Philosophy 301 F17 Ethics (Florence)

Professor: Dr. Erik Schmidt
Office Hours: By Appointment
E-Mail: schmidt@gonzaga.edu

Required Texts:

• Course Reader

Course Description:

The goal of PHIL 301 is to introduce students to the field of ethics and value theory. We will do that by closely examining the central ways people have approached questions of ethics in the western world and by applying those approaches to a range of contemporary issues that I have selected to bring out some of their most salient, and potentially controversial dimensions.

This section of the class will connect to the Florence curriculum in three ways. First, we will explore selections from the works of Renaissance authors to investigate the way various political, religious, and scientific changes during that time period fundamentally changed the way people approach ethics in the modern western world. Next, we will explore the ethical undermining of the slow culture movement, which started in Italy, and ask whether it promotes human flourishing. Finally, we will use our discussion of ancient and contemporary virtue ethics to explore the topic of travel. What role does travel play in human flourishing and what habits and qualities of character should we cultivate in order to become better travelers?

Course Outcomes:

1. Students will be able to: Argue persuasively why each of us is responsible for having ethical concerns about and commitments to the good of others.

2. Students will be able to: Resolve moral problems consistently drawing on resources (e.g., conceptions of human nature and the human community) of one of the ethical theories or traditions studied.

3. Students will be able to: Respectfully advocate for their critically assessed moral commitments and perspective within a diverse community.

Course Requirements:

Reflection Papers (30%): I will post reflection paper topics that explore issues raised by each of the main ethical theories. Each student will select and write a paper on three of those questions.
Midterm (25%): Students will take an in-class midterm exam on Thursday, October 26th.

Final Exam (25%): Students will take an in-class final exam during the time scheduled for our class. (December 15, 18, 19, or 20)

Attendance and Participation (20%): Attendance will be taken during each class. According to Gonzaga University policy, students who miss more than 6 hours of class may receive a V or be asked to withdraw from the class. Please let me know if you are forced to miss class due to serious illness or family emergency so that we can arrange a schedule for you to make up the work you have missed.

Course Policies: These are the basic rules that cover my expectations for each of you this semester.

1. Attendance and Participation: Attendance will be taken during each class. According to Gonzaga University policy, students who miss more than 6 hours of class may receive a V or be asked to withdraw from the class. Please let me know if you are forced to miss class due to serious illness or family emergency so that we can arrange a schedule for you to make up the work you have missed. Bringing the text to class is critical for the activities we will engage in. If you do not bring a copy of the reading to class, you may be marked absent for that day.

2. Laptops: I do not allow laptops during class unless a student provides a Gonzaga accommodation letter requiring one. The reason for this rule is that it prevents the distraction of other students, encourages full participation, promotes and supports a culture of collaboration, and encourages an important set of skills related to attention, information processing, and note-taking.

3. Late Work: Papers are penalized by one letter grade for each class it is late. If students know ahead of time that they will have some difficulty meeting a deadline, please contact me at least two weeks prior to the deadline.

4. Statement Concerning Sexual Misconduct: Gonzaga University recognizes the inherent dignity of all individuals and promotes respect for all people. Sexual misconduct is not tolerated at Gonzaga. This includes unwanted physical/sexual contact, sexual assault, and unwanted and harassing sexual comments. (Clearly, this list isn't exhaustive.) If you have been the victim of sexual misconduct, I want you to know that I am one point of contact for getting you in touch with mental health services, campus police, and (if you should choose to pursue legal action) city police. As a faculty member, I am interested in promoting a safe and
healthy environment. But you should also know that if you tell me anything that incriminates a student, I am legally bound to report that information. The technical terminology here is that I am a mandatory reporter (along with all faculty and administrators). This rule prevents faculty and administrators from being passive bystanders: if you tell me something, I’m in serious trouble (= breaking the law) if I don’t do anything about it (e.g. contact Gonzaga University’s title IX coordinator).

6. **Students with disabilities and medical conditions:** The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides reasonable accommodation for their disabilities. If you believe you have a disability/medical condition requiring an accommodation, please call or visit the Disability Access office (Room 209 Foley Library, 509-313-4134).

7. **Academic honesty:** Academic honesty is expected of all Gonzaga University students. Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to cheating, plagiarism, and theft. Any student found guilty of academic dishonesty is subject to disciplinary action, which may include, but is not limited to, (1) a failing grade for the test or assignment in question, (2) a failing grade for the course, or (3) a recommendation for dismissal from the University. (See also “Academic Honesty” on page 67 of the University’s online catalogue.)

8. **Course Evaluation:** At Gonzaga, we take teaching seriously, and we ask our students to evaluate their courses and instructors so that we can provide the best possible learning experience. In that spirit, we ask students to give us feedback on their classroom experience near the end of the semester. I will ask you to take a few minutes then to carry out course/instructor evaluation on-line. Please know that I appreciate your participation in this process. This is a vital part of our efforts at Gonzaga to improve continually our teaching, our academic programs, and our entire educational effort.