzes (approx. seven, dispersed throughout the semester): 20% of course grade
- Take home midterm: 20%
- Argument paper 1: 30%
- Final paper: 30%

Quizzes: These are multiple-choice or short answer quizzes given occasionally (according to Course Schedule) designed to keep you up with the readings and to sharpen comprehension. The Quiz for that day will be over the readings assigned for that day (or the previous day) only. Quizzes may *not* be made up. Your lowest quiz score will not be included your total Quizzes score. Here is how they are scored:

-1 = 90; -2 = 80; -3 = 70; -4 = 60; -5 = 0. Note that if you cheat on the quiz by looking at someone else's quiz or by giving or obtaining answers from some other source, you will receive a zero for the quiz.

Take home midterm: You will be given several questions to answer. You will be given a window of five hours (or longer) to answer them. The questions will be based on the previously assigned readings. Here are the bases on which I will grade your essay: You must be able to identify and discuss the main idea (thesis) of the readings. You must be able to identify the reasons that are given in support of that thesis. You must be able to critically evaluate that thesis. You must be able to write in clear, grammatically correct, English. Your thoughts must be well-organized. Essays that fulfill all of the above in an excellent manner will receive 90 points. Those that do so in a "good" manner, or fulfill the criteria partially, will receive 80 points or more. Those essays that need work in at least two of the above criteria will receive 70 points or more. Those that do not fulfill several of the criteria, or do so in a weak manner, will receive 60 points or more. Those essays that fail to display much knowledge of the readings, *or* are incomprehensible or thoughtless in expression, will receive a 59 or less. The best way to prepare for these essays is to read the assigned readings *carefully* and pay attention to how we discuss them in class. Also, for most of the readings, I will provide "reading questions" on Moodle that will help you focus on what is important.

Paper and final paper: You will write a five-page argument paper, taking a position on one of the topics I assign. Details on Moodle and forthcoming.

Attendance: is up to you. However, since the class meets only once per week, and given that your final grade depends on your performance on the in-class essay and quizzes, and that we will be discussing these difficult texts in class, it is in your best interest to attend every class, to be attentive, and to participate in the discussions. However, if you miss more than four classes you will receive a 50 for the course, no matter what.

Participation and class conduct: Participation is strongly encouraged. In order to participate well, you must do the readings *before* class so we can go over them in class. Ask questions, make comments, and respond (respectfully) to other students. No question or comment is too silly or off-base. Everyone has questions, and surely others have the same questions as you. However, please do not monopolize the discussion. Give others a chance to speak. *Be respectful of me and others by listening to what is going on, rather than talking among yourselves.*

NOTE: Repeat offenders of the following behaviors will be ejected from class and will have **points removed from their final grade**. (1) Talking while someone else is talking. If you cannot avoid talking to your neighbor, then sit somewhere else. (2) Using cell phones in class. This is a no phone zone. All electronic devices must be turned off and put away completely out of sight. If you must take notes with a computer, the internet connection must be turned off. (3) Leaving the room to make or answer phone calls; playing games or reading non-class material during class. (4) Repeated lateness; leaving early. Also, as a courtesy to me, *please do not make preparations to leave class until I say class is over*. If I seem unaware that class time has expired, kindly alert me, thank you.

Grade Calculation: I want you to understand how your grades are assigned and calculated, so that you can know better what I expect and so that you can exercise more control over your own progress. See “Calculating and Estimating Your Grades” on Moodle.” This will show you completely explicitly how all calculations are made, so that you can do them yourself. Here is a brief explanation: All grades are recorded on Moodle’s “Grades” (as well as on the assignments themselves), so you can view them as soon as I have put them up (Moodle→Administration→Grades).

To estimate your grade at any point in the semester, simply figure your average and multiply it by the “weighted” amount; then sum the weighted amounts (see “Calculating and Estimating. . .”). Be sure to drop the lowest score on your quizzes. Your course grade will not be rounded up. An 82.75 is an 82.

NOTE: Never tell me that you “need” a certain course or paper grade, nor ask me to “go easy” on grades or anything else. The request is completely inappropriate. The only reason students make such a request is that they think it will influence their grade—and they are right. If made, I will *reduce* your course grade by at least 2 points. The best way to get the grade you need is to do the required work as best you can; although I offer no guarantees that you will get it.

Plagiarism: Plagiarism is the intentional or careless use of someone else’s writing or ideas as if they were your own. I consider it equivalent to stealing, lying, and cheating, and no amount of it will be tolerated in my class. Plagiarism is wrong for another reason: The general objective of college is to become a better writer, thinker, learner, and person. Plagiarizing severely undermines that objective and harms, not only you, but all students, professors, the university, and society in general. If you plagiarize, you fail to learn how to write and think. You represent yourself as having skills and knowledge that you in fact do not have. Also, *I despise plagiarism and plagiarists*. I take your work and my work seriously. If you plagiarize, then my work becomes a pointless waste of time. I hate wasting time, because I wish to fill my life with meaning and accomplishments. Nor do I wish to have false relationships. When I read and respond to your work, I consider myself as engaged in a mutual relationship of trust, respect, truth, care, and progress. If I am reading your plagiarized work, then I am having a false relationship with you. I despise false relationships because they destroy the substance of life. **If you plagiarize anything in this class, you will receive a grade of zero for the assignment and be reported to the Dean. It will go on your record and you could be dismissed from the university.** This includes any submitted work whatsoever (including essay drafts, single sentences and ideas, using dictionary definitions, encyclopedia entries, or any part thereof, paraphrasing, whether from books, internet, magazines, friends, wherever). You must also discourage plagiarism by not giving your paper to someone else to copy. Unfortunately, I catch plagiarizers *every semester*. I am an experienced reader and can usually tell, simply by reading, when a student has plagiarized. I can tell because the writing does not match the assignment, because the text has an “internet feel,” or because it uses awkward wording in an attempt to disguise the source. I also use Google and other resources.

You can, of course, easily avoid plagiarism simply by *citing your sources properly*. If you are unsure of how to cite sources properly, see “**Documenting Sources: Rules & Mechanics**” posted on Moodle. But *you are responsible for any plagiarism*. If you are struggling with an assignment, or with your English, please come and talk to me. I am here to help.

Turnitin. Unfortunately, due to a few people’s insidious attempts to plagiarize, I must force everyone to submit all assignments to Turnitin.com. Failure to submit your work to Turnitin results in an automatic 0 for the assignment.

Here is how it works: As their website says, “Every paper submitted is returned in the form of a Originality Report. Results are based on searches of billions of pages from current and archived instances of the Internet, millions of student papers submitted to Turnitin, and commercial databases of journal articles and periodicals” (http://www.plagiarism.org/plag_solutions.html). NOTE that Turnitin only submits a “similarity” report, not a plagiarism report. The similarity report shows the percentage of your text that is similar or identical to another text, and therefore helps me determine whether you have plagiarized. Some similarity is fine and to be expected. But identical similarity or paraphrased similarity is plagiarism. NOTE: Writing papers does *not* consist of using a source and changing a few words here and there. Nor does paraphrasing a source consist of changing a few words here and there. It means making a compact summary of the main point of a paragraph, for purposes of clarification for the reader. All paraphrasing must be documented.

To submit your paper to Turnitin, go to Moodle and click on “Turnitin submission” for the current assignment.

More information on Plagiarism is available on Moodle.

The Writing Center:

If you have writing issues that need extra attention, please take advantage of the Writing Center. Their instructors help all students, from first-year to doctoral. Keep in mind that they will *not* proofread or copy-edit your work. Walk in or make an appointment: 9 am - 5 pm, Monday – Friday. West Hall 336; Ext. 3157; E-mail: writing@aub.edu.lb

Moodle: Here you will find course material such as the syllabus, some course readings, citation mechanics, tips on writing papers, and such. Class notices and announcements will be sent to you by e-mail (via the “News Forum”) so, **check your AUB e-mail** regularly. You may also post your own thoughts on the News Forum for everyone to see.

E-mail: So that we may better communicate, you must use your AUB e-mail and “authenticate” it so that I can see your name and know who you are.

See Course Schedule, next page--

Course Schedule: This schedule is subject to change, although any changes will be announced well in advance. To be prepared for class discussions, read the assigned material *prior* to class time. *Always* bring the assigned material to class. *If you do not bring the readings to class, I may ask you to leave until you return with them!*

Date	Topic and Reading
1. Jan. 29	Introduction to History of Moral Philosophy, and to Aristotle
2. Feb. 5	Aristotle, <i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> , Books I & II (The Object of Life & Moral Goodness) Practice Quiz
3. 12	Aristotle, <i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> Books III, IV, VI (Moral Responsibility: Courage & Temperance; Other Moral Virtues; Intellectual Virtues) Quiz 1
4. 19	Aristotle, <i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> , Books VII & X (Contenance, Pleasure, Happiness, Contemplation) Quiz 2
5. 26	Hume, <i>An Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals</i> pp. 13-26. Also, read the Introduction by Schneewind. Quiz 3 Midterm (take home, Saturday)
6. Mar. 5	Hume, <i>An Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals</i> pp. 38-51 and 82-88 (Concerning Moral Sentiment); Also paragraph on “the Monkish virtues” p. 73-4 Quiz 4
7. 12	Kant, <i>Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals</i> Quiz 5 Preface, Section 1 Warner Wick intro
8. 19	Kant, <i>Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals</i> Quiz 6 Section 2 pp 19-33 (4:424)
9. 26	Kant, <i>Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals</i> Quiz 7 Sec II 33-51 Schneewind, “Autonomy, Obligation, and Virtue”
10. April 2	Kant, <i>Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals</i> <i>Section III</i> Quiz 8 NO CLASS
11. 9	MacIntyre, <i>After Virtue</i> up to p. 51 Paper Due Quiz 9
12. 16	<i>After Virtue</i> , up to p. 146 Quiz 10
13. 23	<i>After Virtue</i> , up to p. 205 Quiz 11
14. 30	<i>After Virtue</i> , up to end Quiz 12 Last Class
15. May 7	Reading period, exams begin Official due date for Final Saturday May 10 10:30 AM Nicely 411.
16. 14	Official end of semester, May 16