

Doane College
Summer 2014

Introduction to Ethics

PRE-111 (3 Credits)

W 8:00AM-12:30PM

Instructor: Lee Tasey
Office Hours: Arranged
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Man I was mean but I'm changing my scene
And I'm doing the best that I can
I admit it's getting better
A little better all the time

"Getting Better" by The Beatles

Course Description: The word "philosophy" comes from two Greek words that mean "love of wisdom." Philosophers try to better understand G-d, the world, and human beings. The word "ethics" comes from a Greek word that means "character." Ethicists try to discover what behaviors are right and wrong as well as how best to live in the world.

Over the next eight weeks, we'll study the major ethical theories of Western philosophy; we'll also look at moral issues facing us today. Our guides through the ethical landscape will be the most influential thinkers in Western Civilization: Plato, Aristotle, Saint Thomas Aquinas, Immanuel Kant and John Stuart Mill, just to name a few. We'll be looking at questions such as "Is anything right or wrong?" and "Can there be morality without religion?" and "Why should I be moral?" and "What is the good life?"

Course Readings:

Allison, Jay and Dan Gediman. *This I Believe: The Personal Philosophies of Remarkable Men and Women*. Holt Paperbacks: 2007. ISBN: 0805086587

Feldman, Corey. *Coreyography*. St. Martin's Press: 2013. ISBN: 0312609337

Mustaine, Dave & Layden, Joe. *Mustaine: A Heavy Metal Memior*. Harper Collins: 2011. ISBN: 0061714402

Warburton, Nigel. *A Little History of Philosophy*. Yale University Press: 2011. ISBN: 0300152086

Course Goals:

to explore the major ethical theories from antiquity to the present (e.g. virtue theory, divine command theory, hedonism, deontology, utilitarianism, etc.)

to study a variety of contemporary moral issues and apply ethical theories to them

to help students see the complexity of moral issues

to think more carefully about the moral issues of our day

to develop your own moral point of view

to develop a tolerance for doubt and uncertainty

Course Requirements:

Attendance, Participation & Attentiveness (APA): *Attendance* is mandatory. The material we'll cover in class may not be found in the readings. *Participation* is expected. Learning to express your ideas orally is a huge part of a college education; it also makes discussion more interesting. *Attentiveness* is also expected. Students may use laptop computers for class notes only. Those who use a laptop for the Internet, email or video games will lose the privilege of using a laptop for the rest of the semester. Finally,

students who are disruptive in class (talking while the instructor is talking, sleeping, flirting, etc) will be asked to leave for the remainder of the class.

Note: If you'll miss more than two classes, do not enroll in this class. If you leave class early, you'll be counted as absent for the entire class. More than two absences will result in the grade of "F."

Philosophy & Ethics Journal: Every week students will write a one-page journal entry. The goal of keeping a journal is to reflect upon what you've learned in *A Little History of Philosophy*. The journal will help to develop your viewpoint on a number of philosophical issues and ethical theories. You are responsible for seven journal entries (one entry per week starting with Week 2). Journal entries should be one typed double-spaced page.

Personal Essay: The essay will be 3-5 pages and will explain your personal ethical philosophy. Our models for the personal essay will be the essays in *This I Believe* as well as *Mustaine* and *Coreyography*.

Note: The Philosophy and Ethics Journal should be stapled to the Personal Essay and submitted as a whole on the last day of class.

What to Expect:

Expect to be challenged. This class will challenge your most deeply held convictions. Get used to it. You won't grow as a human being unless you wrestle with points of view—religious, political, and ethical—in opposition to your own.

Expect to read and write. This isn't a "coasting" course. You must do the readings and come to class ready to discuss them. This will be a boring class if I'm the only one up here talking.

Expect to pay attention in class. Don't talk while the instructor is talking. Don't talk while a colleague is

talking. Raise your hand if you have a question and wait until you're called on to speak.

Expect to be in class and stay for the entire class.

Expect to be in class until at least 10:00AM.

If you arrive to class late, don't ask the person next to you what you've missed. Wait until the break or after class to ask this and related questions.

Expect the instructor to teach the class. Don't think you can teach the class. Many students enroll in the courses offered at Doane College. Expect to hear from all of those students.

Expect to keep all books, notebooks and pencils on your desk until class is over. Don't put them away early. Don't do anything that suggests class is over when it isn't; doing so will trigger the "off" switch and students will stop paying attention.

Expect to listen to the instructor and the guest speakers. Without listening, we can't access the lives, experiences and beliefs that are different from our own.

Expect to turn your cell phone off at the beginning of class—and keep it off.

Course Evaluation:

APA: 40%

Philosophy & Ethics Journal: 40%

Personal Philosophy & Ethics Essay 20%

Course Grading Scale

A+ 100-98

A 97-95

A- 94-90

B+ 89-87

B 86-83

B- 82-80

C+ 79-77
C 76-74
C- 73-70
D+ 69-67
D 66-64
D- 63-60

A Note on Plagiarism

All written work must be in your own words. Borrowing an author's words, sentences or thoughts without a citation is a crime. If I find you guilty of plagiarism, not only will you earn a free trip to the Dean's Office, you'll also fail the course. Play it safe—don't steal.

A Note on Courtesy

We live in the twenty-first century, not the Stone Age. Everyone should act civilized. When the instructor is talking, nobody talks. When you're talking, nobody else talks (including the instructor). And finally, if you disagree with someone, attack the person's argument, not the person.

Tentative Class Schedule

Week 1: What is Philosophy? What is Ethics?

Week 2: The Ancient World: Socrates, Plato, Aristotle &
Virtue Ethics

A Little History 1-21

This I Believe 1-140

You Tube: The Beatles "Getting Better"

Week 3: The Ancient World: Epicurus & Hedonism
Epictetus & Stoic Ethics

A Little History 22-33
This I Believe 141-240
You Tube: Kiss "Lick it Up"

Week 4: The Medieval World: Judaism, Christianity, Islam &
Divine Command Theory

A Little History 34-50, 69-75, 152-157
Mustaine 1-200
You Tube: Kenny Rogers "Coward of the County"

Week 5: The Renaissance & The Early Modern World:
Machiavelli & Might Makes Right
Thomas Hobbes & The Social
Contract

A Little History 51-61
Mustaine 200-400
You Tube: John Lennon "Imagine"

Week 6: The Modern World: Kant & Deontology
Bentham, Mill & Utilitarianism

A Little History 115-120, 138-144
Feldman: 1-144
You Tube: Pink "Respect"

Week 7: The Modern World: Darwin & Evolutionary Ethics

A Little History 145-151
Feldman: 145-288
This I Believe 272-273
You Tube: Survivor "Eye of the Tiger"

Week 8: The Modern World: Nietzsche, Sartre, Beauvior,
Caumus & Existentialist Ethics

A Little History 171-182, 196-201

You Tube: Radiohead "Creep"

Philosophy and Ethics Journal (seven entries) +

Personal Essay Due

