Philosophy 104
INTRODUCTION TO ETHICS AND MORAL JUDGMENT
FALL 2024

MTh 8:30am-9:45am
Room: HW505
Office hours: Th 10am-11am HW1447

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This course is an introduction to some of the central arguments in ethics. By the end of the course students will be able to: (1) identify key concepts, terms, and theories in moral philosophy; (2) summarize the central claims from the various texts reviewed in the course; and (3) critically assess the strengths and weaknesses of those claims. Students will also be encouraged to apply key concepts and debates in the history of moral philosophy to contemporary moral issues.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

1. You must complete *all* of the assigned readings prior to our scheduled meeting time. You should bring the assigned texts to class for reference.
2. Students are required to complete **2 exams** (midterm & final), **1 term paper**, and **1 group presentation**.
3. Class participation will be factored into the final grade.
4. **Attendance is required**. After three unexcused absences, each subsequent absence will result in the student's final grade being reduced. Excessive tardiness will count as an absence. **Excessive absences will lead to a failing final grade.**
5. Students must request in advance a makeup date if they are unable to attend any of the exams or submit their term paper on time. These requests will only be granted for exceptional reasons. If a student misses an exam without having notified the professor, he or she will fail the exam.
6. There is one required text for this course: *The Elements of Moral Philosophy*, 9th ed. (by James Rachels and Stuart Rachels; ISBN #: 978-1259914256). There are also several readings which will be made available either through ERes *or* Blackboard if not otherwise listed on this syllabus.
7. Papers will be submitted through safe assign on BB to check for plagiarism. If a student is caught plagiarizing, he or she will receive an F for the assignment and be reported to the college. If you are unsure what counts as plagiarism, please notify the professor.

The professor reserves the right to alter the syllabus during the semester.

Hunter College Policy on Academic Integrity: Hunter College regards acts of academic dishonesty (e.g., plagiarism, cheating on examinations, obtaining unfair advantage, and falsification of records and official documents) as serious offenses against the values of intellectual honesty. The College is committed to enforcing the CUNY Policy on Academic Integrity and will pursue cases of academic dishonesty according to the Hunter College Academic Integrity Procedures.

In addition to the normal restrictions on plagiarizing, you may not use any artificial intelligence to generate any material you submit to me – including Chat GPT. There are three reasons you should not use Chat GPT or any other AI for papers:

1. Part of your goal in this class is for you to learn how to think about these issues yourself and to be able to write your ideas clearly. To use an artificial intelligence program to do that defeats the entire purpose of this class and defeats the entire purpose of your education. In other words, by using AI you are cheating yourself.

2. I am prohibiting your use of it. Using AI to write or contribute to your essay would be an act of plagiarism that could have severe consequences for your time at Hunter and your subsequent career. I have available to me an AI detection tool that I have already tested and is quite good. I will not hesitate to use it if I suspect that a paper was generated by AI.

3. Finally, sometimes the AI is wrong and so it is not reliable to use.

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities: In compliance with the American Disability Act of 1990 (ADA) and with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Hunter College is committed to ensuring educational parity and accommodations for all students with documented disabilities and/or medical conditions. It is recommended that all students with documented disabilities (Emotional, Medical, Physical, and/or Learning) consult the Office of AccessABILITY, located in Room E1214B, to secure necessary academic accommodations. For further information and assistance, please call: (212) 772- 4857 or (212) 650-3230.

Hunter College Policy on Sexual Misconduct: In compliance with the CUNY Policy on Sexual Misconduct, Hunter College reaffirms the prohibition of any sexual misconduct, which includes sexual violence, domestic violence, sexual harassment, and gender-based harassment, and intimate relationships between Faculty (or staff) with students for who they have professional responsibility. In addition, CUNY prohibits retaliation against students, employees, or visitors, for reporting an incident or participating in an investigation. Students who have experienced any form of sexual misconduct on or off campus (including CUNY-sponsored trips and events) are entitled to the rights outlined in the Bill of Rights for Hunter College, which can be found on the Diversity & Compliance webpage on Hunter's website.

a. Sexual Violence: Students are strongly encouraged to immediately report the incident by calling 911, contacting NYPD Special Victims Division Hotline (646-610-7272) or their local police precinct, or contacting the College's Public Safety Office (212-772-4444).

b. All Other Forms of Sexual Misconduct: Students are also encouraged to contact the College's Title IX Campus Coordinator, Dean John Rose jtrose@hunter.cuny.edu or 212-650-3262) or Colleen Barry colleen.barry@hunter.cuny.edu or 212-772-4534) and seek complimentary services through the Counseling and Wellness Services Office, Hunter East 1123. To learn more, please view the CUNY Policy on Sexual Misconduct.

For further information please contact the Office for Diversity & Compliance or the Title IX Team at TitleIX@hunter.cuny.edu. More information can be found by visiting the Diversity and Compliance website.

FINAL GRADE:

Class Participation/Attendance: 20%
Midterm Exam: 20%
Term Paper: 20%
Group Presentation: 20%
Final Exam: 20%

SCHEDULE:

8/29 Course Introduction

9/2 *No class; Labor Day*

9/5 How to make a philosophical argument

9/9 What is morality? (Rachels, Chapter 1)

9/12 The challenge of cultural relativism (Rachels, Chapter 2)

9/16 Subjectivism in ethics (Rachels, Chapter 3); Does morality depend on religion? (Rachels, Chapter 4, pages 49-55); *Epperson v. Arkansas* (justia.com) and *Wisconsin v. Yoder* (justia.com – not tested on exam)

9/19 Ethical egoism (Rachels, Chapter 5)

9/23 Film viewing: *Wall Street*

9/26 Review session for Midterm Exam

9/30 **MIDTERM EXAM (ON BLACKBOARD)** before 11:59pm

10/3 *No class; Rosh Hashana*

10/7 The social contract theory (Rachels, Chapter 6); group project assignments and term paper topics assigned

10/10 Hobbes, Leviathan Part 1, Introduction; Chapters 13-14
http://www.earlymoderntexts.com/authors/hobbes

10/15 Rousseau, The Social Contract Book 1, Chapters 1-8; Book 2, Chapters 3-
http://www.earlymoderntexts.com/authors/rousseau

10/17 Rawls, A Theory of Justice (https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/rawls/ - Sections 2-4)

10/21 The utilitarian approach (Rachels, Chapter 7) and the debate over utilitarianism (Rachels, Chapter 8)

10/24 Kant and respect for persons (Rachels, Chapter 10)

10/28 How to write a philosophy paper

10/31 Are there absolute moral rules? (Rachels, Chapter 11)

11/4 Group Presentation Workshop (*Come to class prepared to plan your presentation with your group members*)

11/7 Virtue ethics (Rachels, Chapter 12); Aristotle, Nichomachean Ethics, Books I-X http://classics.mit.edu/Aristotle/nicomachaen.html

11/11 Guest speaker

11/14 Nathanson, "An Eye for an Eye" and Van den Haag, "The Ultimate Punishment: A Defense" ERes

11/18 Martin Luther King, Jr., "Letter from a Birmingham Jail"; *New York Times v. Sullivan* (justia.com)

Term Papers Due on Blackboard by 11:59pm on 11/19

11/21 Nagel, "Moral Luck" Eres; Singer, "Famine, Affluence, and Morality" ERes

11/25 *Brown v. Board of Education* (justia.com); *Obergefell v. Hodges* (justia.com)

11/28 *No class; Thanksgiving*

12/2 Group Project Presentations

12/5 Group Project Presentations (due date for individual presentation slides submission on Blackboard)

12/9 Final Exam Review

12/12 *No class; Reading Day*

FINAL EXAM 12/19 before 11:59pm (on Blackboard)