



WALSH UNIVERSITY
SCHOOL *for* PROFESSIONAL STUDIES

PHIL 203

Moral Philosophy

Assignment due the first night, see page 1

PHIL 203: MORAL PHILOSOPHY

Assignment for the First Night:

1. Read Brave New World
2. Read Chapters 1 & 2 in MacKinnon's Ethics: Theory & Practice

BOOKS:

Adler, Mortimer. Aristotle For Everybody.

MacKinnon, Barbara. Ethics: Theory & Contemporary Issues.

Pieper, Josef. Leisure: The Basis of Culture.

Huxley. Brave New World- **ANY** edition of this book is fine I have Perennial Classic, HarperPerennial, a Division of HarperCollins Publishers is: 0-06-092987-1.

Selected Articles and Book Chapters. These will be announced in class and will be copied by students.

COURSE OUTLINE:

I. Statement of the Problem -- The Prevailing Moral Theory of our culture is Moral Relativism. What are the difficulties associated with this position? Is it correct? Does it contribute to the successful attainment of the

natural human desire to lead a good life?

II. Preliminary Distinctions -- Discuss the distinctions that serve as the useful tools for sound ethical thinking:

- Judgments about action vs. judgments about persons
- Different types of responsibility
- Different types of guilt
- Three criteria for the determination of culpability
- Three levels of ethical reasoning
- Etc.

III. Ethical Theories -- Understand several of the different ethical theories in addition to moral relativism:

- Ethical Egoism
- Utilitarianism -- Bentham & Mill
- The Categorical Imperative -- Kant
- Virtue Ethics -- Aristotle

IV. Ethical Issues -- Understand several of the different contemporary ethical issues including: abortion, euthanasia, capital punishment, racism and affirmative action, pornography and sexual morality, animal rights, economic justice, etc.

V. Response to the Problem of Relativism -- The Ethics of Common Sense (an in-depth study of virtue ethics in the tradition of Aristotle, Aquinas, and Mortimer Adler).

EXAMINATIONS:

There will be two essay examinations: a mid-term and a final. The final exam is not cumulative. Pen must be used. There are NO excused absences from either of the examinations.

PAPERS: There are two short papers, 3 - 5 pages each. Instructions are as follows:

1) The first paper is an original piece of writing based on your reaction to a novel or a film of your own choosing. It must be a novel or film which deals with a moral problem, and it needs to be cleared with me first.

You are to explore both sides of the moral problem and conclude with a statement of your own position.

2) The second paper will discuss one of the moral problems found in Part II of MacKinnon's Ethics. In this paper, you are to discuss in a balanced way both sides of the selected moral issue; conclude by providing your

own analysis: which side do you think is correct and what are your reasons for thinking as you do.

[N.B.: Both papers must be typed, grammatically perfect, and on time. **Absolutely** no late papers will be accepted . . . no exceptions, no excuses! The due dates for each paper will be determined in class.]

ATTENDANCE:

Students are expected to attend class. Excessive absences will negatively affect your grade.

GRADING SCALE:

A. Essay exams and papers require a qualitative evaluation. In addition to the GRADING KEY which will

be distributed in class, the following verbal criteria indicate their letter-grade equivalents:

Excellent, superb, outstanding, etc. -- A;

Very good, very nicely done, etc. -- B+;

Good, Nicely done, etc. -- B;

"Pretty Good," etc. -- C+;

O.K., Acceptable, etc. -- C;

Weak, etc. -- D+;

Poor, etc. -- D;

No credit, nothing salvageable -- F.

B. Cheating on an examination and/or plagiarizing a paper are very serious offenses; in accordance with the policy articulated in the Student Handbook, any student guilty of either of these action will receive an automatic failure *in the course*.

FINAL COURSE GRADE:

Your final course grade will be based on the average of the grades from your two exams and two papers: each

is worth approximately 1/4, though examinations and the research paper will have more weight than the paper

based on the novel or film.