Ethics 105 – Fall 2009

Instructor: Eric Lambert
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Office: HH 202

Location: Dewey 310
Times: 8:30 – 10:20 am
Office hrs: TBA

Texts:
The Practice of Virtue: Classic and Contemporary Readings in Virtue Ethics, ed. Jennifer Welchman
The Classic Utilitarians: Bentham and Mill, ed. John Troyer (Hackett)
Blindness, Jose Saramago
Blackness Visible: Essays on Philosophy and Race, Charles W. Mills

Course description
The objective of Ethics 105 is to become conversant with various influential moral theories in Western philosophy. Students will be introduced to the concepts, arguments, and criticisms animating classical and contemporary theories, and will be encouraged to view such positions historically, with a view to continuities and contrasts. You will reflect on questions concerning the nature of virtue, obligation, and value; what makes actions “right” or “wrong”; and differing approaches to moral reasoning and the justification. A chief goal of the course is to develop the ability to analyze and evaluate these theories, in discussion as well as in your writing, and with regard both to primary texts and to their application to contemporary phenomena.

During the first four weeks of class we will survey the canonical moral theories of Virtue Ethics (Aristotle), Deontology (Kant), and Utilitarianism (Mill). After reading Blindness (Saramago), we will spend the remainder of the quarter examining the contributions of Critical Social Theory and Existentialism to contemporary moral thought. Developed shortly before WWII, these latter philosophical approaches distinctively illuminate themes that provide a background horizon to the course: namely, a self-consciously historical and intersubjective approach to ethics, which focuses especially on the import of relationality, social categories, and reciprocal recognition to moral theory.

Grading
25% final paper (8-10 pp.)
5% peer review of rough draft of final paper (typed, min. 3-5 pp.)
15% short essay assignment (4-6 pp.)
40% four (4) short papers (target length: 2 carefully written pages), worth 10% each
15% participation

Attendance
Attendance is required. Since there are only ten weeks per quarter, each class session matters. Three or more unexcused absences will result in 0.5 points being immediately subtracted from a student’s final grade (if your final grade is 2.75 and you have three unexcused absences, you will receive a 2.25). Lateness should also be avoided. Because tardiness is (usually very) disruptive, excessive lateness (e.g., two or more times arriving late) will result in one unexcused absence.

Late papers
Unless prior arrangements are made with the instructor, late papers will be marked down 0.25 points each day the paper is late. Late papers will not be penalized only if prior arrangements are made, appropriate documentation is provided, and the reasons comply with Kalamazoo College policy.

Academic Integrity
Per the Kalamazoo College Honor System: “The term "plagiarism" includes, but is not limited to, the use, by paraphrase or direct quotation, of the published or unpublished work of another person without full and clear acknowledgment. It also includes the unacknowledged use of materials prepared by another person or agency engaged in the selling of term papers or other academic materials.” Simply put, do not plagiarize. If you are not sure what plagiarism consists of, talk to me. Plagiarized work will result – at minimum – in a failing grade for that assignment or exam, and possibly in a failing grade for the course.

Schedule of readings
http://www.kzoo.edu/phil/E105.F09.syllabus.html
Week 1

Tues, Sep 22: Introduction


Week 2

Tues, Sep 29: Hume, *The Practice of Virtue*, 84-107

Thurs, Oct 1: Nietzsche, *The Practice of Virtue*, 112-133

Week 3


Week 4

Tues, Oct 13: Kant, *Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals*, 1-69

Thurs, Oct 15: Onora O’Neill, “Between Consenting Adults” (available on JSTOR)

Week 5

Tues, Oct 20: *Blindness*, Saramago: Discussion; transition to contemporary thinkers

Thurs, Oct 22: *Blindness*, Saramago: continued

Week 6

Tues, Oct 27: Hegel, “Master-Slave Dialectic” (available on marxists.org)
Amery, “Torture” (handout)


Week 7

Tues, Nov 3: Honneth, “Integrity and Disrespect” (JSTOR)
James, “The Moral Philosopher and the Moral Life” (JSTOR)


Week 8

Tues, Nov 10: Marcel, “The Ego and Its Relations to Others” (handout)
Thurs, Nov 12: de Beauvoir, “Freedom and Others” (available on marxists.org)

Week 9

Tues, Nov 17: Mills, “Revisionist Ontologies: Theorizing White Supremacy”

Week 10

Tues, Nov 24: Exchange and peer review of rough drafts of final paper

Due dates for papers:

   September 29 the first short paper (2-3 pp.) is due.
   October 8 the second short paper (2-3 pp.) is due.
   October 20 the third short paper (2-3 pp.) is due.
   November 3 the fourth short paper (2-3 pp.) is due.

   November 12 the short essay (4-6 pp.) is due.

Note: The final paper will be due Friday, December 4. Students are to deliver the final paper to Humphrey House 202, between 8:00-11:00 am.