

# GONZAGA-IN-FLORENCE SYLLABUS

Course: PHIL 301: Ethics  
Credits: 3 Credits  
Instructor: Gabriela Dragnea Horvath;



Study Abroad, 502 E. Boone Ave, Spokane, WA 99258-0085 • (800) 4405391 • [www.GonzagainFlorence.org](http://www.GonzagainFlorence.org) • [studyabroad@gonzaga.edu](mailto:studyabroad@gonzaga.edu)

[dragnea@gonzaga.edu](mailto:dragnea@gonzaga.edu)

**OFFICE HOURS: THURSDAY, 9:30-10:30**

**SCHEDULE: MON, TUE, THU, 9:35 -10:35**

## COURSE DESCRIPTION

The human capacity to discern between right or wrong, just and unjust has always been crucial for personal happiness, professional accomplishment, social and political balance. In our epoch, moral choices can have global consequences in finance, economy, conflicts, health, environment, they can involve the destiny of millions of people and ultimately the very survival of humanity. The course conceives ethics not only as a personal code of good behaviour, but as an instrument to engage in the promotion of values and their transmission to the coming generations.

It is divided into three parts.

- **Part 1** addresses ethical norms as rooted in the conception on human nature, and advances questions like: are good and evil inherent to human nature? Are ethical choices the result of exercising free will or complying with communal rules? What are the ethical models to follow? How does the foundation of human nature in a transcending principle impact ethics? The questions are approached by examining competing models of human nature - St. Augustine, John Stuart Mill, Sartre, Simone de Beauvoir and more recent contributions to our understanding of ethical rules.
- **Part 2** focuses on ethical axioms instrumental to building up a set of personal values and goals and evaluating the proper means to attain them. The text under study is Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*, and the issues - excellence, virtues and vices, values and criteria of defining them, justice and injustice, practical wisdom and judgement.
- **Part 3** Albert Einstein stated that “ethical axioms are found and tested not very differently from the axioms of science. Truth is what stands the test of experience.” In this unit we apply competing ethical axioms and frameworks to the moral issues present in the novel *Homo Faber* by Max Frisch and in other study cases proposed for reflection. Main topics: man as master of nature, truth and lie, strategies of self-justification, technology and environment, family and parenthood, love and friendship, abortion, racism, feminism. Supplementary excerpts from philosophical texts will act as theoretical support.

## **COURSE OBJECTIVES**

- to enrich the students' philosophical culture
- to help them understand the importance of a well-assimilated, well-motivated and coherent ethical system for a good life.
- to refine their skills of critical analysis and reinforce their discernment, by assisting them in approaching an issue from various points of view.
- to increase their sense of responsibility versus their own selves, the world they live in and the future.

## **TEACHING METHOD**

Sessions consist in a brief introductory lecture, text analysis, oral and/or written reports and debates. The students are expected to read the texts in advance, following certain guidelines and present written and/or oral reports. Group work in class is also included.

## **LEARNING OUTCOMES**

By the end of the course, students are expected to:

- develop their critical faculties and abandon emotionally motivated opinions in favor of logically grounded argumentation
- distinguish between genuine and false values, justified behavior and strategies of self-justification
- have a deeper appreciation of their social commitment
- make a balanced use of imagination and rationality in evaluating the possible consequences of moral deliberation.
- improve their ability to write a well-articulated, limpid argumentation.

## **GRADING AND OTHER POLICIES**

The final grade takes into account the following requirements:

### **Attendance and Participation – count 10%**

Regular attendance and punctuality are mandatory. Arriving late will lower your grade; two arrivals behind schedule will count as an absence. Absences are considered as such, excused or unexcused. It is the students' responsibility to make up for missed classes. More than five absences will result in an F for the course. More than four will result in an F for attendance and participation.

Participation means bringing the reading material to class and the written reports when required, presenting oral reports of readings, being active in debates and group work. Participation also refers to regular behaviour in class, thus the evaluation of attendance and participation includes deportment.

## **Department**

Mutual respect is essential for a good collaboration. Being physically present, but doing things that have nothing to do with the class (listening to music, checking emails, private conversation, etc) will have a negative effect on the grade. Disrupting behaviour will be followed by warning and/or dismissal from class and will result in a D or F for attendance and participation and/or dismissal from class. Food and beverages are not accepted in class. Cell phones must be off.

## **Reading Assignments – count 15%**

Due on the dates designated in the syllabus, the reading assignments will be checked by oral and/or written reports, group work in class and unannounced quizzes throughout the semester. There is no make-up possibility for missed quizzes.

## **Essays – count 30 %**

**Two essays are required,**

- **First essay: delivery date- February 21**
- **Second essay: delivery date- April 4**

The essay consists in the articulated and convincing treatment of a topic pertinent to the course, with a clear formulation of the ethical issue to be investigated and an equally clear conclusion. As ethics is applied philosophy, students are expected to address ethical theory and concrete examples in a balanced manner. The topic has to be screened and approved by the professor.

On the delivery date hard copies typed in standard format are to be handed in to the professor at the beginning of class and an electronic copy readable by Word-Windows or Microsoft Word is to be submitted by email.

Standard format: Title, aprox. 4-5 pages Times New Roman, 12, 2 line spacing, Bibliography

**Essays submitted late will receive a grade penalty as follows: 1 day—1 letter grade (e.g., A- to B-), 2 days—2 letter grades (e.g., A- to C-), more than 2 days—grade of 0 / F on the assignment.**

The evaluation is done according to the following criteria:

- well formulated argument (rhetorical strategy)
- ability to approach an issue from various points of view and evaluate them critically
- good use of bibliography. Sources need to be cited and listed at the end in the Bibliography. Class notes can build the frame of your argumentation, but will not be cited as primary sources.
- clarity of expression including quality of style (grammar, spelling).

With the authors' accord excellent papers will be submitted to the director of The Florence Newspaper in view of publication.

## Academic honesty

Academic honesty is essential to education. As students expect professional deontology from their professor, so does the professor expect honesty and genuine intellectual engagement from the student. Academic dishonesty is *any action by which a student seeks to claim credit for the intellectual of another person or uses unauthorized materials or fabricated information in any academic exercise*. It includes unauthorized assistance in tests and examinations; internationally impeding or damaging the academic work of others; submitting another person's work as your own, or providing work for this purpose; submitting work of your own that has been substantially edited and revised by another person, or providing an editing service for others; submitting material from a source (books, articles, internet sites) without proper citation and bibliographic reference; paraphrasing material from a source without appropriate reference and citation; submitting substantially the same piece of work in more than one course without the explicit consent of all the instructors concerned; assisting other students in any of the above acts.

Students who are academically dishonest will receive "0", zero on the work in question or a failing grade for the course as a whole, depending on the importance of the work to the overall course grade and the judgment of the instructor. The instructor reserves the right to submit copies of student written work to a plagiarism detection site such as TurnItIn.com.

## Exams – count 30 %

- **Mid-term exam – scheduled February 22**
- counts 20% and is a written test consisting in a critical analysis of four philosophical excerpts out of six. (25 points each).
- **Final exam – scheduled April 14**
- counts 25% of the final grade and is a written test consisting in:
  1. two questions out of four on two fragments chosen from the readings (50 points)
  2. an essay (no less than one page) on a larger ethical topic (50 points).

## Special Accommodation

Requirements of special accommodation due to specific problems are to be notified on the first day of class.

## Bibliography:

Text selections from:

Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Revised Oxford Translation, Princeton University Press, 1995.

Brannigan, Michael C., *Ethics Across Cultures*, an Introductory Text with Readings, The McGraw-Hill Companies, New York, 2005. (abbr. EAC)

*Ethical Theory*, Classic and Contemporary Readings, ed. Louis P. Pojman, Thomson Learning, London, 2002. (abbr. ET)

*Ethics, History, Theory and Contemporary Issues*, ed. Steven M. Cahn, Peter Markie, Oxford University Press, New York, Oxford, 2006. (abbr. EHTCI)  
*Images of the Human, The Philosophy of the Human Person in a Religious Context*, ed. H.Brown, D.L.Hudecki, L.A.Kennedy, J.J.Snyder, Loyola Press, Chicago, 1995. (abbrev.IH)  
*Thirteen Questions in Ethics*, ed.G.Lee Bowie, Kathleen Higgins, Meredith W.Michaels, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich College Publishers, Orlando, Florida, 1992.(abbr.TQE)  
 Max Frisch, *Homo Faber*, translated from the German by Michael Bullock, A Harvest Book, San Diego, New York, 1987, ISBN 0-15-642135-6

## REQUIRED READINGS

### **A coursepack with photocopies to be purchased in Florence:**

**The novel *Homo Faber* by Max Frisch**, translated from the German by Michael Bullock, Harvest Books, A Helen and Kurt Wolff Book, Harcourt, Inc. San Diego, New York, London, 1987 - ISBN 0-15-642135-6-

**The novel can be purchased in Florence too.**

### Coursepack Contents:

1. IH St. Augustine, Selections from *On the Trinity, Confessions, The City of God*, pp. 95-106.
2. Zimbardo, Philip, *The Lucifer Effect, How Good People Turn Evil*, Rider, London, 2009, pp. 2-22.
3. John Stuart Mill, *Utilitarianism*, in Michael C. Brannigan, EAC, pp. 147-165.
4. IH Jean Paul Sartre, selection from *Existentialism*, pp.512-521
5. IH Simone de Beauvoir IH Selections from *The Second Sex*, pp. 545-559.
6. EHTCI William James: *The Moral Philosopher and the Moral Life*, pp. 361-372
7. Riker, John H, *The Life of the Soul, An Essay in Ecological Thinking*, on-line text.
8. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Oxford translation by W.D.Ross, revised by J. O.Urmson, in *The Complete Works of Aristotle*, edited by Jonathan Barnes, vol.2, Bollingen Series, LXXI.2, Princeton University Press, 1995.
9. Frisch, Max, *Homo Faber*, Harvest Books, A Helen and Kurt Wolff Book, Harcourt, Inc. San Diego, New York, London, 1987
10. Bertrand Russell, *A Free Man's Worship*, ET, pp. 606-610.
11. Immanuel Kant: *Critique of Practical Reason, The Immortality of the Soul as a Postulate of Pure Practical Reason. The Existence of God as Postulate of Practical Reason*, ET, pp. 602-606;
12. St.Francis of Assisi: *The Canticle of the Creatures*, pp. 113-114.
13. Immanuel Kant: TQE *On a Supposed Right to Tell Lies from Benevolent Motives*, pp. 210- 213;
14. Charles Fried: TQE *The Evil of Lying*, pp.213-219.
15. Mark Twain, TQE *On the Decay of the Art of Lying*, pp.231-235;
16. Harry Frankfurt, TQE *On Bullshit*, pp. 235-238.
17. TQE Jean-Paul Sartre, *Anti-Semite and Jew*, pp.328-330.
18. TQE Judith Jarvis Thomson, *A Defense of Abortion*, pp.163-175.
19. Rosi Braidotti: *Ethics Revisited: Women and/in Philosophy, in Nomadic Subjects*, Columbia University Press, New York, 1994, pp.213-231.

20. M C. Brannigan, EAC, *The Black Stork*, p.437; *Fertility Pills and Reproductive Rights*, pp. 444; *Nike's Right to Lie*, p. 486. *Digital Angel*, p.460; *Cell Phones and the Democratic Republic of Congo*, p. 477.
21. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights

**INTERNET RESOURCES available as supplementary support for essays:**

- **JSTOR**
- **Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy**
- **Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy: <http://plato.stanford.edu/>**

**COURSE OUTLINE & SCHEDULE**

**PART I**

**WHAT KIND OF A PERSON AM I? WHAT KIND OF A PERSON DO I WANT TO BECOME?**

Class 1 Monday, Jan 10

- Introduction to the course. Circumscribing concepts like ethos, ethics, morality, immorality.

Class 2 Tuesday, Jan, 11

- Is Man fundamentally good?
- Reading: IH St. Augustine, Selections from *On the Trinity, Confessions, The City of God*, pp. 95-106.

Class 3 Thursday, Jan 13

- Can good people turn evil?
- Reading: Zimbardo, Philip, *The Lucifer Effect, How Good People Turn Evil*, Rider, London, 2009, pp. 2-22.

Class 4 Monday, Jan, 17

- Individual and communal values.
- Readings: John Stuart Mill, *Utilitarianism* in Michael C. Brannigan, EAC, with texts from , pp. 147-165.

Class 5, Tuesday, Jan, 18

- The Human Person as Freedom
- Reading: IH, Jean Paul Sartre, selection from *Existentialism*, pp.512-521
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Class 6 Thursday, Jan 20

- The Human Person as Male and Female
- Reading: Simone de Beauvoir IH Selections from *The Second Sex*, pp. 545-559.

Class 7, Monday, Jan 24

- Ethics and Philosophy
- Reading: EHTCI W.James, *The Moral Philosopher and the Moral Life*, pp.361-372.

Class 8, Tuesday, Jan 25

- Ethics and Psychology
- Riker, John H., *The Life of the Soul, An Essay in Ecological Thinking*, The Psychology of the Self, <http://www.psychologyoftheself.com/papers/riker.htm>

## PART II ETHICAL AXIOMS IN ARISTOTLE

Class 9 Thursday, Jan 27

- Seeking the good.
- Reading: Aristotle. *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book I, 1-7

Class 10 Monday, Jan 31

- How to acquire happiness.
- Reading: Aristotle. *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book I, 8-13

Class 11 Tuesday, Feb 1

- Excellence and virtues 1.
- Reading: Aristotle. *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book II, 1-6.

Class 12 Thursday, Feb 3

- Excellence and virtues 2.
- Reading: Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book II, 7-9

Class 13 Monday, Feb 7

- Action and moral deliberation.
- Reading: Aristotle *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book III, 1-7
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Class 14 Tuesday, Feb 8

- Courage and self-indulgence
- Reading: Aristotle *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book III, 8-12

Class 15 Thursday Feb 10

- Prodigality, magnificence, pride.
- Reading: Aristotle *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book IV

Class 16 Monday Feb 14

- Justice and Unjustice, 1
- Reading: Aristotle. *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book V, 1-6

Class 17 Tuesday, Feb 15

- Justice and Unjustice, 2
- Reading: Aristotle. *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book V, 7-12.

Class 18 Thursday, Feb 17

- Practical wisdom and judgement.
- Reading: Aristotle. *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book VI

Class 22 Monday Feb 21

- **Exam Review + First Essay delivery**

Class 23 Tuesday Feb 22

- **Mid-term Exam**

### PART III

#### APPLYING ETHICAL THEORY TO CONTEMPORARY MORAL ISSUES

Class 24 Thursday, Feb 24

- Identifying the moral issues in *Homo Faber*.
- Reading: students are expected to have read *Homo Faber*.

Class 25 Monday, Feb 28

- *Homo faber* as ideal of excellence
- Readings: *Homo Faber*, by Max Frisch, pp. Bertrand Russell, *A Free Man's Worship*, ET, pp. 606-610.

Class 26 Tuesday, March 1

- Man, nature and God.
- Readings: *Homo Faber*, pp. Immanuel Kant: *Critique of Practical Reason, The Immortality of the Soul as a Postulate of Pure Practical Reason. The Existence of God as Postulate of Practical Reason*, ET, pp. 602-606; St.Francis of Assisi: *The Canticle of the Creatures*, pp. 113-114.

Class 27 Thursday, March 3

- Self-awareness and self-indulgence in Walter Faber.
- Readings: Aristotle *Nicomachean Ethics* Book VII, 8,

Class 28 Monday, March 7

- Walter's and Joachim's Friendship.
- Reading: Aristotle *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book VIII+IX
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Class 29 Tuesday, March 8

- Truth and lie in *Homo Faber*.
- Readings: Immanuel Kant: *On a Supposed Right to Tell Lies from Benevolent Motives*, pp. 210- 213; Charles Fried: *The Evil of Lying*, pp.213-219, Mark Twain, *On the Decay of the Art of Lying*, pp.231-235

Class 30 Thursday, March 10

- Roots and manifestations of relativism in *Homo Faber*.

- Readings: Harry Frankfurt, *On Bullshit*, pp. 235-238.

### **March 11-20 Spring Break**

#### Class 31 Monday , March 21

- Moral deficiencies in Walter's and Hanna's approaches to love.
- Reading: *Homo Faber*. Develop your own theory of love ethics.

#### Class 32 Tuesday, March 22

- Parenthood in *Homo Faber*.
- Readings: Judith Jarvis Thomson, *A Defense of Abortion*, pp.163-175; EAC, M C. Brannigan, *The Black Stork*, p.437; *Fertility Pills and Reproductive Rights*, pp. 444

#### Class 33 Thursday, March 24

- Racism in *Homo Faber*
- Readings: TQE Jean-Paul Sartre, *Anti-Semite and Jew*, pp.328-330.

#### Class 34 Monday, March 28

- Hanna's feminism.
- Readings: Rosi Braidotti: *Ethics Revisited: Women and/in Philosophy*, in *Nomadic Subjects*, Columbia University Press, 1994, pp.213-231. Study case: EAC Zoe Warwick, p. 446.

#### Class 35 Tuesday, March 29

- Study cases: Business ethics. Technology and ethics
- Readings: EAC, Nike's Right to Lie, p. 486. *Digital Angel*, p.460; *Cell Phones and the Democratic Republic of Congo*, p. 477.

#### Class 36 Thursday, March 31

- Study cases: Ethics and Globalization
- Reading: *The Universal Declaration of Human Rights*

#### Class 37 Monday, April 4

- **Final Exam Review+ Second Essay Delivery**

#### Class 38 Thursday April 14

**FINAL EXAM**