

# *Ethics: Virtue and After Virtue*

## Phil 20401

**Instructor:** David Squires

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**Office Hours/Location:** T 1pm-4pm or by appointment/Check Homepage

### *Course Description*

The aim of this course is to introduce you to a number of authors and topics in philosophical ethics. The primary focus of the course will be on *virtue ethics*, the dominant ethical tradition for much of western philosophy's long history. We will begin by tracing the concept of virtue through several important Platonic dialogues before investigating the ethical system of Aristotle presented in his *Nicomachean Ethics*. Toward the end of the course we will examine St. Thomas's adaptation of Aristotelian ethics as well as Kantian and Nietzschean responses to ancient and medieval ethical traditions. We'll meet some real characters along the way—sly and sometimes ironic Socrates, victory-loving Glaucon, cynical Callicles, and sneering Thrasymachus—and we'll ask some real questions to boot. What is happiness and how does one achieve it? Is justice, and virtue generally, essential to human happiness, or is morality the greatest lie we've ever told—a charm, an incantation that we say over the best of our kind in order to tame them and, thereby, rob them of the happiness that is their due by nature. What exactly is a virtue, and can virtue be taught? Are all animals equal? All of this we will discuss, and a good deal more.

### *Required Texts*

Kant, Immanuel. *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*. Edited by Mary Gregor and Jens Timmermann. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012  
ISBN: 978-1107401068

Nietzsche, Friedrich. *On the Genealogy of Morals*, Edited by Robert C. Holub, translated by Michael A. Scarpitti. New York Penguin Books, 2014.  
ISBN: 9780141195377

Nietzsche, Friedrich. *Twilight of the Idols*, edited by Michael Tanner, translated by R. J. Hollingdale. New York: Penguin Books, 2003.  
ISBN: 9780140445145

*Plato: Complete Works*. Edited by John M. Cooper. Indianapolis/Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc.  
ISBN: 978-0872203495

Various other materials will be handed out via email—indicated below with a \*

## *Assignments and Academic Policies*

**Papers:** there will be two paper assignments over the course of the semester, either 2½ or 5 pages in length (I'll specify at the time). The papers are weighted equally (at 25% each). Papers are graded for substance (i.e. understanding the prompt, answering the prompt completely, producing good arguments, etc.), as well as for the quality of writing (i.e. grammar, usage, organization, style, etc.). For the sake of fairness, do not exceed the length limit. You should not need to make use of outside sources. Papers are due at the beginning of class, in hard copy, on the Thursday of the week that they are due. **Late papers will be penalized.**

**Participation:** There are two independent participation assignments each worth 25% of the final grade—viz. **1) Discussion Participation** and **2) Reading Participation**. Participation points are not free points, so read these two sections carefully.

**Discussion Participation:** This participation assignment measures your engagement in terms of philosophical discussion. The best scores will go to students who show a sustained pattern of thoughtful contribution and questioning *in class*, especially if that contribution demonstrates that you have read the assigned material diligently. This can take the form of asking questions to me or other students, answering questions that I ask you by offering your interpretation of a text, producing or analyzing arguments, comparing different texts, etc. You must bring to class the text we are reading each day. If the assignment is from an electronic text that I distribute, you should print it out and bring it to class. You can also earn Discussion Participation points by responding to The Chain (described below) with intelligent questions or commentary. Class attendance is an essential part of Discussion Participation. Only university required absences will be excused—i.e. those described in this policy:

<http://studenthandbook.nd.edu/academic/absence/> Multiple unexcused absences will result in significant Discussion Participation penalties. Lastly, you must see me at least once in person at my office hours to discuss the grade you received on your first paper. This applies to everyone and the point of it is to have an opportunity to provide the best feedback about how to approach the second paper.

**Reading Participation:** This participation assignment measures your engagement with the assigned readings. You are expected to read all of the assigned texts carefully and completely. As few as four times this semester or as many as each class period, I will give you a quiz question(s) that you must answer in a short period of time. Your Reading Participation score will be based on your answers to these quizzes, which will receive standard letter grades. If you've done the reading carefully and completely you should not have too difficult a time offering good answers to the questions you'll be asked. These quizzes are not designed to test philosophical expertise, so much as whether you are doing the readings and understanding them at a basic level. If I get the impression that the readings are not getting done or that they are being read sloppily, I will assign more of these quizzes to ensure that it gets done and done well, so come ready to have engaging discussions with both me and your classmates and we'll keep the busy work to a minimum. In general, think of the readings and class participation as an act of citizenship, through which each individual and the collective body is responsible for the class experience.

**“The Chain”:** You are shackled to taking a second philosophy course, so it is fitting that in that course there should be something called “The Chain”! Luckily for you, this chain is not only harmless, but helpful. The Chain is a string of emails that I’ll send you throughout the semester (chained together so as not to gum up your inbox—hence the name). Each email in The Chain will have three parts—1) the Afterthought: a brief summary of the latest reading, which should be very handy when it comes time to review ideas before writing a paper, 2) the Forethought: a few guiding comments or questions for the next reading, and 3) a Funny Thought: a place for me to post philosophical memes, videos, articles, and, in all likelihood, pictures of my cat, Alice. If there are readings to be handed out, they will be attached to The Chain. Reading/viewing The Chain is entirely optional, but reading the attached assignments is not optional. If you find yourself struggling with the readings, consider at least reading the Forethought.

**Summary:** Each of the papers counts for 25% of your grade, Discussion Participation 25%, and Reading Participation 25%. **Rubric:** A: 93%, A-: 90%, B+: 87%, B: 83%, B-: 80%, C+: 77%, C: 73%, C-: 70%, D+: 67%, D: 63%, D-: 60%

**Disabilities:** The university’s policies regarding disabilities can be found at: <https://dulac.nd.edu/academic/disabilities/> Information concerning Sara Bea Disability Services can be found at: <http://sarabeadisabilityservices.nd.edu/>

**Academic Integrity:** Do not cheat! This includes plagiarism of any variety, including having others do your work for you or merely syntactically or terminologically altering the work of others (e.g. plugging in a few different words into a paragraph written by someone else). If you are not sure what constitutes plagiarism, consult this helpful guide: <http://philosophy.nd.edu/assets/77703/plagiarism.pdf>

**Laptop and Mobile Device Policy:** Laptops and Mobile devices should not be used during class. The results are in: scientific studies show that screens mean less glean. Science giveth the iPhone X Plus and science taketh it away!

## *Schedule:*

### **Week 1: Introduction; What is Virtue and Can It Be Taught?**

Class 1 (8/22) Introduction

Class 2 (8/24) Plato: *Meno*

### **Week 2: Rhetoric and Philosophy; *Nomos* and *Phusis***

Class 3 (8/29) Plato: *Gorgias* 447a-481b

Class 4 (8/31) Plato: *Gorgias* 481b-499b

### **Week 3: *Nomos* and *Phusis* Cont.; Is Justice the Advantage of the Stronger?**

Class 5 (9/5) Plato: *Gorgias* 499b-527e

Class 6 (9/7) Plato: *Republic* Book 1

**Week 4: A City in Words; Music, Poetry, Gymnastic**

Class 7 (9/12) Plato: *Republic* Book 2

Class 8 (9/14) Plato: *Republic* Book 3

**Week 5: Virtues of the City and the Soul; Male and Female, Philosophers As Kings**

Class 9 (9/19) Plato: *Republic* Book 4

Class 10 (9/21) Plato: *Republic* Book 5

**Week 6: Philosophers As Cranks; The Divided Line, The Cave, the Good Beyond Being**

Class 11 (9/26) Plato: *Republic* Book 6

Class 12 (9/28) Plato: *Republic* Book 7

**Week 7: The Good for Human Beings and the Science of the Good; Happiness Is an Activity**

Class 13 (10/3) Aristotle: *Nicomachean Ethics* Book 1, Chapters 1-6\*

Class 14 (10/5) Aristotle: *Nicomachean Ethics* Book 1, Chapters 7-13\*

**First paper due: (10/5)**

**Week 8: Virtue Is a State and a Mean; The Voluntary, Fortitude, Temperance**

Class 15 (10/10) Aristotle: *Nicomachean Ethics* Book 2\*

Class 16 (10/12) Aristotle: *Nicomachean Ethics* Book 3\*

**Mid-Term Break**

**Week 9: The Intellectual Virtues; Continenence, Incontinence, Virtue, Vice**

Class 17 (10/24) Aristotle: *Nicomachean Ethics* Book 6\*

Class 18 (10/26) Aristotle: *Nicomachean Ethics* Book 7\*

**Week 10: The Contemplative Life; The Distinctions among the Intellectual Virtues**

Class 19 (10/31) Aristotle: *Nicomachean Ethics* Book 10\*

Class 20 (11/2) St. Thomas: *Summa Theologiae* Part 1-2, Q. 55 & 57\*

**Week 11: The Distinction Between the Intellectual Virtues and the Moral Virtues; The Relation of the Moral Virtues to the Passions**

Class 21 (11/7) Thomas: *Summa Theologiae* Part 1-2, Q. 58\*

Class 22 (11/9) St. Thomas: *Summa Theologiae* Part 1-2, Q. 59\*

**Week 12: The Theological Virtues; The Good Will**

Class 23 (11/14) St. Thomas: *Summa Theologiae* Part 1-2, Q. 62\*

Class 24 (11/16) Kant: *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals* I, Christine Korsgaard: "Kant's Formula of Universal Law" \*

**Week 13: The Categorical Imperative; The Problem of Socrates**

Class 25(11/21) Kant: *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals* II, G.E.M Anscombe: "Modern Moral Philosophy" \*

**Thanksgiving Break**

Class 26 (11/28) Nietzsche: *Twilight of the Idols* p. 29-57

**Week 14: “Good and Bad,” “Good and Evil”; Bad Conscience**

Class 27 (12/30) Nietzsche: *On the Genealogy of Morals I*

Class 28 (12/5) Nietzsche: *On the Genealogy of Morals II*

**Week 15: A Contemporary Ethicist**

Class 29 (12/7) Peter Singer: "All Animals are Equal"\*

**Second paper due: (by 5pm on the day of the final in hard copy in my Malloy mailbox)**