

Philosophy 100-25
Ethics as an Introduction to Philosophy

Xavier University, Spring 2003

TuTh 10:00-11:15, Alter 221

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This course will focus on two related questions: which way of life is best for a human being, and what is the best form of human society? You will be encouraged to explore these questions by developing arguments that use your own knowledge and experience to respond to the ideas of others. We will find such ideas in one of the greatest works of ancient philosophy, Plato's *Republic*, as well as in selections from other ancient and modern thinkers, a film, and a short novel.

Most of our time will be devoted to discussion, both among the class as a whole and in small groups of students. You are encouraged to speak your mind and to back up your opinions with arguments. The writing assignments will develop your ability to make philosophical arguments clearly and effectively.

This class is an introduction to philosophy, understood as the activity of asking fundamental questions and trying to find the best answers to them. Philosophy does not pay off immediately in the way technical knowledge does; instead, it helps to develop you as a thoughtful and articulate person. This is the first course in the undergraduate requirement of three philosophy courses; it is followed by Theory of Knowledge and a philosophy elective. This course is also part of the Ethics/Religion and Society focus, which also includes Theological Foundations, Literature and the Moral Imagination, and an elective. E/RS courses investigate ethical or religious dimensions of socially significant questions.

Required texts

Charles Guignon (ed.), *The Good Life* (Hackett)

Lois Lowry, *The Giver* (Laurel-Leaf)

Plato, *The Republic of Plato*, translated by Allan Bloom (Basic Books)

Please buy these books now. Make sure you have the right translation of the *Republic*.

Course requirements

Group project: 10%
 First paper: 20%
 Second paper: 25%
 Quizzes: 10%
 Final exam: 15%
 Class participation: 20%

The *group project* will involve debating a series of philosophical questions in a group of about three people, during class time. One or more members of your group will write a summary of your debate.

The *papers* (4+ pages each) will require you to develop an argument in response to a philosophical text, which you will need to interpret in some detail. They will require precise language, good organization, and the clear presentation of some reasoning to support a thesis. A guide to writing philosophy papers will be handed out with the first assignment.

Unannounced multiple-choice *quizzes* may be given at any time. They are meant to test your basic knowledge of the material and make sure you are keeping up with the reading. Missed quizzes may not be made up and will receive an automatic C.

The *final exam* will be a short-essay test. Study questions for it will be handed out in advance. You may consult two pages of notes during the test.

The *class participation grade* is a judgment I make at the end of the semester about the quality of your effort and your contributions to the class as a whole. The judgment is based on your participation in discussions and small-group work (possibly including writing the summary of your group project), any extra writing you may do (such as a rewritten paper or your informal thoughts about an issue that came up in class or in the text), and your communication with me outside class (office hours, e-mail, phone). To get a good participation grade, try to do something regularly to demonstrate that you are actively involved in the class. (Attendance is not participation.)

Calculating your grade

I assign each element of your grade a letter grade, then convert it to a number on a 4-point scale (like the scale used for your GPA), with pluses and minuses counting as 0.3 point: A = 4.0, A- = 3.7, B+ = 3.3, etc. I multiply this number by the percentage the element is worth, and add all the results to get your raw grade. This raw grade, adjusted to account for absences (see "Policies" below), yields the course grade. (A course grade of A is 3.5 or higher, a B is under 3.5 but at least 2.5, etc.)

For example:

Group project	B	$3.0 \times 10\% = 0.3$
First paper	C	$2.0 \times 20\% = 0.4$
Second paper	B-	$2.7 \times 25\% = 0.675$
Average of all quizzes	1.5	$1.5 \times 10\% = 0.15$
Final exam	C+	$2.3 \times 15\% = 0.345$
<u>Participation</u>	A-	<u>$3.7 \times 20\% = 0.74$</u>
Raw grade		2.61
Two missed days with no makeup work		-0.4
Course grade		2.21 = C

Policies

When you miss a class for any reason, you do not need an excuse, but you are expected to turn in one page of makeup work when you return. (I do not usually take roll, but I will often notice if you are absent.) The makeup work may be handwritten; it should summarize the reading for the class you missed and state your own reactions to the reading. Getting someone else's class notes is a good idea, but copying them and turning them in as makeup work is not acceptable; your work has to show that you read the text yourself. If you do not turn in makeup work promptly, I may subtract up to 0.2 grade points from your final course grade (on a 4-point scale) for each day you missed. Anyone who misses more than 6 classes may fail the course, even if makeup work is turned in.

Late papers will be penalized by up to one letter grade for each day they are late. Extensions are possible if you ask for them well in advance of the due date.

Papers may be *rewritten*. Rewrites will not change your grade on the paper, but they will count as class participation (extensive rewrites can make a significant difference to your participation grade). If you rewrite a paper, please turn in the new version along with the original version and my original comments. Rewrites may be turned in as late as the day of the final exam.

Missed quizzes cannot be made up (I do not have the time to create special makeup quizzes and administer them outside class). They will receive an automatic C, which is very unlikely to affect your course grade.

Plagiarism is using someone else's words or ideas, even if you rephrase them, without giving credit to the source (such as a book, article, *Cliffs Notes*, web site, or another student's writing). It's fine to consult such sources, but you must use quotation marks if you quote them, and you must acknowledge them whenever you use them (preferably using footnotes). For a helpful web site about plagiarism, see www.nwu.edu/uacc/plagiar.html. Xavier's policy on academic honesty states: "The direct and unattributed use of another's efforts is prohibited as is the use of any work untruthfully submitted as one's own. Penalties for violations of this policy may include one or more of the following: a zero for that assignment or test, an 'F' in the course, and expulsion from the University. The dean of the college in which the student is enrolled is to be informed in writing of all such incidents, though the teacher has full authority to assign the grade for the assignment, test, or course."

All assignments and the final exam must be completed in order to pass the course.

Schedule

Jan. 14 Tu Introduction to the course:
what is “the good”?; how to read philosophy

Challenges to morality and justice

Is there any nonreligious reason to be moral? Why should we be moral or just?

Jan. 16 Th “God is dead”: before today’s class, read Friedrich Nietzsche,
The Gay Science, sections 124, 125, 343, and 382
(in *The Good Life*, starting on page 228)

Jan. 21 Tu Can morality survive the death of God?
Film in class today: “Crimes and Misdemeanors,” part 1
No reading assignment.

Jan. 23 Th The consequences of injustice:
“Crimes and Misdemeanors,” part 2
No reading assignment.
Handout in class today: outline of the *Republic*

Jan. 28 Tu Is justice good in itself? Historical background on Plato.
For today read Plato, *Republic* 338c-339a (pp. 15-16), 343a-344c (pp. 21-22), and 357a-362c (pp. 35-40), plus the outline of the *Republic* up to this point. From now on, please read the outline as we go along, using it to fill in parts we are skipping and review the text (and preview it, if you like). I also encourage you to read the omitted parts of Plato’s original text if you can.

Fundamental questions of political philosophy

What is the purpose of a community? How should it be structured and ruled?

Jan. 30 Th Group project in class today (be sure to attend!).
No reading assignment.

Feb. 4 Tu Socrates builds a city: *Republic* 367e-372e (pp. 44-49)
(*Error in the translation*: switch “former” and “latter” at 370a.)
If you’re writing the summary of your group project, **bring a draft today**; make enough copies for everyone in your group.

Feb. 6 Th The guardians of the city: *Republic* 372e-376c (pp. 49-53)
Summaries of group projects due.

Feb. 11 Tu The rulers of the city and the noble lie:
Republic 412b-421c (pp. 91-99)
Today you’ll have a chance to evaluate the course so far.

Political and psychological justice

What does it mean for a city to be just? What does it mean for a soul to be just?

- Feb. 13 Th Political justice and the parts of the soul:
Republic 432b-436b, 439c-441c (pp. 110-115, 118-121)
Handouts: first paper assignment;
guidelines for writing philosophy papers
- Feb. 18 Tu The psychological virtues: *Republic* 441c-445b (pp. 121-125)

Aristotle on virtue and the good life

How does Plato's greatest student develop Plato's concept of psychological justice?

- Feb. 20 Th The search for the good:
Nicomachean Ethics, in *The Good Life*, 1.1-1.3 (pp. 23-25)
Optional: editor's introduction, pp. 22-23
Handout: outline of our readings in Aristotle
- Feb. 25 Tu Common views about the good and happiness:
Nicomachean Ethics, pp. 25-28
First paper due.
- Feb. 27 Th The human function and happiness:
Nicomachean Ethics, pp. 29-top of 33
- March 4, 6 No class—Spring break
- March 11 Tu Virtue and how to get it:
Nicomachean Ethics 1.9, 2.1 (pp. 33-38)
- March 13 Th Virtue of character and the mean:
Nicomachean Ethics 2.2 (pp. 38-41)
An objection to Plato and Aristotle? Nietzsche, sec. 120
(*The Good Life*, p. 228)

Emerson on the good life

Is individualism part of psychological justice?

- March 18 Tu Against conformity and consistency:
Ralph Waldo Emerson, "Self-Reliance,"
in *The Good Life*, pp. 211-top of 219
Optional: editor's introduction, p. 211
- March 20 Th Following intuition:
Emerson, "Self-Reliance," pp. 219-226

The Giver: a glimpse of utopia
Which is better, safety or freedom?

March 25 Tu An ideal city?
The Giver through p. 87

March 27 Th Rebellng against the ideal city:
Finish *The Giver*

Radical politics: feminism and the family

What is the rationally best way for men, women and children to live together?

Apr. 1 Tu The first wave: *Republic* 449a-457c (pp. 127-136)

Apr. 3 Th The second wave: *Republic* 457c-464b (pp. 136-143)

Radical politics and philosophical enlightenment

What is philosophy? What does it study? Should philosophers be rulers?

Apr. 8 Tu The third wave: *Republic* 472a-480a (pp. 152-161)
Handout: second paper assignment

Apr. 10 Th The idea of the good: *Republic* 502c-511e (pp. 182-192)

Apr. 15 Tu The allegory of the cave: *Republic* 514a-521c (pp. 193-200)

Apr. 17 Th No class—Easter vacation

Apr. 22 Tu Dialectic and the founding of the city:
Republic 532a-534e, 538c-541b (pp. 211-214, 217-220)
Second paper due.
Handout: study questions for the final

Injustice and its effects

What are political and psychological injustice? Why are they bad?

Apr. 24 Th Democracy:
Republic 543a-545c, 557a-558c (pp. 221-223, 235-236)

Apr. 29 Tu The tyrannic soul: *Republic* 571a-580c, 588b-592b
(pp. 251-261, 270-275)

May 1 Th The wages of justice and injustice:
Republic 611b-621d (pp. 295-303)
Review session for the final; course evaluations.
Please look over the study questions for the final.

May 8 Th **Final exam**, 8:30-10:20, in our regular classroom.