HU2702 – Ethical Theory/Moral Problems

Instructor: Professor Michael Bowler
Phone: 487 - 2447
Office Hours: Tuesday and Thursday 2:30 – 3:30 and by appointment

Office: Walker 323
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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 the WebCT page for this course.

Course Prerequisites: None
Course Requirements:

There will be two exams, one mid-semester and one at the end of the semester. The 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:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Letter Grade</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Grade points/credit</th>
<th>Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<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>
</tr>
<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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<tr>
<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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<tr>
<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 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</td>
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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 ready to 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/aao/
Disability Services: http://www.admin.mtu.edu/urel/studenthandbook/student_services.html#disability
Course Itinerary:

September
1st Introduction/Syllabus.
3rd Introduction to moral theory, CC, pp. 1 – 15.
8th Ethical and cultural relativism, CC, pp. 49 – 60.
10th Divine command theory, CC, pp. 35 – 48.
15th Ethical egoism, CC, pp. 16 – 34.
17th Ethical egoism continued.
22nd First class presentation, Animal rights, AE, pp. 77 – 103.
24th First class debate, Animal rights.
29th Natural law theory, CC, pp. 61 – 87.

October
1st Natural law theory continued.
8th Second class debate, Euthanasia.
13th Comparison and discussion of divine command theory, ethical egoism, and natural law theory.
15th First Exam.
22nd Consequentialism/Utilitarianism continued.
29th Third class debate, Privacy and civil society.

November
3rd Kantian ethics, CC, pp. 114 – 150.
5th Kantian ethics continued.
10th Fourth class presentation, Cloning, AE, pp. 141 – 158.
12th Fourth class debate, Cloning.
17th Virtue ethics, CC, pp. 151 – 194.
19th Virtue ethics continued.
24th Thanksgiving Break.
26th Thanksgiving Break.

December
1st Fifth class presentation, World hunger and the duties we have to others, AE, pp. 313 – 342.
3rd Fifth class debate, World hunger and the duties we have to others.
8th Comparison and discussion of Utilitarianism, Kantian ethics, and virtue ethics.
10th Second Exam.