



Nanchang University PHI 320 : Ethical Theory

Credit: 4

Contact Hours

This course is composed of 24 lecture sessions, 3 tutorial sessions and 9 office contact hours. Each lecture session takes 2 contact hours in length; each tutorial session takes 3 contact hours in length; There will be a Q-A review session (3 contact hours) and Final Exam (3 contact hours) at the end of this term. This course has 72 contact hours in total.

Course Description

In this course, students will mainly explore several significant philosophical topics concerning with moral aspects, free will, moral conduct and human life and so forth. This course mainly covers morality, self-interest, relativism, objectivism, value, utilitarianism, kantian and deontological systems, contractarian ethical systems, virtue-based ethical systems, the fact/value problem, moral realism, skepticism, religion & ethics and contemporary challenges to classical ethical theory and etc.

Course Learning Outcomes

After completing this course, students will be able to:

1. Analyze persistent questions regarding right and wrong, good and bad;
2. Identify and make ethical evaluations of issues and cases;
3. Examine the principles of moral conduct;
4. State problem and identify relevant factors in ethical decision making;
5. Understand the strengths and weaknesses of ethical theories;
6. Make a debate about ethical issues.

Required Textbook

Ethical Theory: Classical and Contemporary Readings by Louis P. Pojman

Press: Wadsworth Publishing

ISBN: 0495808776

Ethical Theory: A Concise Anthology by Margaret R. Holmgren, Heimur Geirsson

Press: Broadview Press Ltd

Edition: 2nd Revised edition

ISBN: 1554810159



Reference Readings

Introduction to Ethical Theories: A Procedural Approach by Douglas Birsch

Press: Waveland Pr Inc

ISBN: 1478606703

Note: Only several listed here, more diverse readings will be recommended in class. Students are expected to be well prepared for each class when required reading should be finished.

Grading

- Participation and Presentaions 20%
- Essays 20%
- Group Discussions 20%
- Midterm Paper 20%
- Final Exam 20%

A+ 96-100	A 90-95	A- 85-89
B+ 82-84	B 78-81	B- 75-77
C+ 71-74	C 66-70	C- 62-65
D 60-61	F < 60	

Course Schedule

The course has 24 class sessions in total. All sessions are 2 contact hours in length. At the end of this term, there will be a Q-A review session(3 contact hours) and Final Exam (3 contact hours).

Note: the course outline and required readings are subject to change.

Class 1:

Introduction to the course

Studens' ideas about ethics

What is ethics?

Plato: Socratic Morality: Crito.

Class 2:

Ethical relativism vs ethical objectivism

Herodotus: Custom is King

Plato: Objective Moral Forms

Thomas Aquinas: Objectivism: Natural Law

Class 3:

Ethical relativism vs ethical objectivism

Ruth Benedict: A Defense of Ethical Relativism

Louis Pojman: A Critique of Ethical Relativism



Gilbert Harman: Moral Relativism Defended
Group Discussion 1

Class 4:

Morality and self-interest

Joseph Butler: Against Egoism

Joel Feinberg: Psychological Egoism

Class 5:

Morality and self-interest

Plato: Why Be Moral?

Richard Taylor: On the Socratic Dilemma

David Gauthier: Morality and Advantage

Essay 1

Class 6:

Value and the self

Robert Nozick: The Experience Machine

Richard Taylor: Value and the Origin of Right and Wrong

Friedrich Nietzsche: The Transvaluation of Values

Class 7:

Value and the self

Derek Parfit: What Makes Someone's Life Go Best?

Thomas Nagel: Value: The View from Nowhere

Derek Parfit: Later Selves and Moral Principles

Group Discussion 2

Class 8:

Value and the self

Bernard Williams: Persons, Character, and Morality

Carol Gilligan: Women's Conception of Self and of Morality

Sarah Clark Miller: The Need for Care: Gender in Moral Theory

Essay 2

Class 9:

Utilitarianism

Epicurus: Pleasure

Jeremy Bentham: The Utilitarian Calculus

John Stuart Mill: Utilitarianism

Class 10:

Utilitarianism

J.J.C. Smart: Extreme and Restricted Utilitarianism



Kai Nielsen: Against Moral Conservatism
Bernard Williams: Against Utilitarianism

Class 11:

Utilitarianism

John Hospers: Rule-Utilitarianism

Robert Nozick: Side Constraints

Peter Singer: Famine, Affluence and Morality

Group Discussion 3

Class 12:

Kantian and Deontological systems

Immanuel Kant: The Foundation for the Metaphysics of Morals

W. D. Ross: What Makes Right Acts Right?

Onora O'Neill: Kantian Formula of the End in Itself and World Hunger

Essay 3

Class 13:

Kantian and Deontological systems

Thomas Nagel: Moral Luck

Philippa Foot: Morality as a System of Hypothetical Imperatives

Judith Jarvis Thomson: Killing, Letting Die, and the Trolley Problem

Class 14:

Contractarian ethical systems

Thomas Hobbes: The Leviathan

David Gauthier: Why Contractarianism?

John Rawls: Contractualism: Justice as Fairness

Class 15:

Virtue-based ethical systems

Aristotle: The Ethics of Virtue (Books 1-4 complete)

Bernard Mayo: Virtue and the Moral Life

William Frankena: A Critique of Virtue-Based Ethics

Group Discussion 4

Class 16:

Walter Schaller: Are Virtues No More than Dispositions to Obey Moral Rules?

Alasdair MacIntyre: The Nature of the Virtues

Susan Wolf: Moral Saints

Louis P. Pojman: In Defense of Moral Saints

Class 17:

The fact/value problem: Mathematics in the Twentieth Century



David Hume: On Reason and the Emotions: The Fact/Value Distinction

A. G. E. Moore: Non-Naturalism; A J. Ayer: Emotivism

Class 18:

R. M. Hare: Prescriptivism: The Structure of Ethics and Morals

John Searle: How to Derive Ought from Is

Geoffrey Warnock: The Object of Morality

Class 19:

Moral realism and the challenge of skepticism

J.L. Mackie: The Subjectivity of Values

Jonathan Harrison: A Critique of Mackie's Error Theory

Gilbert Harman: Moral Nihilism

Bruce Russell: Two Forms of Ethical Skepticism

Essay 4

Class 20:

Religion and ethics

Plato: Morality and Religion: Euthyphro

David Hume: Morality Independent from Religion

Immanuel Kant: God and Immortality as Necessary Postulates of Morality

Class 21:

George Mavrodes: Religious and the Queerness of Morality; Kai Nielson: Ethics Without God

Contemporary challenges to classical ethical theory

Sociobiology; Moral Responsibility.

Class 22:

Charles Darwin: Ethics and the Descent of Man

E.O. Wilson: Sociobiology and Ethics

Michael Ruse: Evolution and Ethics: The Sociobiological Approach

Elliot Sober: Prospects for an Evolutionary Ethics

J.L. Mackie: The Law of the Jungle, Evolution and Morality

Essay 5

Class 23:

The Challenge of Determinism to Moral Responsibility and Desert

Class 24: Final Exam

Louis Pojman: Free Will, Determinism, and Moral Responsibility: A Response to Galen Strawson.

Richard Taylor: A Libertarian Defense of Free Will and Responsibility. A Glossary of Ethical

Attending Policy



Regular and prompt attendance is required. Under ordinary circumstances, you may miss two times without penalty. Each absence over this number will lower your course grade by a third of a letter and missing more than five classes may lead to a failing grade in the course. Arriving late and/or leaving before the end of the class period are equivalent to absences.

Policy on “Late Withdrawals”

In accordance with university policy, appeals for late withdrawal will be approved **ONLY** in case of medical emergency and similar crises.

Academic Honesty

Nanchang University expects all students to do their own work. Instructors will fail assignments that show evidence of plagiarism or other forms of cheating, and will also report the student's name to the University administration. A student reported to the University for cheating is placed on disciplinary probation; a student reported twice is suspended or expelled.

General Expectations:

Students are expected to:

- Attend all classes and be responsible for all materials covered in class and otherwise assigned;
- Complete the day's required reading and assignments before class;
- Review the previous day's notes before class and make notes about questions you have about the previous class or the day's reading;
- Participate in class discussions and complete required written work on time;
- Refrain from texting, phoning or engaging in computer activities unrelated to class during the class period;
- While class participation is welcome, even required, you are expected to refrain from private conversations during the class period.

Special Needs or Assistance

Please contact the Administrative Office immediately if you have a learning disability, a medical issue, or any other type of problem that prevents professors from seeing you have learned the course material. Our goal is to help you learn, not to penalize you for issues which mask your learning.