DPLS 745 Leadership & Personal Ethics

Summer 2011 2 Credits
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6 - 10 PM
Tuesdays (June 20, 27, July 5, 12, 19)

General Description of the Course's Content
Theoretical ethics can be studied from at least two perspectives; we can examine character or decisions. The first is an examination of the makeup of a good person, sometimes called the "sagacious" approach because it emphasizes the wisdom of the moral "sage" regarding the moral character one should strive for. The second is focused on decisions. It emphasizes the characteristics of good choices as contrasted with morally bad ones and emphasizes that right and wrong is a matter of decision-making. This course takes the first route; it is a study four sagacious traditions. They can be classified as the Western, Eastern, Feminist, and Cosmopolitan approaches to being a person of good character.

Each of the four traditions is a complex and diverse gathering of assumptions, questions, contradictions, and resolutions that congregate around a central mode of life that is markedly distinct from those of the other three. Over the centuries, each tradition's internal dialogue has generated lines of demarcation between various schools of thought. Yet, no matter how these schools diverge, their continued dialogue necessitates enduring allegiance to a central theme. Thus, for the West, to seek the good life is inevitably marked with the pursuit of a "transcendental good." For Eastern thought, the relief of suffering is the central concern. Feminism's central theme is the maintenance of close, caring relationships. Cosmopolitanism emphasizes that each person is a "citizens of the world" who has moral obligations in regard to everyone else, despite our cultural differences. Each of these traditions has its own moral focus, its own way of defining and discussing moral issues, and its own convictions about the central themes of being a good person.

The personal ethics of a leader determine not only the moral character of the leader as an individual, but also influence the ethical character of the organization and those with whom it interacts. Moral character is, of course, at the heart of moral decision-making. But moral character has an influence on others in many ways, including influence on the values others choose in emulation of those shown by leadership.

The Course's Anticipated Outcomes
The primary outcome of the course is a thorough understanding of the impact the four sagacious traditions have on personal moral character. The secondary outcome is an appreciation of philosophical analysis and reflection. Philosophical analysis breaks down ideas, questions their meanings, and criticizes their assumptions. Philosophical reflection is an exercise of imagination and intellect that emphasizes rigorous cognitive responses to important issues. Thus, each tradition we study will be subject to significant analysis and criticism.
How the Course Reaches its Anticipated Outcomes
The course has three elements. First, the class views the documentary Enron: the Smartest Guys in the Room during the first meeting. The discussion that follows the viewing will set the stage for our philosophical forays into personal moral character for the rest of the course. Second, the class reads, reflects, and discusses each of the four sagacious traditions we study in the course (the West, the East, Feminism, and Cosmopolitanism). The goal here is to grasp the primary concepts and insights regarding moral character each tradition presents. The weekly reading, reflective quotation assignments, lectures, discussions, and class session summaries complete this task. Third, you explain your view of personal moral character in the final paper, an analysis and criticism of each of the four sagacious traditions.

The final paper satisfies primary outcome of the course. It should demonstrate that you have an intellectual appreciation of each tradition, and that you can identify one of those traditions as more personally appropriate than the other three.

The second outcome is reached by display of analytic precision, clarity in expression, and philosophical imagination in the reports but especially in the final paper.

Class Assignments
Reports
Each week (except for the first week), every student is assigned a specific page range in the reading assignment for the following week. The report should explain and summarize the page range's main ideas. The reports are the basis for the class discussion of the reading. Each student will be asked to read his or her report to the group and to respond to discussion. In effect, the report is an act of leadership because

Lectures
Lectures provide background, clarification, and commentary on the next session's sagacious tradition. Lectures provide philosophical terminology, general perspective, and historical background. You will be given a "broad outline" of the lecture that is meant to ease your note-taking tasks.

Final Paper
A successful final paper describes the main focus of each of the sagacious traditions. It concludes with a discussion of which of the four traditions the writer feels is most personally appropriate. If none of the four are felt to be personally appropriate, the paper needs to explain why each tradition fails to achieve the task. The paper is fifteen to eighteen pages in length (APA).

Typical Class Session Schedule

Please plan to participate in every class session.

Missing any class session will negatively impact your performance in the course.

6:00-6:15: Initial informal discussions.
6:15-7:15: Large group reports
7:15-7:25 Break
7:25-8:40: Large group reports
8:40-8:50: Break
8:50-9:45: Lecture on the next session's sagacious tradition
9:45-10:00 General Discussion

Reading Assignments
Books are available in the Gonzaga University Bookstore

Tuesday, June 20
No reading assignment; the class will view and discuss the documentary, Enron: the Smartest Guys in the Room

Tuesday, June 27
Republic, Plato (Translator, Grube. Hackett Edition)
Book I, Book VI, 506a-511e, Book VII, 514a-518e, Book IX, Book X, 609b-621d

Tuesday, July 5
The Heart of Buddha's Teaching, Thich Nhat Hanh, pp. 3-118, 161-175

Tuesday, July 12
Caring: A Feminine Approach to Ethics and Moral Education, Nel Noddings, Chapters 1-4.

Tuesday, July 19
Cosmopolitanism, Kwame Anthony Appiah

The Final Paper is due Saturday, July 30. (If I don't receive the paper by this date, your grade will be an Incomplete. Incomplete grades must be completed by August 15). Please email the final paper as an attachment in Microsoft Word to dplsethics@hotmail.com