

## **PHIL 119 – ETHICS (4 credits)**

### **Course Description**

The purpose of this course is to introduce students to, and give them a firm grounding in, the theoretical foundations of Ethics. From the Greeks to the twentieth century analytical movements, students will trace the differing treatment of concepts such as ‘good’, ‘the good’, ‘right’, ‘wrong’, ‘evil’, and the notion of justice. A large part of the course will emphasise the difference between Ethics and Metaethics and the practical consequences of their being such a difference.

### **Course Requirements**

Students are expected to be self-conscious in their pursuit of sources of information and knowledge for this course. It will be considered self-evident in this course that at a third level learning institution students need not be told to visit the library and seek out for themselves books and articles relating to subjects covered in class.

Students shall be required to submit a weekly report of at least two pages on the material they have been requested to read. Their understanding of this material will also be assessed during lectures. These reports will be considered part of the attendance and participation criteria for grading purposes. A specific research project must be completed during the semester. Students will submit an oral proposal outlining the subject they desire to cover, the reason for its relevance and significance and the sources from which it is proposed information will be used.

Two examinations will be set, both of which will be of one and a half hours duration and will be taken at the university.

Students must attend and participate in all classes. A record shall be kept of this and an appropriate proportion of the final grade made to reflect success and conscientiousness in this.

### **Required Text**

Moral Philosophy. Louis P. Pojman (Ed).

Please Note: Readings from the textbook will be assigned in advance depending on the level of the class and the speed at which the material is covered to the satisfaction of the instructor. During the semester handouts will also be distributed for the purposes of helping students in the collecting of a coherent set of notes on the subject, and where it is deemed relevant, academic papers and newspaper articles which help give practical perspective to an abstract or obscure notion.

### **Assessment**

First Mid-Term Exam	30%
Final Exam	30%
Research Project	30%
Attendance and Participation	10%

## **Approximate Schedule**

### *Weeks 1&2*

Introduction to class procedure, philosophic method and material to be covered.  
Ethics versus Metaethics.

### *Weeks 3&4*

General Introduction to Ethics. Ethics as branch of philosophy. “Right” and “Wrong” as concepts. Moral Relativism and Moral Objectivism. Morality and ‘selfishness’.  
Reference will be made to the following:  
Pojman: Introduction and Page 19.  
Herodotus: Custom Is King.  
Ruth Benedict: A Defence of Ethical Relativism  
Thomas Hobbes: Leviathan Chapter 13.  
Human Nature in Thomas Hobbes and Human Nature in Jean-Jacques Rousseau. The “savage” savage and the “noble one”.  
Mackie: Part One: The Subjectivity of Values  
Pages 15-48

### *Weeks 5&6*

Ethical Egoism.  
Ayn Rand: A defence of Ethical Egoism  
James Rachels: A critique of Ethical Egoism.  
The idea of ‘good’ v the idea of ‘the good’.  
Hedonism. Cyrenaic and Epicurean schools.  
Jeremy Bentham: Classical Hedonism.  
Friedrich Nietzsche: Beyond Good and Evil  
Plato: Republic 503e – 518b.  
Robert Nozick: The Experience Machine.

### *Weeks 7&8*

Utilitarianism.  
Act Utilitarianism  
Rule Utilitarianism  
John Stuart Mill  
Bernard Williams: A Critique of Utilitarianism  
Sterling Harwood: Eleven Objections to Utilitarianism.  
Mackie: Part II 6 1-7

### *Week 9 - End*

Virtue, Morality and Religion. The ‘beloved by the gods’ problem. Secular morality and ‘ethics’ without ‘religion’.  
Aristotle: Virtue Ethics.  
Alasdair MacIntyre: The Nature of the Virtues.  
Mackie Page 186  
Pojman: 247-249  
Plato: The Euthyphro Problem  
Bertrand Russell: A Free Man’s Worship.  
Kai Nielson: Ethics without Religion.  
Specific Ethical Issues.