DPLS 747 Leadership & Classical Ethics

Fall 2009 2 Credits
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8:00 - 12 Noon
Tilford 105
Every other Saturday (September 5, 19, October 3, 17, 31)

General Description of the Course's Content
This course analyzes primary source material in four distinct voices vital to any philosophically informed discussion of leadership ethics - Plato, Aristotle, Immanuel Kant, and John Stuart Mill. There are several seminal philosophical approaches to contemporary ethics - emotivism (C. L. Stevenson), prescriptivism (R. M. Hare), contract ethics (John Rawls) and discourse ethics (Jürgen Habermas) - that some philosophers regard as "classical" theories because they are so fundamental to current discussion. However, there is a virtually universal consensus that contemporary theories are extrapolations of the concepts embedded in the works of Plato, Aristotle, Kant and Mill. Indeed, Alfred North Whitehead once famously wrote that all philosophy is a footnote to Plato. Whitehead may have been exaggerating for the sake of emphasis, but a good grasp of the primary ideas in these four thinkers will, without a doubt, serve as an excellent foundation for grasping seminal and current approaches in ethical theory.

It should be noted that the course is restricted to Western philosophical sources; the insights of religious traditions such as Confucianism, Buddhism, Judaism and Christianity are not addressed. This does not imply, of course, that these traditions are not worthy of study. Indeed, over the years they have influenced philosophical ethics. However, philosophy addresses ethics in a voice that the religious traditions do not; philosophy approaches ethics as an abstract, theoretical exploration. It is an intellectually rigorous activity that prioritizes questions and theory rather than answers and data. The religious traditions are more involved with ethics as a practical, applied way of life.

Philosophy is an abstract, purely theoretical investigation of meaning. It can be frustrating in its repudiation of closure, its passion for the open-ended question, and its downright refusal to be "brought down to earth." William James describes this aspect of philosophy quite well in the opening paragraphs of his famous 1907 essay, "Pragmatism, a New Name for Some Old Ways of Thinking."

Philosophy is at once the most sublime and the most trivial of human pursuits. It works in the minutest crannies and it opens out the widest vistas. It "bakes no bread" as has been said, but it can inspire our souls with courage; and repugnant as its manners, its doubting and challenging, its quibbling and dialectics, often are to common people, no one of us can get along without the far-flashing beams of light it sends over the world's perspectives. These illuminations at least, and the contrast effects of darkness and mystery that accompany them, give to what it says an interest that is much more than professional.
James' insight here is important to our course. It will, at times, seem odd, even unfeeling, that we discuss the heartfelt and serious issue of right and wrong in such an abstract, distanced manner. Philosophy certainly has more passion for the activity of thinking about right and wrong than it does for rights and wrongs themselves. Since our course involves reading, discussing and analyzing the primary philosophical sources, you can expect a great deal of abstraction. We will encounter what James describes as the sublime and the trivial, and at times we may be repulsed by the doubting, the challenging, and the quibbling. But as we open our vistas and develop our intellectual courage we will find those far-flashing beams of light and those dark areas of mystery that are so vital to authentic ethical leadership.

The Course's Anticipated Outcomes
The primary sources are challenging in their rigor and subtlety. Class discussions will center on clarifying the readings as well as their implications for leadership. The goal in class discussion is not to find one philosopher who is "better" than the rest, but to understand the "voice" of each. The voice is a gestalt constituted, for the most part, of key terms, presuppositions, and goals inherent in the approach. The voice, similar to the "spirit" of the philosophical approach, is an animating presence. Your task in the course is to come to an intellectual and personal understanding of the similarities and differences among the ethical voices we call "Platonism," "Aristotelianism," "Kantianism" and "Utilitarianism".

More specifically, the primary anticipated outcome of the course is your final essay. The final essay is a reflective paper that describes the "ideal" leader embedded in each of the classical philosophical voices we study. The essay requires an imaginative and intellectual extrapolation of each of the four philosophic voices to a speculative description of the Platonic, Aristotelian, Kantian, and Utilitarian ethical leader.

A secondary - and no less important - anticipated outcome of the course is your demonstration of a successful recognition of the four voices by completing two reading question responses and engaging in the class discussions.

Assignments
Readings: Each session comes with a reading assignment. Each student is responsible for reading the entire assignment. The assigned reading is attached to this syllabus along with the reading questions.

Reading Question Responses: Each session begins with a large group discussion that focuses on the reading question responses. Each student is required to have word-processed notes (double-spaced) on all four questions that are helpful in contributing to the discussion for one session. Students will read their written responses to the questions to the class, and discussion will follow. (The class will agree on the dates for student assigned responses during the first session.) The written responses include informal cited page or margin numbers in order for everyone in the class to have ready access to specific sections of the texts. You may make use of secondary sources in responding to the reading questions, but be sure to cite them. That way, others can benefit from your research. You should hand in your written responses at the conclusion of the class session in which you report. The assignment you hand in will not be
returned, so you need to retain a copy. *Please do not hand in any late reading question responses, as they cannot be accepted.*

**Final Essay:** The final essay, due three weeks after the course is completed (Saturday, November 21) is a research-based analysis of each philosophical voice we study and an extrapolation of that analysis to a speculative description the "ideal leader" each voice implies. The essay should have at least four sections, one on each philosophic voice along with the ethical leadership style you find embedded within it. You may focus more on the philosopher you reported on, comparing and contrasting those ideas with the other three. Feel free to make use of secondary sources in your essay, but do not neglect your research into the primary sources we study in class. Please use APA format. The article by Karen Gocsik, "What is a Scholarly Paper?" is an excellent description of the type of final essay this course requires. Guidelines for the APA format and Gocsik's article can be found at [http://www.gonzaga.edu/Academics/Colleges-and-Schools/School-of-Professional-Studies/Ph.D.-Leadership-Studies/Current-Students/Dissertation-Templates,-Blue-Book,-Paper-Format,-and-IRB-Information.asp](http://www.gonzaga.edu/Academics/Colleges-and-Schools/School-of-Professional-Studies/Ph.D.-Leadership-Studies/Current-Students/Dissertation-Templates,-Blue-Book,-Paper-Format,-and-IRB-Information.asp)

**Grades**

Grades in the course are determined by the quality of your written response to your assigned study questions (20%) and your final essay (80%).

**Session Schedule**

As much as possible, we will adhere to this schedule rigorously. Please try to be in place at the obvious times.

8:00-9:30: Large Group Discussion based on responses to reading questions
9:30-9:45: Break
9:45-10:15: Large Group Discussion (continued)
10:15-11:00: Lecture - rather than interrupt the lecture, please jot down your comments and questions. You will be asked to turn them in after the break for class discussion.

- Session 1. Plato
- Session 2. Aristotle
- Session 3. Kant
- Session 4. Mill
- Session 5. No lecture

11:00-11:10 Break (please write out comments and questions - including speculations about ethical leadership - and hand them in during the break)
11:10-12:00 Response and discussion of written comments and questions

**First Session (September 9)**

8:00 - 8:45 Introductions and review of syllabus
8:45 - 9:30 Lecture: Introduction to Classical Ethics - the voices of Platonism, Aristotelianism, Kantianism, and Utilitarianism
9:30 - 9:50 *Break and* construction of written questions about the lecture
9:50 - 10:30 Discussion of written questions
10:30 - 10:40 Student selections of responses to study questions
10:40-10:50 *Break*
10:50-11:45 Lecture: Platonism
Texts for the Course (Available in the Gonzaga University Bookstore)


Some Secondary Sources

- *Don't overlook the introductions to our texts; all of them are worthwhile secondary sources.* Copleston and Solomon are both excellent print sources that are sufficient for our course. The other print sources here are more specialized, but relatively accessible and much more detailed than either Copleston or Solomon.
- Two internet sources - *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* and *The Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy* - can be very helpful.
- Annas, Julia. *Platonic Ethics, Old and New*. A contemporary study that goes far beyond our course, but you may find some insights that help with Plato.
- Borchert, Donald. *Encyclopedia of Philosophy 2nd Edition*. This is an excellent source, as is the first edition, edited by Paul Williams.
- Copleston, Frederick. *The History of Philosophy*. 9 Volumes. Copleston remains the single best source for introductory material on any philosopher from the pre-Socratics to the mid-twentieth century. His work on Plato, Aristotle, Kant, and Mill is detailed and reliable.
- Irwin, Terence. *Plato's Ethics*. This scholarly work with a specific thesis regarding Plato's views may be helpful, but it is not an introductory text. Don't overlook Irwin's introduction, notes, and glossary in our Hackett edition of the *Nicomachean Ethics*.
- Solomon, Robert. *Introducing Philosophy*. Solomon has written several introductory texts, all of them very good. This general introduction will probably clarify issues in all four philosophers.
- Sullivan, Roger J. *An Introduction to Kant's Ethics*. This is a relatively recent study that examines Kant's ethics by considering his political views. The author is a Kant scholar, but this text is more accessible than most Kant studies.
- Taylor, A. E. *Socrates*. Taylor may give you more than you want to know, but he is quite reliable.
- Wood, Allen W. *Kant's Ethical Thought*. This scholarly introduction to Kant's ethics is, in part, a detailed study of the *Grounding of the Metaphysics of Morals*.

Reading Schedule and Discussion Questions

**Discussion Questions**: Please provide specific responses, citing margin or page numbers that indicate specific references to the text. Your response to each question should be at least two paragraphs in length. Note that the questions are directed at discovering the "voice" of the ethical perspective; they focus on *key terms, presuppositions, and goals*

**September 19**: Read *Euthyphro, Apology, Crito*, Plato.
1. What do you think is the main point Plato is making in the dialogue between Socrates and Euthyphro about "piety"?
2. What does Socrates presuppose about human nature in the Apology when he says, "The unexamined life is not worth living?"
3. What is Socrates' position on the proper relationship between the individual and society in Crito?
4. What sort of ethical leader does Platonism advocate?

October 3: Read Books I - IV and VIII - IX in Nicomachean Ethics, Aristotle
   1. Book I - II What does Aristotle mean by the term happiness?
   2. Book III- IV What does Aristotle presuppose about human nature in his explanation of virtue as the mean between extremes, especially the virtue of magnanimity?
   3. Book VIII-IX Explain each of the three types of friendship and why Aristotle believes that friends are necessary to happiness.
   4. What sort of ethical leader does Aristotelianism advocate?

October 17: Read the Preface, First Section, and Second Section of Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals, Kant.
   1. First Section: Explain what Kant means by, "There is no possibility of thinking of anything at all in the world, or even out of it, which can be regarded as good without qualification, except a good will."
   2. First Section: Explain what Kant presupposes about morality when he writes, "An action done from duty has its moral worth, not in the purpose that is to be attained by it, but in the maxim according to which the action is determined."
   3. Second Section: Explain what Kant means when he writes, "Hence there is only one categorical imperative and it is this: Act only according to that maxim whereby you can at the same time will that it should become a universal law."
   4. What sort of ethical leader does Kantianism advocate?

October 31: Read Chapter I and II in Utilitarianism, Mill.
   1. Chapter II What does Mill mean by the term "greatest happiness principle?"
   2. Chapter II What does Mill presuppose about human nature when he claims, "It is better to be a human being dissatisfied than a pig satisfied?"
   3. Chapter II, What is Mill's point in writing, "The utilitarian morality does recognize in human beings the power of sacrificing their own greatest good for the good of others. It only refuses to admit that the sacrifice is itself good. A sacrifice which does not increase or tend to increase the sum total of happiness, it considers as wasted."
   4. What sort of ethical leader does Utilitarianism advocate?