PHILOSOPHY OF LIFE – PHIL 1213 SECTIONS:
22552/22664/22668 SPRING 2019

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REQUIRED TEXTBOOKS: An Introduction to Moral Philosophy by Jonathan Wolff and Readings in Moral Philosophy by Jonathan Wolff

OVERVIEW: Philosophy, or the seeking of wisdom (Sophia) as taught and lived by the Ancient Greeks was a way of life. It was a constant striving to live an authentic, moral/ethical life with the goal of seeking and finding wisdom. In addition, the Ancient Greeks spoke and wrote about living the ‘good life’. This did not mean ‘keeping up with the Kardashians’ or acquiring vast sums of wealth, collecting fast cars and houses or even power. This goal of the ancient Greeks was about being (not merely acting as) a good – or moral/ethical person. But what does it mean to say that one is ‘moral’ or ‘ethical’? And what set of values and standards would one follow if a person were to strive to meet this goal? In this Philosophy of Life class we will attempt to come up with some answers to these questions. In addition, we will apply some ethical systems to specific ethical topics such as: Free Speech and Its Limits, Animal Rights, Terror and Torture, The Environment or Police Ethics. This first section could be entitled: A Moral Life.
The second section is entitled: A Meaningful Life. We will be reading about Socrates and his defense of his beliefs as recorded in the Apology of Socrates. We will also be reading three articles from contemporary philosophers about The Meaningful Of Life.

We will first cover this syllabus and then we will continue with a brief overview of philosophy and a lecture on How Philosophy Can Save The World based on the contemporary book, The Shallows by Nicholas Carr about the dangers of the internet in trying to live an authentic life in reality. We will then use our textbook to learn about the following ethical systems: Cultural Relativism, Utilitarianism, Deontology (Kant), Religion and Natural Law (Divine Command Theory and Natural Law Theory), and Virtue Ethics.

Whether we are learning about ethical systems, reading articles about animal rights or the defense of Socrates as well as applying the six ethical systems to the topics listed above, we will be using group and class discussions as we respond to questions to the readings. Students will be expected to use critical thinking skills and the ability to form coherent arguments.

Grades will be based on 13 assignments (the highest 10 figured into your grade) and your Final. Out of those 13 assignments there will be three (3) unannounced short quizzes (see below for details) over chapters covering the six (6) ethical systems but there will be no exams. Students will be assigned 9 chapters from the first textbook and the quizzes will be over those chapters. Additionally, there will be two papers 2-3 pgs. of text (see below for details) over two separate topics: Philosophy as a Way of Life and the other topic TBA in class.
The applied ethics portion of the class will consist of Ethics Bowl type debates (see below for details) with six groups of students chosen at the beginning of the semester. Each group will take a turn at presenting arguments based on readings from the second textbook, responding to those arguments and critiquing the other groups’ presentation. Forms will be provided for the critique portion. Students who are presenting will be given class time to present the author’s arguments (at least 3) and students who are responding will be given time to respond to those three arguments. The presenting group will then be able to give a short counter. ALL STUDENTS whether presenting, responding or critiquing will bring to class a typed paper copy consisting of three (3) arguments from the author of the assigned reading for that day and three (3) counter arguments from the student. These need only be in the form of bullet points. The professor will give the students credit (0/5/10) while the groups are prepping their presentation/response. The other 10 points will be added for participation based on the quality of presentation/response/group form critique. Groups should fully answer critiques and not just answer ‘no/yes’ for best participation scores.

Finally, there will be two (2) group papers at the end of each section: A Moral Life and A Meaningful Life. There will also be an opportunity for an extra credit assignment worth 10 points over Police Ethics or the Environment/Land Ethic.

All quizzes/assignments listed above will be graded and the lowest three papers will be dropped via algorithm on D2L gradebook.

The Final exam will be worth 100 points and there will be a choice of one of three types of final essays: a traditional essay 4-5 pgs. of text comparing two ethical systems; or a 4-5 pgs. of text apology/defense of your life (moral/meaning based on readings
from the semester) with an analysis of the Apology of Socrates; or a 5-10 minute video and 2 pgs. of text consisting of a definition of one ethical system. The video will be over your results and analysis of living one of the six ethical systems for three days.)

NOTE: The student must briefly meet in-class with the professor during Pre-Finals Week to have their ethical system and choice of final be pre-approved. Final Essays/Videos must be uploaded via PDF or WORD document (videos must be in a format the professor can access without downloading specific programs) to D2L AND be delivered to the professor’s office on a specified date/time frame TBA during Finals Week.

NOTE: We will NOT meet for a final day/time other than the drop off to the professor’s office TBA. Students must watch their emails for questions from the professor regarding their final through the Finals Week and until the correct grade is uploaded to SIS.

ACADEMIC FREEDOM: We will be covering several topics and some may be of a sensitive nature and/or controversial to some students. I strongly encourage students to have the freedom to express their beliefs and ideas – supported with reference material and examples – without any harassment or intolerance from other students. I am a strong supporter of academic freedom and I want all students to feel free and safe to communicate with one another. Should a topic or discussion in class cause discomfort for a student or if a student in a group is not comfortable with the behavior of the group (e.g. students not working on their assignments, others being intolerant or of a harassing nature) that student should notify the professor as soon as possible.

STUDENT CONDUCT: Students are expected to attend class, take notes when necessary, be attentive and thus aware of assignments.
NO electronic devices will be allowed on student’s desks during class. Phones should be on silent and students will not be allowed to use their phone, laptops, etc. Recordings of lectures are allowed. Incessant off topic talking while the instructor is talking or other students are talking in class discussions, lectures or presentations will not be tolerated.

ATTENDANCE: Students are expected to attend class. However, emergencies, sicknesses and appointments do occur. Therefore, students are expected to contact the professor (preferably in person) when they return for assignments/missed readings. Roll will be taken but absences will not affect your grade directly. However, missed classes could result in missed in-class points due to missed assignments/quizzes. There will NOT be an opportunity to make up these missed in-class assignments/quizzes. One of the two 2-3 pg. writing assignments is based on an in-class exercise and will NOT be allowed to be made up. Regarding the other 2-3 pg. writing assignment (Philosophy as a Way of Life) students will upload their papers to D2L and they will be given one (1) week to complete that assignment regardless of attendance.

ASSIGNMENTS: Unless otherwise noted by the instructor, the assignments must be typed. Hand written and/or assignments on laptops, email, etc. will not be given full credit and if the instructor is unable to read the student’s handwriting, it may not be graded. Exceptions would be for students with OSU approved disabilities.

THERE ARE NO LATE ASSIGNMENTS FOR THIS CLASS.

GRADING OF ASSIGNMENTS: Thirteen (13) assignments will be graded. The lowest three (3) scores will be dropped. All thirteen assignments for the course will be worth 20 points each.
QUIZZES: There will be three (3) unannounced quizzes based on the assigned chapters that cover six ethical systems. Each quiz will cover 1-3 chapters and will be worth 20 points. Quizzes will consist of T/F, multiple choice and short answer. Typically each quiz will have 4-5 questions. Quizzes may not be made up regardless of reason.

WRITING ASSIGNMENTS: Besides the Final, there will be two (2) essays assigned. One will cover the chapter, Philosophy as a Way of Life by John Hadot. The other essay will be explained and assigned in the latter half of the semester. Both essays will be 2-3 pages OF TEXT and will be uploaded to D2L.

GROUP ASSIGNMENTS: There will be two (2) group assignments wherein students will answer questions (one is a dilemma used in ethics the other will cover the Meaningful Life question) as a group. Upon completion of the first draft, one student in the group will upload the answers to D2L and the professor will approve the draft prior to the students leaving class. Students will be given an opportunity to revise the first draft prior to leaving class. If any student is not in agreement with their grade on the group assignment, they must contact the professor in person within one week after the assignment is graded.

EXTRA CREDIT ASSIGNMENT: (10 PTS/OPTIONAL) Students will come to class with a list of ten (10) questions for ‘Officer Deb’ (aka the instructor) regarding police procedures, tactics, training and ethics. For those students who wish to obtain up to ten (10) bonus points, they must read the chapter (exact pages will be given approximately one week prior by the professor) on police ethics (provided on D2L) and the article on Sheep Dogs (by
Lt. Col. Dave Grossman also on D2L). Students must reference both the chapter and the article for at least five (5) of the questions and submit them via D2L by the day/time stated by the professor. To obtain the possible 10 bonus points, students must also attend class on the day the EC assignment is due.

NOTE: The ‘Ofc Deb’ idea is a technique to separate the instructor from the students in a role-playing debate so that the students will feel freer to ask questions. The instructor has 15 years experience as a certified police officer and deputy sergeant with additional training and experience in riot and crowd control, high risk warrant service, jail administration, undercover narcotics operations and tactical operations.

FINAL ESSAY: (100 pts.) Students MUST have prior approval from the instructor for their choice of final and coverage of topic. Time will be given during Pre-Finals week for this approval process.

Essays should be double-spaced, 1 inch margins, 12 pt font with NEW COURIER or TIMES NEW ROMAN. In addition to uploading the final assignment to D2L, students will bring to the professor’s office their paper copy of the final essay (and flash drive of video if applicable) on the day and time specified by the professor. Students who cannot meet the scheduled deadline must notify the instructor or the instructor will have to issue a final grade based on the points prior to the final.

200 point (10 highest grades of 13 thought papers worth 20 pts)
100 points Final Essay
  10 points Extra Credit (optional) added to total at end of semester
300 points Total Grade Points


STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES: Students should direct the OSU Disabilities Office to send an email to the instructor regarding their disability. Students also are responsible to meet with the instructor before accommodation(s) may be arranged.

INCOMPLETE GRADES: Students may be eligible for an incomplete grade. Students should contact the instructor well before the final grade is due to see if they qualify.

PLAGAIRISM/CHEATING: The instructor will follow established OSU policies in regards to plagiarism/cheating. Neither will be tolerated and consequences may range from an F on a single assignment to an F for the class or even expulsion from the university.

EMAILS: STUDENTS ARE REQUIRED TO MAINTAIN A VALID EMAIL ADDRESS AND TO CHECK IT DAILY FOR ANY UPDATES OR INFORMATION FROM THE INSTRUCTOR.

THE INSTRUCTOR RESERVES THE RIGHT TO ALTER, REMOVE AND/OR REPLACE ANY PORTION OF THIS SYLLABUS AND MAY DO SO IN WRITING OR VERBALLY OR BOTH.

THE PROFESSOR WILL BE SPEAKING WITH STUDENTS AND ENGAGING THEM IN DISCUSSION ABOUT TOPICS
IN THE APPROVED TEXTBOOK(S) AND/OR ARTICLES AND CHAPTERS ON D2L. THE PROFESSOR WILL RARELY IF AT ALL GIVE HER OWN BELIEFS/OPINIONS AND IF SHE Chooses TO DO SO WILL MAKE IT CLEAR THAT ANY STATEMENTS ARE HER OWN THOUGHTS. ALL OTHER STATEMENTS MADE BY THE PROFESSOR WILL BE EITHER THE BELIEFS/ARGUMENTS OF THE AUTHORS IN THE MATERIAL STATED IN THIS SYLLABUS AND AVAILABLE ON D2L AND YOUR OWN TEXTBOOKS OR THE BELIEFS/ARGUMENTS OF THE GENERAL PUBLIC. THESE STATEMENTS ARE MADE TO INSPIRE ACADEMIC DISCUSSION NOT TO UPSET ANY SPECIFIC STUDENT. THE BEST STATEMENT ON THIS SUBJECT IS FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO:

July 2012

Originally published on UChicago News

The University of Chicago is an institution fully committed to the creation of knowledge across the spectrum of disciplines and professions, firm in its belief that a culture of intense inquiry and informed argument generates lasting ideas, and that the members of its community have a responsibility both to challenge and to listen. Geoffrey R. Stone, Edward H. Levi Distinguished Service Professor of Law and former Provost of the University, captures this ethos in his July 2012 statement of the aspirations of the University of Chicago:

Eighty years ago, a student organization at the University of Chicago invited William Z. Foster, the Communist Party’s candidate for President, to lecture on campus. This triggered a storm of protest from critics both on and off campus. To those who condemned the University for allowing the event, University President Robert M. Hutchins responded that “our students . . .


should have freedom to discuss any problem that presents itself.” He insisted that the “cure” for ideas we oppose “lies through open discussion rather than through inhibition.” On a later occasion, Hutchins added that “free inquiry is indispensable to the good life, that universities exist for the sake of such inquiry, [and] that without it they cease to be universities.”

This incident captures both the spirit and the promise of the University of Chicago. Because the University is committed to free and open inquiry in all matters, it guarantees all members of the University community the broadest possible latitude to speak, write, listen, challenge and learn. Except insofar as limitations on that freedom are necessary to the functioning of the University, the University of Chicago fully respects and supports the freedom of all students, faculty and staff “to discuss any problem that presents itself,” free of interference.

This is not to say that this freedom is absolute. In narrowly-defined circumstances, the University may properly restrict expression, for example, that violates the law, is threatening, harassing, or defamatory, or invades substantial privacy or confidentiality interests. Moreover, the University may reasonably regulate the time, place and manner of expression to ensure that it does not disrupt the ordinary activities of the University. Fundamentally, however, the University is committed to the principle that it may not restrict debate or deliberation because the ideas put forth are thought to be offensive, unwise, immoral, or wrong-headed. It is for the members of the University community to make those judgments for themselves.

As a corollary to this commitment, members of the University community must also act in conformity with this principle. Although faculty, students and staff are free to criticize, contest and
condemn the views expressed on campus, they may not obstruct, disrupt, or otherwise interfere with the freedom of others to express views they reject or even loathe.

For members of the University community, as for the University itself, the proper response to ideas they find offensive, unwarranted and dangerous is not interference, obstruction, or suppression. It is, instead, to engage in robust counter-speech that challenges the merits of those ideas and exposes them for what they are. To this end, the University has a solemn responsibility not only to promote a lively and fearless freedom of debate and deliberation, but also to protect that freedom when others attempt to restrict it.

As Robert M. Hutchins observed, without a vibrant commitment to free and open inquiry, a university ceases to be a university. The University of Chicago’s long-standing commitment to this principle lies at the very core of the University’s greatness. (Bold mine)

CLASS SCHEDULE/READING LIST

A MORAL LIFE

WEEK ONE: Syllabus/Intro to Philosophy/How Philo can Save Humanity

WEEK TWO: Philosophy as a Way of Life (2-3 pg. assignment)

WEEK THREE: Ch. 1 Lecture and 6 groups assigned/Ch. 2 Cultural Relativism
WEEK FOUR: Ch. 8 UTILITARIANISM/Ch. 9 Challenges for Utilitarianism

WEEK FIVE: Ch. 10 Deontology: Kant/Ch. 11 Challenges for Kantian Ethics

WEEK SIX: Ch. 12 Virtue Ethics/Ch. 13 Challenges for Virtue Ethics

WEEK SEVEN: Ch. 7 Religion and Natural Law/Lecture Natural Law

WEEK EIGHT: In-Class Group Assignment – apply Train Dilemma to all 6 ethical systems/Police Ethics Extra Credit/Ofc. Deb Q&A

APPLIED ETHICS (Book #2)

WEEK NINE: Free Speech and Its Limits, pg. 252 Group Presentations/Response/Critiques

SPRING BREAK

WEEK TEN: Animal Rights pg. 426/ Group Presentations/Response/Critiques

WEEK ELEVEN: Terror and Torture, pg. 485/ Group Presentations/Response/Critiques
A MEANINGFUL LIFE

WEEK TWELVE:  Apology of Socrates/Socrates
Video/Philosophy As A Way of Life revisited/What is Water?

WEEK THIRTEEN:  Philosophy and the Meaning of Life by Robert Nozick*/The Meaning of Lives by Susan Wolf*/Groups
How do we live a meaningful life?

WEEK FOURTEEN:  Absurdity of Life Without God by William Lane Craig*.


WEEK FIFTEEN:  Pre-Finals Week – Final/Evals/Final essay topic/choice approvals

WEEK SIXTEEN:  Finals – upload to D2L/drop off to professor’s office TBA (choice of two days/2 hour blocks)