Course Description and Objectives:

This course is an introduction to the philosophical study of ethics. Students will be introduced to the primary philosophical approaches to ethical questions and moral discourse, including Virtue Ethics, Deontology, Utilitarianism, and Natural Law Ethics. The focus of the course will be a close, critical study of great texts from the western philosophical tradition, including works from Aristotle, Hume, Kant, Mill, Nietzsche, Sartre, and Aquinas. Although the student will concentrate on understanding these philosophers in their historical context and on their own terms, various contemporary philosophers and scholars will also be read and discussed as a means for deepening the philosophical conversation and discerning the relevance of various philosophical approaches for contemporary ethical issues. This course partially fulfills the systematic philosophy area requirement for the Philosophy M.A. or Concurrent M.A. options. It also satisfies the philosophical ethics requirement of the Western Dominican Province’s Ratio Studiorum.

By the end of the semester, students should be able to explain the distinctive characteristics of the main philosophical approaches to ethics, and assess their relative strengths and weaknesses, particularly in their ability to provide satisfactory answers to contemporary moral debates. With a grounding in the philosophical principles of ethics, students will have the tools to enter more confidently into conversations on current ethical issues and critically engage these issues in their future studies and leadership.
More specifically, students should be able to:

- Clearly explain Aristotle’s account of *eudaimonia* and the nature of the good, his distinction between voluntary and involuntary acts, his definition of choice, and the role of the moral and intellectual virtues in Aristotle’s ethics.
- Briefly explain the “naturalistic fallacy” and its significance for ethics.
- List the three formulations of Kant’s Categorical Imperative and explain their significance for evaluating the morality of actions.
- Explain Mill’s Principle of Utility and its significance for contemporary ethical debate.
- Summarize Nietzsche’s critique of traditional morality, and describe the role that genealogy, *resentiment*, and bad conscience play in his account.
- Identify the main features of Natural Law Ethics, and describe the structure of human acts according to Aquinas.

**Course Format:**

Due to current restrictions and precautions necessitated by the continuing dangers of COVID-19, this course will be held in Hi-Flex, i.e., hybrid format, allowing students to attend the course in person (preferred) or remotely via Zoom, in cases where attending in person is not possible and the permission of the DSPT Academic Dean has been obtained. Please see below for details regarding course access and technology requirements for those participating remotely. Students enrolled in the course and attending remotely are expected to attend each class session and be present for class both audially and visually.

A 3-unit course requires, on average, a commitment of nine hours from students each week. Since this course is structured as a lecture and discussion, 100% of the course’s scheduled class time (Mondays and Thursdays, 8:10-9:30 AM) will be fulfilled by class meetings, attended either in person or remotely, in order to facilitate student interaction. The remaining six hours per week will be spent completing class readings and course assignments (see below).
Course Requirements:

Each class session will consist of both lecture and discussion. Students will be expected to carefully prepare assigned readings in order to actively participate in the conversation and raise thoughtful questions in class. These activities will foster student capacities for reading and analyzing philosophical texts, as well as for self-direction and collaborative learning (DSPT Institutional Goals A3 and B1). To aid in this preparation, for each class meeting students will be given several questions related to the reading (posted on Moodle), and asked to write a brief response to each (100-200 words per question). Responses should be submitted via Moodle, and be completed before the beginning of the respective class. *No credit will be given for late assignments.* Students are expected to be present for all class sessions, following the policies set forth in the DSPT Student Handbook. *Absences will significantly affect the student’s final grade.*

Students with disabilities or whose first language is not English are encouraged to speak with the instructor about any special needs they might have.

Students will be evaluated on the quality of their class participation and their understanding of class material as demonstrated by their bi-weekly questions, two short (6-8 page) analytic papers, and a final exam. These assignments are designed to help students develop their own critical thinking on moral issues and articulate their understanding of ethics both orally and in writing (DSPT Institutional Goals A3 and B1). Topics for the two short papers will be made available to students several weeks ahead of time. While these papers are not research papers, class texts and all other sources should be cited using proper “Turabian” format (see Kate L. Turabian, *A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations.* Eighth Edition. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2013). *Lack of proper citation in Turabian format will significantly affect the grade for each paper.* Students are asked to consult the DSPT Student Handbook and follow the DSPT’s policies regarding academic honesty and plagiarism. The papers are due **November 4 (Paper #1) and December 13 (Paper #2).** *Late papers will be accepted, but will be penalized 1/3 of a letter grade for each day late* (e.g., an “A” paper turned in one day late will receive an “A-.”)
Grading: Class Participation/Weekly Questions: 30%
   Papers (2): 15% each
   Final Exam: 40%

Assigned Texts:


Weekly reading assignments will be taken from these assigned texts and from readings posted on Moodle (http://moodle.gtu.edu). The *Summa Theologiae* of St. Thomas Aquinas can be found online (including, for example, at http://dhspriory.org/thomas/summa/FP.html).
E-Mail Protocol and Office Hours:

Please do not hesitate to contact me with questions or concerns via e-mail. While I will do my best to answer your e-mail quickly, please do not respect an immediate response. I typically respond to e-mails within 24 hours. If you send an e-mail over the weekend (Friday-Sunday), my response time may be a bit longer (24–72 hours). Office hours are available via appointment. The modality of office hours—whether in person or via Zoom—will vary depending on current COVID conditions and student and instructor needs.

Course Access and Technology Requirements:

Moodle and Zoom

- Much of the material for the course, including links for class sessions via Zoom, will be available through Moodle. Once registered, students automatically have access to the course Moodle page by logging into moodle.gtu.edu using their school e-mail and password. In Moodle, the course will appear in your Dashboard under Courses.
- If you are new to Moodle, please check out the instructional videos and documentation on the Moodle home page. It is recommended that you use either Google Chrome or Mozilla Firefox to access Moodle (Safari is not recommended).
- Students can use their smartphone to access Moodle. When accessing Moodle from a phone, it is recommended that you use an internet browser rather than the mobile app.

Technology Requirements and Support (for Remote Attendance)

- If attending remotely, students will need the following technology on hand to actively engage in the course and complete course requirements:
  - Computer, laptop, or tablet with an up-to-date operating system (Windows, Mac, Linux) and up-to-date internet browser (Chrome, Firefox)
  - High speed internet bandwidth (preferably 10 mbps or higher, but at least 3 mbps)
  - A webcam
  - A microphone
• If students experience any difficulties with Moodle or Zoom, they can contact Moodle support at moodle@gtu.edu, and will receive a response within 24 hours.

Course Schedule:

9/9: Course Introduction
    Cicero, selections from *De Officiis*, Book III (Class Handout)

9/13: Aristotle on Happiness
    Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book 1
    Julia Annas, *Intelligent Virtue*, Chapter 8

9/16: Aristotle on Virtue and Vice
    Julia Annas, *Intelligent Virtue*, Chapters 2-3

9/20: Aristotle: on the Moral Virtues
    Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Books 3.6—4
    Alasdair MacIntyre, selections from *After Virtue*

9/23: No Class

9/27: Aristotle on Justice and the Intellectual Virtues
    Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book 5-6
    Optional: Ronald Polansky, selections from “Giving Justice Its Due”

9/30: Aristotle on Pleasure and Contemplation
    Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Books 7 & 10
    Optional: Verity Harte, “The *Nicomachean Ethics* on Pleasure”
10/4: Social Contract Theory
   Hobbes, Selections from De Cive
   Rousseau, Selections from Discourse on Inequality

10/7: Hume's Moral Psychology
   David Hume, Treatise on Human Nature Book III, Section 1

10/11: Hume and the Naturalistic Fallacy
   Alastair MacIntyre, “Hume on ‘Is’ and ‘Ought’”
   Searle: “How to Derive ‘Ought’ from ‘Is’”
   Optional: MacBeth, "'Is' and 'Ought' in Context: MacIntyre's Mistakes"

10/14: Kant and the Ethics of Duty
   Immanuel Kant, Grounding of the Metaphysics of Morals I
   Optional: Christine Korsgaard, “Kant’s Analysis of Obligation: The Argument of
   Groundwork I”

10/18: The Categorical Imperative I
   Immanuel Kant, Grounding of the Metaphysics of Morals II

10/21: The Categorical Imperative II
   Immanuel Kant, Grounding of the Metaphysics of Morals III
   Optional: Thomas W. Pogge, “The Categorical Imperative”

10/25 & 10/28: No Class (Reading Week)

11/1: Utilitarianism I
   John Stuart Mill, Utilitarianism Chapters I-III
   Optional: West, “Mill and Utilitarianism in the Mid-Nineteenth Century”
11/4: Utilitarianism II
    John Stuart Mill, *Utilitarianism* Chapters IV-V
    *First Paper Due*

11/8: Contemporary Consequentialism
    Peter Singer, “The Singer Solution to World Poverty”
    and “What’s Wrong with Killing?”
    Robert Spaemann, selections from *Benevolence and Happiness*

11/11: Nietzsche’s Subversion of Morality I
    Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Genealogy of Morals*, First Essay
    Philippa Foot, “Nietzsche’s Immoralism”

11/15: Nietzsche’s Subversion of Morality II
    Maudemarie Clark, “Nietzsche’s Immoralism and the Concept of Morality”

11/18: Emotivism and Non-Cognitivist Approaches to Ethics
    Stevenson, “The Emotive Meaning of Ethical Terms”
    MacIntyre, selections from *After Virtue*

11/22: Existentialist Ethics
    Sartre, “Existentialism as a Humanism”

11/25: Thanksgiving (No Class)

11/29: Aquinas: Natural Law I
    Flannery O’Connor, “The Enduring Chill”
    Martin Luther King, Jr., “Letter from a Birmingham Jail”
    Jean Porter, selections from *The Recovery of Virtue*

12/2: No Class
12/6: Aquinas: Natural Law II
St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* I-II, qq. 90-97
Sokolowski, “What is Natural Law?”

12/9: Aquinas on the Structure of the Human Act
St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* I-II, qq. 6-9, 18
Ralph McInerny, *Ethica Thomistica*, Chapter 4

12/13: Aquinas on the Virtues
St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* I-II, qq. 55-56, 59, 61, 63-64
Josef Pieper, selections from *The Cardinal Virtues*

*Second Paper Due*

12/16: Final Exam Due by 5 PM

N.B.: The instructor reserves the right to revise the course syllabus as the need arises.

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**General Criteria for Grading of Papers and Essay Exams**

**A:** The student’s essay not only reflects a correct understanding of the subject matter, but also a depth of comprehension which sees the wider implications of ethical principles and theories. The writing is fluent, well-organized, without grammatical or syntactical errors, following the standards articulated in Kate Turabian’s *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses and Dissertations* (Eighth Edition).

**A-:** For work which, although still excellent, falls short of the above.
B+: The student has produced a paper demonstrating a correct grasp of the subject matter, and has expressed this articulately. The paper itself is free of grammatical and syntactical errors.

B: The student has correctly grasped the essence of the subject matter, although with a few errors, and has presented his or her understanding in an organized, articulate way.

B-: Although the work shows a fair understanding of the subject matter, there are multiple errors in content, or the student’s understanding has not been well expressed.

C+: Although the student’s work shows evidence of effort and some genuine understanding of the topic, there are more significant errors or omissions, or the expression results in difficulty determining the extent of the student’s understanding.

C: Serious errors or omissions show that the student has failed to grasp important aspects of the subject matter or make a fully coherent argument, or has expressed their argument in such a way as to leave serious difficulties in determining the paper’s position and the student’s understanding.

C-: The student’s paper exhibits very little understanding of the topic and is poorly expressed.

D: The work exhibits a lack of understanding of the topic and is poorly expressed.

F: The work fails to meet even the minimum standards of understanding and expression, or has not been turned in.
Additional Resources

The following is list of supplemental and suggested readings. They are by no means required reading for the course, but may be of some interest to students wishing to do additional research in the area of philosophical ethics.


-----. *The Disputed Questions on the Virtues (Quaestio Disputata de Virtutibus In Communi and Quaestio Disputata de Virtutibus Cardinalibus)*. Translated by Ralph McInerny. South Bend, IN: St. Augustine’s Press, 1999.


Cicero, Marcus Tullius. On Duties (*De Officiis*). Translated by Walter Miller. Volume 30 of


MacIntyre, Alasdair. *Ethics in the Conflict of Modernity: An Essay on Desire, Practical Reasoning,*


University Press, 2014.


## Appendix: Course & Curricular Outcomes Table

In the following table, each Course Outcome is listed, followed by course activities and/or assignments by which the Course Outcome is to be measured along with the DSPT Institutional Outcomes and Program Goals/Outcomes to which the Course contributes. The DSPT Institutional Goals and Program Goals/Outcomes are available on the following page.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course Outcome</th>
<th>Activities &amp;/or Assignments</th>
<th>Related Program and Institutional Goals/Outcomes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1. **Gain an understanding of the fundamental principles, arguments, and perspectives of the main approaches to philosophical ethics** | A. Class Participation  
B. Reading Assignments with Weekly Class Questions  
C. Synthesis Papers  
D. Final Exam | IG-A1-Integrative Thinking  
IG-A2-Intellectual Humility  
MAPhG2-Systematic Philosophy  
MAPhEG4-Integration of Knowledge  
MAPhTG4-Specialized Knowledge |
| 2. **Develop the ability to evaluate and assess the relative strengths, merits, weaknesses, and liabilities of various philosophical positions and ethical approaches** | A. Class Participation  
B. Reading Assignments with Weekly Class Questions  
C. Synthesis Papers  
D. Final Exam | IG-A1-Integrative Thinking  
IG-A2-Intellectual Humility  
MAPhG2-Systematic Philosophy  
MAPhEG4-Integration of Knowledge  
MAPhTG4-Specialized Knowledge |
| 3. **Develop a facility for reading, comprehending, and analyzing philosophical texts** | A. Class Participation  
B. Reading Assignments with Weekly Class Questions  
C. Synthesis Papers | IG-A1-Integrative Thinking  
IG-A2-Intellectual Humility  
IG-A3-Self-Direction  
MAPhG3-Research Skills |
| 4. **Gain a facility for expressing and articulating ethical insights and reasoned argument in the service of ethical discussion, both orally and in writing** | A. Class Participation  
B. Reading Assignments with Weekly Class Questions  
C. Synthesis Papers  
D. Final Exam | IG-A1-Integrative Thinking  
IG-A2-Intellectual Humility  
IG-A3-Self-Direction  
IG-B1-Ability to Collaborate  
MAPhEG4-Integration of Knowledge  
MAPhEG5-Communication Skills  
MAPhTG4-Specialized Knowledge  
MAPhTG5-Skills for Advanced Writing |
| 5. **Master basic skills in academic writing, including: synthesizing and fairly evaluating the thought of a philosophical work or thinker; analyzing philosophical concepts; articulating and developing arguments; and skillfully using and citing from primary sources** | C. Synthesis Papers | IG-A1-Integrative Thinking  
IG-A2-Intellectual Humility  
MAPhG3-Research Skills  
MAPhEG4-Integration of Knowledge  
MAPhEG5-Communication Skills  
MAPhTG5-Skills for Advanced Writing |
DSPT Institutional and Program Goals and Outcomes

DSPT Institutional Goals:

**Pedagogical Goal: Deep Learning.** Motivated by a thirst for truth, the disciplined inquirer is a life-long learner who recognizes fundamental principles in a given field of inquiry and applies them in creative or innovative ways to broader contemporary issues which are of importance to Church, the academy, and/or society. Disciplined inquiry includes the following characteristics:

A1. Integrative Thinking: the ability to recognize, understand, retain, integrate, and apply the fundamental principles operative in a field of inquiry, and use them to make synthetic judgments.

A2. Intellectual Humility: an orientation of mind and heart that fosters intellectual collaboration, precludes both rigidity and passivity of mind, and recognizes that contrary opinions are not a threat, but provide the opportunity to test and deepen one's own grasp of the truth.

A3. Self-Direction: the disposition to take primary responsibility for one's own education, manifested in a keen intellectual interest in the topic of studies, and the ability to teach oneself through a habit of skilled and responsible research and resilient exploration.

**Vocational Goal: Collaborative Leadership.** A collaborative leader inspires within others the desire to realize the common good by articulating to academy or society a coherent vision rooted in the mission of the Church, all the while leading by example.

B1. Ability to Collaborate: expressed in good listening and communication skills which foster decisions stemming from and leading to an open, transparent, and mutually enriching dialog with others in order that the gifts of all can be appropriately acknowledged and utilized.
Abbreviations: IGA1-Integrative Thinking, IGA2-Intellectual Humility, IGA3-Self-Direction, IGB1-Ability to Collaborate

MAPh – Exam Option: Goals
1. a comprehensive knowledge of the history of the Western philosophical tradition;
2. a detailed understanding of systematic philosophy;
3. skills for academic research;
4. an ability to integrate historical and systematic knowledge in a chosen area of interest;
5. skills for effective communication of philosophical ideas.

Abbreviations: MAPhEG1-knowledge of history of phil, MAPhEG2-understanding of systematic phil, MAPhEG3-research skills, MAPhEG4-integration of knowledge, MAPhEG5-communication skills

MAPh – Thesis Option: Goals
1. a comprehensive knowledge of the history of the Western philosophical tradition;
2. a detailed understanding of systematic philosophy;
3. skills for academic research;
4. a focused knowledge in one specific topic of philosophical inquiry;
5. skills for advanced academic writing and publication.

Abbreviations: MAPhTG1-knowledge of history of phil, MAPhTG2-understanding of systematic phil, MAPhTG3-research skills, MAPhTG4-specialized knowledge, MAPhTG5-skills for advanced writing