

INTRODUCTION TO ETHICS

Course Syllabus

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Term: Summer 2022.

I. Format: Seminar: Lectures combined with a seminar style in-class discussions.

The language of the course is English and Serbian.

Levels of students: All levels, no prerequisite requirements.

II. Course description including objectives

This is a general course in philosophy, accessible to all students; the aim of the course is to teach students to think seriously and responsibly about moral matters, i. e. about all matters relevant and important in life: how to become a good and responsible person, how to avoid wrong acting and what does it mean to have a life deserving to be respected and satisfied with – not as a recipe in instrumental sense but in the sense in which it is the result of attaining the capability for self-evaluation and self-respect, as well as the capacity to responsibly evaluate and respect others. It is the course dealing with the task how to incorporate morality into the individual and social life.

III. Course structure:

1. Ethics and morality: morality as a part of social reality, ethics as the (philosophical) theory of morality.
2. The nature and definition of morality: Morality as a specific value criterion and a social fact.
3. Basic distinctions: between acts and events, between reasons and causes, between values and facts.
4. Ethical theories: reciprocal illumination as a test of the feasibility of five ethical theories (direct intuition and “golden rule”, virtue ethics, theory of double effect, utilitarianism [consequentialism]), deontology).
5. Meta-ethics, theory of meaning of moral terms and sentences
6. Meta-ethics, theory of justification within moral discourse, (“is/ought” gap, institutional facts, constitutive rules, social ontology).
7. Cultural and ethical relativism.
8. Religion and morality (Divine Command Theory).
9. Justice and social contract theory
10. Psychological and ethical egoism

11. Utilitarianism in more details: instrumental rationality, the structure and scope of consequentialism
12. Kantian ethics in more details: Universalization, Categorical Imperative
13. Kantian ethics: Classification of duties
14. Freedom and Determinism: Compatibilism
15. Applied Ethics, General Features (Three Normative Principles)
16. Illustrations of Applied Ethics (Bioethics, Business Ethics, Environmental ethics, Computer ethics).

IV. Reading material: J. & S. Rachels, *The Elements of Moral Philosophy*, an additional packet of texts prepared for the course. All students will get the reading material electronically in advance.

V. Requirements:

One in-class written exam on specific topic determined by instructor – during second week of the course, and sent immediately to the instructor -30% of grade.

One final paper (1500-2500 words), worth 60% of the grade, due three weeks after the course (or at the date determined by BFSU). The topic of each final paper has to be endorsed by the teacher in advance. Papers should be written in the form of critical analysis, must be well reasoned, and argumentative. Be consistent and careful in your expression; length is not the guarantee of quality. See “Writing standards” below.

Class Participation, worth 10% of the grade.

VI. Writing Standards:

Papers should be written in an organized and coherent form addressing the following questions:

1. What is the issue under consideration?
2. What is your thesis?
3. What are the arguments for that thesis?
4. In preparing papers attention should be specifically given to your own judgments, and justification offered for those judgments. They should not amount to simple paraphrases of read material, but express your evaluation of this material, and your own thoughts on the matter. Participation in discussion is the best preparation for writing your final paper. Writing the papers will require that students write critical, well-reasoned, argumentative essays. Be consistent and careful in your expression, length is not a guarantee of quality.
5. What can we learn from this paper? What should we know or think about after reading it that we might have not known or thought about before? What do you get, or think to get, from writing and completing the paper? What message are you sending to someone who might read it without having to grade it? Are you satisfied with your paper? (That is most important.)