GONZAGA-IN-FLORENCE SYLLABUS
Course: Ethics (PHL.301)
Credits: 3 Credits
Instructor: Martino Traxler, mtrax@tiscali.it

OFFICE HOURS: M-W: 13:15-14:00 OR BY APPOINTMENT

SCHEDULE: MON., TUE., WED.,THU., 10:00-11:35

ROOM: PREREQUISITES: PHL 101, PHL 201

COURSE DESCRIPTION
This course offers a partial overview of approaches to moral philosophy. We consider both normative questions—How ought I to live? What is good, bad, right, wrong? and meta-ethical ones—Are morals a matter of reason or emotion? Are all morals relative to culture? We read a large portion of Kwame Anthony Appiah’s *Cosmopolitanism: Ethics in a World of Strangers* (2006), as well as several other authors from antiquity to the present.
You are offered a list of topics on which to write your paper and give your presentation to the class. Those writing on a similar topic may jointly present their research and opinions to the class.
Requirements: midterm and final exams (30% of course grade each), plus the research paper (40% or else 25% for the paper and 15% for the presentation).

COURSE OBJECTIVES
- Incite moral reflection, develop critical faculties and one’s imagination, particularly regarding moral questions
- Acquire greater fluency with the language used to express a broad range of moral and meta-ethical considerations
- Refine skills in moral deliberation and in assessing matters of value
- Improve their argumentative skills

TEACHING METHOD
Sessions consist of some lecturing followed, preceded, or accompanied clarifying, questioning, rebuttals, and discussion of the cases or arguments under examination. Students are expected to have read the relevant texts in advance.

LEARNING OUTCOMES
By the end of the course, students are expected to demonstrate in their written work and their presentation that they:
- have acquired fluency with a broad set of moral considerations
- are able to fully express their moral judgments and support them with adequate theoretical underpinning of the sort studied in this class
- are able to express and defend in their papers settled moral conclusions around a broad moral question of their choice (typically chosen from the list of topics proposed).

GRADING AND OTHER POLICIES
The final grade may take into account any or all of the following:
Attendance
Attendance is taken at the beginning of class from the first day of the semester. The student entering class after attendance is taken has to contact the professor at the end and announce his/her presence. However, this does not mean that coming late is accepted. Two late arrivals may be excused, three turn automatically into an absence and will affect the attendance and participation part of the final grade.

Students can miss one week’s work, irrespective of the course formula (three sessions, two sessions, one session). It is their responsibility to make up for the missed work. If they miss a quiz or a report they are not allowed to have it at another time, unless the absence is for certified medical reasons and the professor and Dean agree.

More than one week’s work missed will be penalized as follows:
1. One extra absence lowers the attendance and participation grade by half a letter grade
2. Two extra absences lower the final grade by a whole letter grade
3. Three extra absences lower the final grade to an F.

Deportment
Learning and reflection are collaborative efforts. So student participation, particularly in the form of constructive or critical analysis, is warmly invited. It is not required, however, as you are now deemed to have matured enough as scholars to judge for yourselves the merits contributing your opinions, questions, or arguments. Because mutual respect is essential to good collaboration, Traxler reserves the right to make grade subtractions for disruptive behaviour as well as for behaviour disrespectful to other students. For, while disrespecting faculty may be unwise gradewise, disrespecting fellow students is disgraceful and may be sanctioned with grade subtractions. In the same spirit, what you do with your computer or smart-phone during this class is your business alone for as long as it does not distract others or disrupt class, whereupon you become liable to grade subtractions.

Attendance, participation
Assuming we are all adults now, no grades are awarded for attendance or participation.

Writing--40 % of course grade
You are required to write an essay, preferably on a normative question chosen from among those listed in the topic list shared at the beginning of the course.

- Papers are due by Thu. 9 June.

The essay consists in the articulated and carefully argued treatment of a topic chosen, preferably, from the topic list for this course supplied on the first day of class. For a topic to be added to this list following a student’s suggestion, it must be presented in a clearly-stated form and be approved by your instructor whereupon it will be added to the list and thereby become available for others to write about, too. For this reason all topic proposals must be submitted by the end of week 3.

Group submissions (max. 3) are welcome. The form of such paper is slightly different. See M. Traxler’s Writing Advice, for details.

All papers must be submitted in hard copy. You are encouraged to print over & back. 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.

Evaluation will follow the standards set out in M. Traxler’s writing advice, requirements, and grading criteria, shared with all of you, which include the following criteria:

- argumentative completeness and lucidity
- good organization
- good use of sources, properly cited.
- good or notable expression

Traxler’s formatting requirements are also set out in his writing advice.

Optional oral presentations—15%
Those writing on a particular topic (not more than three (3)), have the option of participating in a joint presentation of your views on this topic to the class in weeks four and five. If the grade of this presentation helps, your grade on the presentation will count for 15% of the course grade, the paper for the remaining 25%. Presentations should last around 10 minutes to be followed by 20 minute discussion. Presentations are judged as much on the subsequent discussion they elicit as on the persuasiveness of the claims defended in the presentation itself.

Exams—60 % of course grade

**Mid-term exam 30%—on Wed. 1 June, at the usual class time**
- Contents: mostly multiple-choice questions & passage identification questions (e.g., identify the source of “Why Gramma, what big teeth you have!”), and perhaps 1 or 2 short essay questions.,

**Final exam—30%—on Thu. June in the week of Monday April 18, at the usual class time and place**
- Contents: 1 or 2 short essay questions, probably some multiple-choice, and almost certainly passage identification questions.

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.

Special Accommodation
Requests for special accommodations due to specific, preferably documented institutionally recognized reasons, are to be made on the first day of class.
Required reading:
All further required readings, as well as much recommended reading, will be shared with you from a drive associated with this e-mail address: zagethics@gmail.com.

Internet resources recommended:
- *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*: http://plato.stanford.edu/ (probably your best starting point for research in ethics)
- *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*
- *The Catholic Encyclopedia* (http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/)
- and, of course, JSTOR

**COURSE OUTLINE & SCHEDULE**

Note: the dates at which particular readings will be discussed are merely indicative.

Class 1– Mon. 16 May
- Introduction to the course, trolley-car problems, Heinz dilemma, etc.

Class 2– Tue. 17 May
- Jonathan Haidt, *Where does morality come from?* shared reading about the nature and jurisdiction of our morals

Class 3– Wed. 18 May
- Is moral development rational and gendered?

Class 4– Thu. 19 May
- Jonathan Haidt, *The intuitive dog and its rational tail* shared reading about the roles of reason & intuition in morals

**Week 2:**

Class 5– Mon. 23 May
- Happiness yours, as viewed by some good old Brits as by some pretty ancient Greeks.

Class 6– Tue. 24 May
- Happiness what it takes to get it: virtue, friendship, & luck

Class 7– Wed. 25 May
- Virtue?

Class 8– Thu.. 26 May.
- Friendship?

**Week 3:**

Class 9– Mon. 30 May
- *The Situationist Challenge to virtue ethics: K.A. Appiah “The Case Against Character”* (shared reading)

Class 10– Tue. 31 May
- *Another approach: Utilitarianism*

Class 11– Wed. 1 June
- *MIDTERM EXAM*

No class Thu. 2 June (Italian national holiday—Day of the Republic)
Week 4
Class 12 Mon. 6 June
  • A third approach: Immanuel Kant: leave it all to reason.
Class 13 Tue. 7 June
  • Some skeptical considerations regarding Kant
Class 14 Wed. 8 June
  • Preliminaries to a fourth approach: prisoners’ dilemmas & commons
Class 15-Thu. 9 June
  • A fourth approach: morals from a social contract

Week 5: Relativism & cosmopolitanism
Class 16 Mon. 13 June.
  • Meta-ethics again: are morals local or universal? Anthropologists v. Bernard Williams
Class 17 Tue. 14 June
  • Appiah splits the difference: Cosmopolitanism ch. 1 & 2.
Class 18 Wed. 15 June
  • Cosmopolitanism ch. 3
Class 19 Thu. 16 June
  • Cosmopolitanism ch. 4

Week 6: Cosmopolitanism, world poverty, & you
Class 20 Mon. 20 June.
  • Cosmopolitanism ch. 5 & 6
Class 21 Tue. 21 June
  • Is helping strangers a moral duty? Singer v. Appiah (& others)
Class 22 Wed. 22 June.
  • A recent moral bucket list for life
Class 23 Thu. 23 June

FINAL EXAM