

PHIL 114  
The History of Ethics  
UC Davis (Fall Quarter 2020)  
M/W/F, 2:10 pm-3:00 pm  
Remote

**Instructor:** Dr. Tristan J. Rogers, Lecturer, Department of Philosophy

**Email:** [drtrogers@ucdavis.edu](mailto:drtrogers@ucdavis.edu)

**Zoom Personal Meeting Room ID:** 970 454 1076

**Office Hours:** By Appointment

**Website:** <http://www.tristanjrogers.com/>

Moral philosophy is a rich intellectual tradition. As the inheritors of this tradition, students of its history have an opportunity to gain a deeper understanding of ethics and the good life. But what is a good life? Is living a good life the same thing as living an ethical life? Is morality about fulfilling ethical duties? Or is morality fundamentally about producing good outcomes? These are some of the big questions raised in the history of ethics. In this course, we will discuss these (and other) questions by studying works by Plato, Aristotle, David Hume, Immanuel Kant, John Stuart Mill, and Friedrich Nietzsche. The course is divided into two parts. Part One focuses on ancient ethics and its central theme of living a good life in accordance with virtue. Part Two turns to modern ethics and its central project of rationally justifying morality. We will also consider Nietzsche's critique of traditional ethics.

**Catalogue Description:** Study of some classic texts from the history of philosophical writing on central problems of ethics, taking the form either of a survey or concentrated examination of selected historical figures. Readings from such philosophers as Aristotle, Butler, Hume, Kant, Mill.

**Required Texts (available in Bookstore or online):**

Plato, *Five Dialogues: Euthyphro, Apology, Crito, Meno, Phaedo*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Hackett)

Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Hackett)

David Hume, *Moral Philosophy* (Hackett)

Immanuel Kant, *Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals* (Hackett)

John Stuart Mill, *Utilitarianism*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Hackett)

All other texts will be available in PDF format on Canvas.

**Goals:**

1. Develop competence in philosophical language and literature on the history and transformations of ethical theories.
2. Develop written and oral communication skills as those are associated with argumentative writing and public speaking.
3. Develop close-reading and critical thinking skills in the study of philosophical texts.

**Assessment:**

5% - Participation

15% - Review Questions

20% - Two Short Papers

25% - Midterm

30% - Final Exam

**Late work policy:** As a rule, work will not be accepted late except in cases of documented emergency or illness. You may make a written petition in advance if you feel an exception is warranted.

**Course conduct:** You are expected to be respectful toward your fellow students and myself, during virtual Zoom lecture/discussion sessions. While per university policy, access to video is not required of students for Zoom sessions, it is my expectation that you will be fully present and participate appropriately, either voluntarily or when called on.

**Plagiarism:** Plagiarism is a violation of University policy and seriously undermines your integrity as a student. Penalties may be severe. It is your responsibility to understand the University’s plagiarism policy.

**Reasonable Accommodation:** Should any student need accommodation because of a disability, please let me know to discuss options.

---

Week	Dates	Topics	Readings/Assignments
<b>PART ONE: Ancient Ethics</b>			
Week One – Plato	Wed, Sept 30	The Tradition of Ancient Greek Ethics	Julia Annas, “The Happy Life, Ancient and Modern” (PDF)
	Fri, Oct 2	What is the Good?	<i>Euthyphro</i> (all)
Week Two – Plato	Mon, Oct 5	Wisdom and the Good Life	<i>Apology</i> , thru line 24b
	Wed, Oct 7	Virtue and the Good Life	Cont., 24b-end
	Fri, Oct 9	Justice and the Good Life	<i>Crito</i> (all)
Week Three – Aristotle	Mon, Oct 12	Happiness and the Human Telos	<i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> , Bk. I, Ch. 1-6
	Wed, Oct 14	Aristotle’s View of Happiness	<i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> , Bk. I, Ch. 7-13
	Fri, Oct 16	The Character of Virtue	<i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> , Bk. II, Ch. 1-5
	Sun, Oct 18	FIRST PAPER DUE	

Week Four – Aristotle	Mon, Oct 19	The Doctrine of the Mean	<i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> , Bk. II, Ch. 6-9
	Wed, Oct 21	Types of Friendship	<i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> , Bk. VIII, Ch. 1-6
	Fri, Oct 23	Is Friendship Necessary for Happiness?	<i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> , Bk. IX, Ch. 9-12
Week Five – Epicureanism, Stoicism, and Skepticism	Mon, Oct 26	Pleasure and the Good Life	Epicurus, “Letter to Menoeceus” (PDF)
	Wed, Oct 28	Is Happiness in Our Control?	Epictetus, <i>Enchiridion</i> (“Handbook”) (PDF)
	Fri, Oct 30	Is There a Skill of Living?	Selections from Sextus Empiricus
	Sun, Nov 1	MIDTERM DUE	
<b>PART TWO: Modern Ethics</b>			
Week Six – David Hume	Mon, Nov 2	Reason, Emotion, and Morality	<i>A Treatise of Human Nature</i> , Bk. III, Pt. 1, Sec. 1
	Wed, Nov 4	Morality and Sentiment	<i>Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals</i> , Sec. 1-2
	Fri, Nov 6	Artificial Virtues and the Utility of Justice	<i>A Treatise of Human Nature</i> , Bk. III, Pt. 2, Sec. 1; <i>Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals</i> , Sec. 3
Week Seven – Immanuel Kant	Mon, Nov 9	Introduction to Kant	<i>Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals</i> , Editor’s Intro, pp. v-xiii
	Wed, Nov 11	Veterans Day (No Class)	
	Fri, Nov 13	Reason and Morality	<i>Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals</i> , Preface and Section 1

Week Eight – Immanuel Kant	Mon, Nov 16	The Good Will	<i>Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals</i> , Section 2, pp. 19-24
	Wed, Nov 18	The Categorical Imperative	<i>Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals</i> , Section 2, pp. 24-30
	Fri, Nov 20	Moral Duties and the Kingdom of Ends	<i>Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals</i> , Section 2, pp. 30-44
	Sun, Nov 22	SECOND PAPER DUE	
Week Nine – John Stuart Mill	Mon, Nov 23	Introduction to Mill	<i>Utilitarianism</i> , Ch. 1
	Wed, Nov 25	Defining Utilitarianism	<i>Utilitarianism</i> , Ch. 2
	Fri, Nov 27	Thanksgiving Holiday (No Class)	
Week Ten – John Stuart Mill	Mon, Nov 30	The Principle of Utility	<i>Utilitarianism</i> , Ch. 3
	Wed, Dec 2	Proving the Principle	<i>Utilitarianism</i> , Ch. 4
	Fri, Dec 4	Utility and Justice	<i>Utilitarianism</i> , Ch. 5
Final Week – Friedrich Nietzsche	Mon, Dec 7	Critique of Ethics	Selection from <i>Beyond Good and Evil</i> (PDF)
	Wed, Dec 9	Master/Slave Morality	Selection from <i>On the Genealogy of Morals</i> (PDF)
	Fri, Dec 11	Review	
	Tues, Dec 15 6:00 pm	FINAL EXAM	