Origins of Western Morality
SPRING 2017
Meeting Time: M/Th 10:55 – 12:15
Meeting Location: CDL 109

Professor Kocar
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Office Location: Room 112 Loree Building
Office Hours: Th 9 – 10:30 or by appointment

Course Description
This course is an introduction to some of the most important ancient thinkers and writers in the Western Canon on morality. We will consider Jewish, Greco-Roman, and Christian intellectuals as they strove to articulate and defend their views on how best to live our lives. As we shall see, they often do not agree with one another. How do we account for why and how they disagree with one another? Are some moral arguments superior to others? And is it possible to evaluate the persuasive force of ethical claims, especially when they come into conflict with one another? Throughout this course, we shall repeatedly return to these questions as we survey the competing views of ancient moralists, with an eye towards both their historical contexts and their continued significance in modern ethical debates.

Plan for the Course
Each class will be organized around a particular theme and a primary or series of primary (ancient) readings in translation. We shall discuss together the major issues found in these readings. My hope is to have time in each session for active debate as we examine various topics throughout the course. This course will be divided into four major units. At the end of each of the first three units, you will have a 5 – 7 page paper due; these unit papers will address specific authors and questions from that unit. At the end of the term, you will submit a final paper, which will be a revised and extended version of one your unit papers. This final paper will be 10 – 12 pages long and should build upon your previous draft. To help with this process, we shall have a paper workshop during the final unit of the class; during this workshop, students will provide constructive criticisms on their peers’ previous drafts. There will also be a final exam that will be cumulative for the whole term.

Policies and Requirements
Attendance: You are expected to attend every. It will be difficult for you to complete the written assignments and perform well on the final exam if you do not attend class. I would be happy to discuss missed material in office hours provided that class was missed due to illness of some personal emergency.

Readings: The amount of reading varies from week to week. Try to plan ahead. The lectures and class discussion will be far less useful if the material has not been read beforehand.

Class Participation: Debate and disagreement are to be expected in class on morality. Ideally we will have opportunities to disagree and debate one another on issues as they arise throughout the course. I expect, however, that students will remain civil and collegial in their comments, questions, and debates.
Final Evaluation
Class participation (unannounced quizzes and discussion prep.) 30%
3 Unit Papers 30%
Final Paper 20%
Final Exam 20%

All written assignments will be penalized a grade for being late and another for every day after
that until they are handed in. No extensions without medical reasons or serious personal
disasters. Please do not email assignments without prior approval.

NB: Significant improvement and/or excellent class participation can lift the final grade
by up to 1/3 (e.g., from a B to a B+)

Required Textbooks and Readings
The New Oxford Annotated Bible

Sophocles’ Theban Plays

Plato, The Trial and Death of Socrates

Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics

Additional readings listed, marked with **, will be provided by the instructor online.

Tentative Schedule For Topics and Reading Assignments
Please Note: These are subject to change

Week 1:
January 19 – Introduction to the course

Week 2:
M January 23 – Moral Incommesurability

Unit 1: Moral Relativism and the Foundations of Morality

Th January 26 – Horrendous Evils
   Thucydides’ Melian Dialogue (5.84 – 116) **
   Deuteronomy 2 – 3; 20
   Livy 1.9 – 13 **

Week 3:
M January 30 – No Class Today
   Sophocles’ Oedipus
Week 4:
M February 6 – The Platonic Tradition
   Plato’s *Apology* and *Phaedo* (selections: Death scene)

Th February 9 – Aristotle and Virtue Ethics
   Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics*, Books 1 – 2

Week 5:
M February 13 – Divine Commandments
   Exodus 19 – 24
   Matthew 5 – 7
   Genesis 21 – 22
   Iliad Book 2 **

Unit 2: Meaning and Value – How do we recognize Good or Evil?

Th February 16 – Religion and Morality
   Plato’s *Euthyphro*

Paper #1 is due in Class

Week 6:
M February 20 – Creator: Good, Bad, or Neutral?
   Genesis 1 – 3
   John 1
   Gospel of Judas **
   Hesiod’s *Theogony* (selections)**

Th February 23: Creation: Good, Bad, or Neutral?
   Gospel of John
   Genesis 6 – 9
   1 Corinthians 15
   Recommended: CS Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (selections) **

Week 7:
M February 27: Vertical or Horizontal Orientation: Part 1 – Platonizing Christianity
   Hebrews
Th March 2: Vertical / Horizontal Part 2: The End-times
   Daniel 7 – 12
   1 Thessalonians 4 – 5
   Mark 13
   Gustavo Gutierrez, *A Theology of Liberation* (selections) **

**Week 8:**
M March 6: Heaven and Hell: Post-mortem Rewards and Punishments
   Psalm 141
   Genesis 42:35 – 38
   Isaiah 25 – 26
   Ezekiel 37
   Daniel 12:2
   Matthew 25
   Revelation 12 – 22 (focus on the final three chapters)

Th March 9: Anthropogony: Rationality and Morality
   Gen 1 – 3
   Romans 6 – 8
   Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book 3

*Paper #2 is due in Class*

**SPRING BREAK**

**Unit 3: Social Practices – How are we supposed to live?**

**Week 9:**
M March 20 – Family and Community
   Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* Books 8 – 9
   Philemon
   Ephesians 5 – 6

Th March 23: Social Ethics
   1 Corinthians
   Romans 12 – 15

**Week 10:**
M March 27 Marriage or Renunciation?
   1 Corinthians 7
   Paul and Thecla **
   1 and 2 Timothy
Th March 30: Violence and Martyrdom
   2 Maccabees 7
   Letter of Pliny to Trajan **
   Martyrdom of Polycarp **
   Celsus’ *On the True Doctrine* (selections) **

**Week 11:**
M April 3: Poverty and Justice
   Hosea
   Amos
   Matthew 5:3 – 12
   Luke 6:20 – 26
   James

Th April 6: Sin and Repentance
   Leviticus 16
   Psalm 32
   Jonah
   Matthew 3 – 4
   Hebrews 6:4 – 6; 10:26 – 31; 12:17

   **Paper #3 is due in class**

**Unit 4: What They’ve Left us**

**Week 12:**
M April 10: Gender and Sexuality
   Genesis 1 – 3
   Romans 16
   Galatians 3
   Thunder, Perfect Mind **

Th April 13: Just War and Violence
   G.E.M. Anscombe, “The Justice of the Present War Examined” **
   Paul Ramsey, “Justice in War” **
   Recommended: Reinhold Niebuhr, “Augustine and Christian Realism” **
**Week 13:**
M April 17: Politics and Justice: Can You Morally Dissent?

- Plato’s *Crito*
- Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics* 10.9
- Romans 13
- 1 Peter
- Revelation 16 – 19
- Review: Antigone

Th April 20: Writing Workshop

**Week 14:**
M April 24: Sin and Free Will: The Problem of Evil/Suffering

- Job
- Romans 9 – 11

Th April 27: Pluralism and Polyphonic Ethics

- Richard Rorty, “Religion in the Public Square” **
- Wayne Meeks, “Postscript” to his *The Origins of Christian Morality* **

**Week 15:**
M May 1: Review and Discussion

- Final paper due in Class

**Final Exam May 8th 8:00 AM**