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PHL 110E.04: Introduction to Ethics

Patrick Maurice Burke

The University of Montana, patrick1.burke@umontana.edu

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Pat Burke
Spring 2012
Philosophy 110E-4

INTRODUCTION TO ETHICS

This course carefully examines the three major traditions of western ethics as expressed in the writings of Aristotle, Immanuel Kant and J.S. Mill. Each of these traditions gives an account of right action, the good life and the possibility of enduring happiness that has profoundly influenced the way in which we take up with ethical issues today. Throughout the course contemporary ethical issues will be discussed in light of these traditions with a particular emphasis on those issues surrounding our environmental crisis and global climate change. The strengths and possible inadequacies of each tradition will be discussed with the goal of enabling students to both understand the ethical arguments underlying controversial issues and express their own ethical convictions.

Texts:

Immanuel Kant, *Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals*, Translated by Lewis White Beck, Macmillan/ Library of Liberal Arts, 128 pp.

Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Translated by Martin Ostwald, (1962 Macmillan/Library of Liberal Arts), 316 pp.

Martin Seligman, *Authentic Happiness*, (2002 Free Press a Division of Simon and Schuster), 321 pp.

John Stuart Mill, *Utilitarianism*, (1979 Hackett Publishing), 63 pp.

James Welch, *Fools Crow*, (1986 Viking Penguin Books). 391pp.

Electronic reserve readings on environmental ethics.

Supplemental Readings on Reserve:

Steven Cahn, *Ethics: History, Theory and Contemporary Issues*, (2011 Oxford University Press). 992 pp.

Albert Borgmann, *Real American Ethics: Taking Responsibility For Our Country*, (2006, University of Chicago). 245 pp.

Readings: We will read the texts in the following order spending about three weeks each on Kant, Mill, Aristotle, Welch and the associated Seligman readings. I will announce in class the readings for each week.

Seligman, *Authentic Happiness*, chs. 1-4.

Kant, *Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals*, Sections 1 and 2.

Seligman, *Authentic Happiness*, chs. 5-7.
Mill, *Utilitarianism*, the entire essay.

Seligman, *Authentic Happiness*, chs. 8-10.
Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Books 1-5, Book 10.

Welch, *Fools Crow*, the whole book. (Don't wait until the end of the semester to read this one! It's the great Montana novel and an enjoyable book to read but is 390 pages long).

Requirements:

There will be ten 20-minute tests on Fridays. The first test will be on Friday, February 3rd. Each test will cover the prior 1-2 weeks of lecture and reading material and consist of: (A) three questions that test your basic understanding of the course content and are to be answered with brief responses of approximately 30 words each (B) a quotation from the readings which you are to carefully read and then identify the philosophical point that is being made in the quotation. Your answer should again be about 30 words in length. (C) An essay question that asks for *your* thoughtful response of 150-200 words to an ethical issue. The answers to the three questions in (A) will together be given a single letter grade. The answer to (B) will be graded either "P" (passing) or "U" (unsatisfactory). The answer to (C) will be graded "P", "U", or "E" (excellent). A "P" will raise the grade for part (A) by one step (e.g. B to B+); a "U" will lower it by one step (e.g. B to B-); an "E" will raise it by two steps (e.g. B to A-). The tests will be returned on the following Wednesday and you will be expected to pick them up on that day. There will be a 6-8 page paper due Monday of the last week of classes (April 30th). Possible paper topics will be handed out four weeks prior to the due date. The final exam will be on Monday, May 7th 3:20-5:20 p.m.. The final exam will include 9 course content questions drawn from previous weekly tests and 3 course content questions from the final two weeks of classes. The weekly tests, paper and final exam will be weighted as follows: weekly tests = 50%; paper = 25%; final exam = 25%. You can make up one missed weekly test without an excuse. You can also re-take one test and will receive the higher of your two grades. However, any additional make-up tests require (1) statement from your physician or the health service, (2) documented official university business, or (3) real hardship.

Discussion Section: There will be voluntary weekly discussion sections at times and locations to be determined. These will provide an opportunity to ask questions and engage in more extended discussion of the issues

Office Hours:

Pat Burke, Davidson Honors College 106: MWF 9-10:00 a.m. and by appointment.
Phone and messages: 529-6130. E-mail: Patrick1.Burke@umontana.edu

Please let me know if you have a disability so that we can make accommodations.