

Philosophy 102 *Enduring Questions: The Good and the Beautiful*

Western Kentucky University—May 2016

Online Course

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Course Meditation and Description:

If an evil and all-powerful genie told you that she was about to wipe a major figure in history out of existence, either Martin Luther King Jr. or Pablo Picasso, and you could choose which it would be, who would you pick? Why? Aren't they equally valuable? Aren't they equally good? What would be your justification for your choice? Would you pick Picasso for all of the beauty he has introduced to the world and his impact on Art? Or would you pick MLK since he helped and inspired so many oppressed people and effectively contributed to their social and political liberation? What's more important? Are they even important in the same way? Which do YOU value more, and why?

Value Theory is the part of philosophy that evaluates facts and principles in many spheres of human existence insofar as they contain standards of what is important. The majority of this course will be focused on one branch of value theory, moral philosophy, or *Ethics*. Ethics is the study of morality: its nature, origin, practice, principles, conflicts, justification, validity, and application. While the division is fuzzy and involves much overlap, Ethics is typically divided into three kinds: Applied, Normative, and Meta. Applied Ethics deals with instances of ethical dilemmas and concerns on a case-by-case basis. Normative Ethics searches for general theories that one can use and refer to when deliberating about how to live and act. Metaethics analyzes what we do when we do ethics; it asks questions like *what is goodness?* and *what are we doing when we make more judgments?*

Also part of Value Theory is Aesthetics, or the philosophy of art and beauty. In this course, we shall consider what it means to be beautiful and what it means to be art, whether these two are mutually inclusive, and whether there is a relationship or, perhaps even tension, between aesthetics and ethics. Specific questions might include: Is beauty in the eye of the beholder? Is something art because someone says so? Can there be something that is both art and ugly? Are all good things beautiful? Are all beautiful things good? What does it mean to value something as beautiful or to value it as good? Do we find ourselves choosing between satisfying our desires for beauty and our desires for the good? What is the right choice?

Throughout this course, we will be considering these questions and many more. Upon considering answers, we shall employ valid and sound argumentation techniques to determine which answers are most plausible and compelling. Most importantly, students will be encouraged to determine the plausibility of accounts for themselves as well as consider opposing views objectively and fairly.

Course Objectives:

Like PHIL 102's counterparts (PHIL 101 and PHIL 103) this course aims to teach students how to:

- Utilize basic formal elements, techniques, concepts, and vocabulary of philosophy, including the concepts and techniques of argumentation, philosophical theories, and core techniques and concepts of the interpretation of philosophical texts.
- Analyze and evaluate philosophical arguments, (including a demonstrated ability to distinguish between valid and fallacious reasoning and to identify common logical fallacies); identify reliable sources; and distinguish between different types of philosophical evidence.
- Express themselves logically and objectively in both analytic and argumentative writing.

In addition, specific goals of PHIL 102 include developing students' abilities to:

- Analyze and ponder answers to questions concerning how ethical and aesthetic value have evolved over time and have been fundamentally connected to philosophers' historical and cultural circumstances.
- Evaluate the significance of human expression and experience in shaping larger social, cultural, and historical contexts, in particular how philosophical theories about ethics and aesthetics shape and impact larger social, cultural, and historical contexts and institutions.
- Evaluate enduring and contemporary issues of human experience, including both (i) how changing cultural and social factors influence current philosophical debates about ethics and aesthetics and (ii) how to engage with current philosophical debates about ethics and aesthetics in students' own cultural traditions.
- Effectively express beliefs, commitments, and practices related to ethical and aesthetic themes in speech and writing.
- Recognize, understand, and appreciate reasoned expression of alternative ethical and aesthetic views (e.g., not the student's own) in speech and writing.

Required Texts:

--Many short readings provided electronically through the course Blackboard site.

Recommended Texts:

--Articles found on the [Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy](http://www.iep.utm.edu) (www.iep.utm.edu) or the [Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy](http://plato.stanford.edu/) (http://plato.stanford.edu/).

Course Requirements

Online Quizzes	40%
Discussion (2 posts in one discussion)	10%
Paper	25%
Final Exam	25%

Online Quizzes

Students are expected to take several quizzes online by the specified due dates. The purpose of these quizzes (called “tests” by Blackboard) is to assess your comprehension and retention of what will surely prove to be an extensive and quick study of many philosophers and views. These tests may have T/F sections, fill-in answers, and, perhaps, short objective answers (i.e., not essays requiring the student’s own argument).

Students ARE PERMITTED to use their **personal notes, readings, my handouts, and my notes ONLY**. Students ARE FORBIDDEN from seeking/receiving assistance from other persons, the Internet, or any other resources. The quizzes will be timed, so students are encouraged to study prior to taking them as it will not be possible to perform well while searching through copious notes.

Students ARE ENCOURAGED to take notes of anything they might want to look up later while they are taking the quizzes (this includes taking note of the correct answers to particular questions).

Discussion

The first writing assignment consists of discussion board participation (2 parts). Every student must answer either the reflection question from Topic 1 or the reflection question from Topic 2.

Original posts should be at least 200 words long (use MS “word count” feature to ensure your contribution is sufficient). Be sure to incorporate both content from the reading and your own position backed up with reasons and argumentation.

Once the student has answered the question for him- or herself, the student must respond meaningfully and thoughtfully to at least one other student’s original post in that discussion. This response must be at least 75 words long.

Be sure to review Anton’s handout on how to write a successful discussion board post (on Blackboard under “Helpful Handouts”) prior to posting.

Paper

The paper will have both: 1) an exegetical component—a specific objective question about the material that should be thoroughly explained and 2) a reflective component that involves analysis of the student’s own life experiences and defense of the student’s own beliefs.

Each paper is a response to a *reflection question* of the student’s choice from *Topics 3-10*. Reflection questions can be found on the assignment sheet after each Topic (see below).

Instructions for Reflection Question Responses

Write an essay response between 750-1,250 words (approximately 3-4 pages double-spaced with 12 point Times New Roman Font and 1-inch margins all around). **750 words is a strict minimum length. Anything shorter will receive a grade of zero.**

Be sure to answer the question *completely and thoroughly*, but also concisely. Make each word count. Write as though your reader is unfamiliar with the materials. Be sure to present the course content clearly and in a formal voice (this is not an e-mail to the instructor). In addition to presenting the content, you will be expected to respond to it critically or reflectively.

Cite the texts in Chicago Humanities Style 16th edition with footnotes (word count does not include footnotes).

Be certain to cite both direct quotes as well as paraphrasing. Cite as specifically as possible; in other words, cite page numbers, page ranges if an idea is paraphrased from a section of text larger than a page, or chapters. Do not simply cite an entire manuscript unless what you are citing is the main idea expressed throughout.

Students are both permitted and encouraged to ask peers to review and critique their work before submitting it. For example, working with a writing tutor is perfectly fine.

Final Exam:

The final exam will follow the same format as the quizzes, except for the fact that this test will be considerably longer and cover all of the course content.

Students are NOT permitted the use of any resources beyond their own memory and cognitive capacities. No notes, no texts, no help from friends, and definitely no web searches.

Graded Assignment Advice:

- Know deadlines and be prepared to meet them.
- Abide by rules of academic honesty at all times. Plagiarism is an offense punishable by an F for the entire course.
- Sharing study tips/information before an exam IS PERMITTED AND ENCOURAGED. No reliance on such materials during the exam is allowed.
- Be sure to review the “How to Write a Philosophy Paper” presentation. Grammar counts. Paragraph organization counts. Sentences should relate to surrounding sentences. A thesis is often (though not always) required.

Course Policies:

Please see the document, “Anton’s Course Policies” for further information (available on Blackboard or by request). This document is an appendix to the syllabus and is, therefore, equally binding. This syllabus (as well as reading lists and assignments lists) is subject to change at the discretion of the instructor at any time.

Finally...*Enjoy the class!* ☺

COURSE SCHEDULE

PHIL 102 "Enduring Questions: *The Good and the Beautiful*" (3 week plan)

By Friday of the **Week 1**, students should complete everything in the following modules:

- Ethics in General
- Aesthetics in General
- Plato-Sun, Line, Cave

✚ **Original Discussion Post:** is due Wednesday by midnight.

✚ **Response Discussion Post:** is due Thursday by midnight.

✚ **Quiz:** "Ethics and Aesthetics" is due Friday by midnight. Students are allowed to use approved resources only (see "Online Quizzes" in syllabus).

By Friday of **Week 2**, students should complete everything in the following modules:

- Plato-Mimesis
- Aristotle-Mimesis
- Bell-Formalism
- Collingwood-Expressivism
- Family Resemblance (especially Wittgenstein and Weitz)

✚ **Quiz:** "Plato and Aristotle" is due Thursday before midnight. Students are allowed to use approved resources only (see "Online Quizzes" in syllabus).

✚ **Quiz:** "The Art Question" is due Friday by midnight. Students are allowed to use approved resources only (see "Online Quizzes" in syllabus).

By Friday of **Week 3**, all modules must be completed, including:

- Hedonism & the Good
- Kant
- Glaucon's Challenge
- Nietzsche
- Devereaux—Beauty & Evil
- Susan Wolf—Moral Saints

✚ **Quiz:** "Kant" is due Wednesday before midnight. Students are allowed to use approved resources only (see "Online Quizzes" in syllabus).

✚ **Quiz:** "Glaucon's Challenge and Nietzsche's Genealogy of Morals" is due Thursday before midnight. Students are allowed to use approved resources only (see "Online Quizzes" in syllabus).

✚ **Cumulative test:** must be completed before midnight CST, Friday. Students are NOT permitted to use notes (or any other resources) during this exam.

✚ **Paper:** The paper must be submitted before midnight CST, Friday. This may be submitted earlier.

Topic Modules and Reflection Questions

Topic 1. Ethics in General

Readings: James Feiser's "Ethics"

Reflection Question: With which ethical rules or principles did you identify in the Feiser article? Are these consistent? Were you surprised to learn of your ethical alignments? Were there any ethical principles not discussed that you think should be considered?

Topic 2. Aesthetics in General

Readings: Barry Hartley Slater's "Aesthetics"

Online Quiz: Ethics and Aesthetics

Reflection Question: What makes something beautiful? What makes something ugly? Is it really a matter of opinion? Even if you think that aesthetics is a matter of opinion, how can we account for widespread agreement? Finally, do you think something's ethical value can affect its aesthetic value? Why or why not?

Topic 3. Plato's Theory of Forms—Sun, Line, and Cave

Readings: *The analogy of the sun*, from Plato's Republic, BK VI

The analogy of the divided line, from Plato's Republic, BK VI

The allegory of the cave, from Plato's Republic, BK VII

Online Lecture: Plato's Divided Line

YouTube videos: Plato's Cave analogy

Reflection Question: What is the meaning of the allegory of the cave? What does each part represent? Can you think of a time in your life when you emerged from a "cave of ignorance"? How does each part of your experience represent the freed prisoner's journey out of and back into the cave?

Topic 4. Mimetic Art

Readings: From Plato's Republic, end of BK II

From Plato's Republic, selection from BK X

From Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics

From Aristotle's Poetics (*skip chapters 7-8, and 10; read other sections carefully*)

Online Lectures: Aristotle's Ethics in General

Plato and Aristotle's Mimetic Views of Art

Online Quiz: Plato and Aristotle

Reflection Question: What is mimetic art? Does it have a place in a JUST society? Ought art to be regulated? If not regulated, do artists have a moral obligation to present the truth? What is art good for anyway? Finally, what do your answers to the above questions suggest about your views about censorship and personal and political corruption in general?

Topic 5. What is Art? Contemporary Answers

Readings: From Nigel Warburton's The Art Question, "Chapter 1: Significant Form"

From Nigel Warburton's The Art Question, "Chapter 2: Expression of Emotion"

From Nigel Warburton's The Art Question, "Chapter 3: Family Resemblance"

Online Lectures: Clive Bell

R. G. Collingwood

Wittgenstein and Weitz

Online Quiz: The Art Question.

Reflection Question: How do Bell, Collingwood, and Weitz each answer the art question?

What is art for each of them and why? What does not count as art according to each and why?

Which view is more compelling and why? Be sure to discuss both problematic implications of each person's view as well as positive ones.

Topic 6. What is Good? Hedonism and Its Enemies

Readings: From Plato's Gorgias (excerpt on "Leaky Jars")

Robert Nozick's "The Experience Machine"

From Thomas Hurka's "Moore's Moral Philosophy," G. E. Moore's *Open Question Argument*

Online Lectures: Bentham's Utilitarianism

Moore's Open Question Argument

Reflection Question: Is the pursuit of pleasure really the good life? Are all pleasures the same?

Do all pleasures require a need or lack in order to exist by fulfilling it? Is *Pleonexia*, or the Greek term for unrelenting pursuit of pleasure, a good thing or a bad thing? Finally, what are Moore's Open Question Argument and Nozick's Experience Machine example and what do they have to do with answering the previous questions? What is your assessment of Moore's Argument? If given the chance, would you "plug in" to Nozick's Experience machine? Why or why not?

Topic 7. Right Reasons: Rational Deontology and Morality without Exception

Readings: From Immanuel Kant's Groundwork for a Metaphysics of Morals

Immanuel Kant's "Letter on a Supposed Right to Lie from Philanthropic Concerns"

Online Lecture: Kant's Ethics

Reflection Question: What is Kant's point in his letter on lying? What is the force of the counterexample explained by Benjamin Constant? Is Kant's reply satisfactory? Why or why not? Finally, in your opinion, are there any actions that we must never ever do under any circumstances? Provide reasons and arguments in favor of your response.

Topic 8. The Possibility of An Artificial Origin of Morality

Readings: From Plato's Republic, first half of Book II, *Glaucon's Challenge*

From Friedrich Nietzsche's Beyond Good and Evil

From Friedrich Nietzsche's Genealogy of Morals

(Recommended): Audrey Anton's "The Nietzschean Influence in *The Incredibles* and *The Sidekick Revolt*"

Online Lectures:

1. Republic II Types of Goods
2. Republic II Glaucon's Challenge

3. Republic II Truly Just and Truly Unjust
Nietzsche Lecture

Reflection Question: Is it possible that morality came about from a social contract? Can groups of people be tricked into entering a social contract? Are there any examples of people entering a social contract today? Are there any that suggest one or more parties will not benefit from the agreements made? How much do people want to exploit other people and what role does resentment play in the success or failure of inter-human exploitation?

Topic 9. Beauty and Evil

Readings: Mary Devereaux's "Beauty and Evil: The Case of Leni Reifenstahl's *Triumph of the Will*"

YouTube Video: *Triumph of the Will*

Online Quiz: Devereaux—Beauty and Evil

Reflection Question: What is Devereaux's main point of her article? What is (or can be) the relationship between beauty and evil? What is that relationship in the film, *Triumph of the Will*? How ought we to answer the autonomist/moralist question?

Topic 10. Moral and Aesthetic Value at Odds

Readings: Susan Wolf's, "Moral Saints"

Online Lecture: Moral Saints

Online Quiz: Moral Saints

Reflection Question: What is a moral saint? What are the different ways of being a moral saint that Wolf discusses? Why or why not try to become one? What does Wolf think? Is she right? Why or why not?