

BA Ethics Course Description and Requirements  
Instructor: John Hymers

Description:

This course will outline some of the major ethical views relative to the question: What does it mean to be good? It will do so in philosophical and historical terms. It will also consider the major positions inherited from the tradition of reflection on the good, from antiquity to the contemporary world. It will consider some of the essential themes of ethical reflection, such as the nature of virtue and duty, the question of justice and the good society, the relation of ethics and religion.

Material Goals:

- To gain basic familiarity with the major positions in the history of ethics, and their classical refutations

Formal Goals:

- To learn how to think about contemporary ethical questions
- To understand the relation between metaphysics (how reality is seen to be) and ethics (how reality ought to be)

Procedure:

If class size permits, each class will begin with a brief student presentation (5-10 minutes) based on a prepared question list concerning the assigned readings, drawn from the course outline. Then, through a guided discussion, the instructor will ensure the above goals are met. If class size is too great, the instructor will lead a discussion based on the aforementioned question list.

Grading:

Three papers (due throughout the semester) and a final examination. The first paper is worth 15 % of your final grade; the following two papers and the final exam are each worth 25 % of your final grade. The final 10 % is earned through class participation.

Texts: W. Desmond. *Philosophy and its Others*. Albany: SUNY, 1990.

O. A. Johnson. *Ethics: Selections from Classical and Contemporary Writing*. 7<sup>th</sup> Ed. Orlando: Harcourt Brace and Company, 1994.

PLEASE TURN OVER FOR COURSE OUTLINE

## BA Ethics Course Outline

Introduction: What is Ethics?

### *Theories of the Good, and the Good Life*

Aristotle and Eudaimonia

Epicurus and Hedonism

Kantian Mortality

Utilitarianism: Bentham and Mill

### *Ethics and the Good Society*

The Ideal Society: Plato

Society and Power: Hobbes

Aristocratic Society: Nietzsche

Altruism: Schopenhauer and Bradley

Feminine Ethics and Moral Care: Gilligan

### *Ethics and Religion*

Socrates: Piety and Reason

Stoicism, Epictetus: Reason and Religion

St. Augustine and St. Thomas Aquinas: The Religious telos of Ethics

Ethics and Theism: Kierkegaard

Atheism: Sartre

### *Being Ethical*

Desmond: Immediacy, self-mediation, and intermediation of the good

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