

Happiness, Virtue, and the Good Life

Fall 2010

12:30-2pm MW

Haverford College

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How do we form ourselves as moral beings? Is morality a natural expression of the human essence? Is morality an intrinsic part of human happiness? Or is morality an alien imposition on our animal instincts? Are moral laws bound up with divine commands? To what extent do moral laws reflect institutional demands for consistency and control, and to what extent does morality challenge social conventions? Is it possible to conceive of a good individual life without considering the complex relations through which individuals belong to and contend with one another? These are just some of the questions we will consider in this class, which surveys some of the classic texts and contemporary controversies surrounding the problem of how morality, happiness, and human flourishing might be connected.

Required Texts

Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*. Trans. J.A.K. Thomson. London: Penguin, 2003.

ISBN: 0140449493

Badiou, Alain. *Ethics: An Essay on the Understanding of Evil*. Trans. Peter Hallward.

London: Verso, 2002. ISBN: 1859844359

Foucault, Michel. *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction. Volume I*. Trans. Robert

Hurley. New York: Random House, 1990. ISBN: 0679724699

Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*. Trans. Mary Gregor. Cambridge:

Cambridge University Press, 1998. ISBN: 0521626951

Kierkegaard, Søren. *Fear and Trembling*. Trans. Alastair Hannay. New York:

Penguin, 1986. ISBN: 0140444491.

Mill, *Utilitarianism*. Indianapolis: Hackett, 2002. ISBN: 087220605X

Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morality*. Trans. Carol Diethe. Cambridge:

Cambridge University Press, 2006. ISBN: 052169163X

Plato, *Gorgias*. Trans. Chris Emlyn-Jones. New York: Penguin, 2004. ISBN:

0140449043

Course Requirements

Readings in advance of discussion; two essays ; discussion leadership.

Schedule

8/30 Introductions

Pagan Virtues and Religious Passions

9/1 Plato, *Gorgias*

9/6 Plato, *Gorgias*

9/8 Plato, *Gorgias*

9/13 Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Books 1-3

9/15 Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Books 4-6

9/20 Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Books 7-8

9/22 Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Books 9-10

9/27 Augustine, *City of God*, Book XIV

9/29 Augustine, *City of God*, Book XIV **TAKE-HOME EXAM DISTRUBUTED**

Two Modern Visions

10/4 Kant, *Groundwork* **TAKE-HOME EXAM DUE**

10/6 Kant, *Groundwork*

Fall Break

10/18 Kant, *Groundwork*

10/20 Mill, *Utilitarianism*

10/25 Mill, *Utilitarianism*

Virtue as Power

10/27 Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals*

11/1 Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals* **SHORT ESSAY DUE**

11/3 Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals*

11/8 Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals*

11/10 Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction* (Vol. 1)

11/15 Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction* (Vol 1)

Ethics and the Problem of Transcendence

11/17 Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling*

11/22 Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling*

Thanksgiving Break

11/29 Badiou, *Ethics*, pp. 1-29

12/1 Badiou, *Ethics*, pp. 20-57

12/6 Badiou, *Ethics*, pp. 58-90

12/8 Conclusions

12/13-12/17 Finals Week **Term Paper Due**

Assignment Structure

Reading

Readings are to be completed in advance of discussion. Secondary literature will be available on reserve for those wishing to investigate further.

Mid-Term Exam

There will be a take-home essay exam covering Plato, Aristotle, and Augustine

Essays

There will be two essays for this class, a shorter essay (5-6 pages) on Kant and Mill, and a longer essay (8-10 pages) on a topic to be determined in collaboration with the professor based on the readings from Nietzsche, Foucault, Kierkegaard, and Badiou.

Discussion Leadership [20% of grade]

Pairs of students will have the opportunity to lead a class discussion once in the term.