HU2702 – Ethical Theory/Moral Problems

Instructor: Professor Michael Bowler  
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Office: Walker 323  
Office Hours: Tuesday and Thursday 3:30 – 4:30 and by appointment

Course Description:

This course is an introduction to the theory and application of ethics. Ethics is that area of philosophy that can be characterized broadly as the investigation of how one should act and what one should value. That is, ethics is concerned with what characterizes right action and, alternately, wrong action as well as in what moral goodness and evil consists. Ethical theory is concerned with systematizing these notions, while applied ethics investigates particular, concrete moral problems, e.g., capital punishment, euthanasia, etc., by means of one or more ethical theory. In this course we will examine most of the major ethical theories by reading classical statements of these theories by some of the greatest philosophers of all time as well as more contemporary discussions of those theories. Throughout the course we will also have the chance to discuss and debate particular moral problems of contemporary significance utilizing essays by contemporary authors and by applying the theories we have learned.

Course Objectives:

By the end of the course students will have a working knowledge of many of the key issues and theories of ethics and applied ethics, an acquaintance with the views of both contemporary and historical philosophers on these topics, and an ability to think philosophically about these issues both abstractly and as they relate to more contemporary contexts.

Required Texts:


There may be additional readings that will be announced in class and will be available online at: http://www.hu.mtu.edu/~mjbowler – go to online syllabi and then go to HU2702 – Ethical Theories/Moral Problems.

Username: student  
Password: student
Course Prerequisites: None

Course Requirements:

There will be two exams, one mid-semester and one at the end of the semester. They first exam will cover material from the beginning of class up until the exam and the second exam will cover material from after the first exam to the end of the semester. There will also be class presentations/debates throughout the semester on topics in applied ethics. For these presentations you will work in a group and present before the class. In addition, there will be regular quizzes on the readings, usually on the Tuesday of a given week. Quizzes will cover the readings for the entire week. Thus, it is imperative that you do the required readings before coming to class on Tuesday. Finally, you will be graded on participation, which is a must, and attendance. Excessive absences will be guaranteed to negatively affect your grade. Promptness is expected. If you are consistently late to class your grade will be negatively affected. No make-up exams or quizzes will be given except for documented officially excused absences (e.g., documented illness, documented athletic participation, etc.)

Grading:

The breakdown for grading purposes is as follows:

Class participation/attendance: 5%
Quizzes: 15%
Class presentation/debate: 30%
Two exams: 25% each for a total of 50%

Grading System:

| Letter Grade | Percentage | Grade Points/credit | Rating
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>93% &amp; above</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>Excellent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AB</td>
<td>88% - 92%</td>
<td>3.50</td>
<td>Very good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>82% - 86%</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>Good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BC</td>
<td>76% - 81%</td>
<td>2.50</td>
<td>Above average</td>
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<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>70% - 75%</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>Average</td>
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<tr>
<td>CD</td>
<td>65% - 69%</td>
<td>1.50</td>
<td>Below average</td>
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<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>60% - 64%</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>Inferior</td>
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<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>59% and below</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>Failure</td>
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<td>I</td>
<td>Incomplete; given only when a student is unable to complete a segment of the course because of circumstances beyond the student’s control. A grade of incomplete may be given only when approved in writing by the department chair or school dean.</td>
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<td>X</td>
<td>Conditional, with no grade points per credit; given only when the student is at fault in failing to complete a minor segment</td>
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of a course, but in the judgment of the instructor does not need to repeat the course. It must be made up within the next semester in residence or the grade becomes a failure (F). A (X) grade is computed into the grade point average as a (F) grade.

Course Policies:
Please be courteous and respectful to everyone within the classroom. This includes, but is not limited to: Turning off all electronic devices before coming to class (which includes: Cell phones, blackberries, PDAs, computers, etc.), not talking with others during class, not reading newspapers or other materials during class, not eating during class, etc., etc. Come to class ready to participate and pay attention and remember that your fellow students are trying to do the same.

Plagiarism:
Plagiarism, especially from the Web, is of particular concern. Anything you copy directly or paraphrase from another source, whether that source be electronic, paper, or flesh and blood, that source must be cited. If you have any questions or doubts in a particular case I would be more than happy to discuss that case with you and to clarify what counts as a violation of academic integrity.

University Policies:
Academic regulations and procedures are governed by University policy. Academic dishonesty cases will be handled in accordance the University's policies.

If you have a disability that could affect your performance in this class or that requires an accommodation under the Americans with Disabilities Act, please see me as soon as possible so that we can make appropriate arrangements. The Affirmative Action Office has asked that you be made aware of the following:

Michigan Tech complies with all federal and state laws and regulations regarding discrimination, including the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. If you have a disability and need a reasonable accommodation for equal access to education or services at Michigan Tech, please call the Dean of Students Office, at 487-2212. For other concerns about discrimination, you may contact your advisor, department head or the Affirmative Action Office, at 487-3310.

Academic Integrity: http://www.studentaffairs.mtu.edu/dean/judicial/policies/academic_integrity.html
Affirmative Action: http://www.admin.mtu.edu/aaao/
Disability Services: http://www.admin.mtu.edu/urel/studenthandbook/student_services.html#disability
Course Itinerary:

September
2nd  Introductions/Syllabus.
4th  Introduction to moral theory, CC, pp. 1 – 15.
9th  Ethical and cultural relativism, CC, pp. 49 – 60.
16th Ethical egoism, CC, pp. 16 – 34.
18th Ethical egoism continued.
23rd First class presentation, Animal rights, AE, pp. 77 – 103.
25th First class debate, Animal rights.
30th Natural law theory, CC, pp. 61 – 87.

October
2nd  Natural law theory continued.
7th  Second class presentation, Euthanasia, AE, pp. 159 – 190.
9th  Second class debate, Euthanasia.
14th Comparison and discussion of divine command theory, ethical egoism, and natural law theory.
16th First Exam.
23rd Consequentialism/Utilitarianism continued.
30th Third class debate, Privacy and civil society.

November
4th  Kantian ethics, CC, pp. 114 – 150.
6th  Kantian ethics continued.
11th Fourth class presentation, Cloning, AE, pp. 141 – 158.
13th Fourth class debate, Cloning.
18th Virtue ethics, CC, pp. 151 – 194.
20th Virtue ethics continued.
27th Thanksgiving Break.
29th Thanksgiving Break.

December
2nd  Fifth class presentation, World hunger and the duties we have to others, AE, pp. 313 – 342.
4th  Fifth class debate, World hunger and the duties we have to others.
9th  Comparison and discussion of Utilitarianism, Kantian ethics, and virtue ethics.
11th Second Exam.