

Great Conversation 310: The Conversation Continues

Spring 2011

Ed Langerak; office H601C; office hours: T,W,F, 3-5 and by appointment.

Phone 3494 and 645-8321; e-mail: langera@stolaf.edu

Class alias: 2010-11-semester2-great-con-310@stolaf.edu

Description: We will begin with Alasdair MacIntyre's seminal book, *After Virtue* (3rd ed.), which refers to and even carries on conversations with such folks as Homer, Sophocles, Plato, Aristotle, Augustine, St. Benedict, St. Theresa, Abelard, Maimonides, Aquinas, Dante, Machiavelli, Luther, Calvin, Hume, Locke, Rousseau, Kant, Mozart, Kierkegaard, Mill, Nietzsche, Austin, Marx, Rorty, and others. These conversations build on much of what we have studied and will lead to discussions about such topics as the use of virtues and of narratives in ethics and in living a fulfilling life, the viability of classical liberalism in politics, and the relevance of post-modern critiques of Enlightenment notions of truth and progress.

Other readings will be developed after a survey of student interests and may include biography and literature that bears on ethical issues and normative perspectives.

In the course, special attention will be given to issues of pluralism and relativism and to the tensions involved in making personal commitments that avoid both dogmatic mule-headedness and wishy-washy paralysis. Thus there will be some readings from Langerak's forthcoming book on *Civil Disagreement: Personal Commitment in a Pluralistic Society*.

EIN: This course receives EIN (Ethical Issues and Normative Perspectives) GE credit; here are the learning outcomes associated with EIN courses: 1. Understanding of particular normative perspectives, including at least one from a Christian tradition. 2. The ability to see similarities and differences in the ethical reasoning of two or more normative perspectives. 3. The ability to analyze current ethical issues from two or more normative perspectives. Here is the link to a full description of the EIN requirement:

<http://www.stolaf.edu/committees/gec/genedrequirements/ethicalissues.html>

Accommodations: If you have a documented disability for which accommodations may be required in this class, please contact Connie Ford (ford@stolaf.edu) or Erin Larson (larsonee@stolaf.edu) in the Academic Support Center (507-786-3288) as soon as possible to arrange accommodations. If you have already presented your documentation and/or arranged accommodations through Student Disability Services, you should provide me with your accommodation letter within the first two weeks of class. All discussions will be confidential.

Honesty: We assume the college's honor policy:

<http://www.stolaf.edu/stulife/thebook/academic/honor.html>

And the policy on academic integrity, which applies to papers:

<http://www.stolaf.edu/stulife/thebook/academic/integrity.html>

Some helpful websites:

This very useful website has material on all the ethicists and many of the topics that we discuss (Click on “The Reference Room” for classic texts. The site also has good tips on writing an EIN paper): <http://ethics.sandiego.edu>

This site is an excellent encyclopedia with articles on all the thinkers, concepts, and topics that we discuss:

<http://plato.stanford.edu/contents.html>

This comprehensive site has many resources and links:

<http://dir.yahoo.com/arts/humanities/philosophy>

See also our own library philosophy site:

<http://www.stolaf.edu/library/research/web/phil.html>

Student participation: helpful class participation (15%); ten written comments and questions, alternating between group A and group B, sent to the class alias by 10:30 of class day (15%); class presentation and leading the discussion (15%); term paper (30%); exam(s) (25%).

Texts: Alistair MacIntyre, *After Virtue* (M); Edward Langerak, *Civil Disagreement: Personal Commitment in a Pluralistic Society* (CD); Langerak, “Covenantal Ethics in Cultural Context” (CE); handouts and references to texts used in previous Great Conversation classes.

Schedule:

Feb 7: Introduction

A1 Feb 9: Disquieting disagreement. M 1&2

B1 Feb 11: Emotivist culture. M 3

A2 Feb 14: Enlightenment project. M 4; CE pp.1-14

B2 Feb 16: It had to fail. M 5

A3 Feb 18: Consequences: Nietzsche or Aristotle M 6 and M 9 (Rec. M 7&8)

B3 Feb 21: Alternative view of pluralism. CD 1& part of 2 (pp.1-34)

A4 Feb 23: Perspective pluralism. CD 2 (pp. 35-58)

B4 Feb 25: Heroic virtues. M 10

A5 Feb 28: Athenian virtues. M 11

B5 Mar 2: Aristotelian virtues. M 12

A6 Mar 4: Medieval virtues. M 13

B6 Mar 7: Virtue ethics. M 14

A7 Mar 9: Narrative ethics. M 15

B7 Mar 11: Covenantal ethics. CE pp.15-33

Mar 14: Catch up and review

A8 Mar 16: Virtues to virtue. M 16

B8 Mar 18: Justice. M 17; Rawls and Nozick

Spring Break

A9 Mar 28: Justice con't. M 18

B9 Mar 30: Toleration CD 3

A10 Apr 1: Rawls' *Political Liberalism* (handout)

B10 Apr 4: Rawls' *Political Liberalism* con't

Apr 6: Rorty (handouts and review Melchert on Rorty [5th ed. 713-24])

Apr 8: Keke's *Against Liberalism* (handout)

Apr 11: Okin's feminist critique (two handouts, with Galston handout recommended)

Apr 18: Nussbaum's "The Feminist Critique of Liberalism" (handout)

Apr 20: Patrick Boland on Narrative Ethics

Easter Break

Apr 27: Sarah Sprague on Feminist Ethics

Apr 29: Jon Lambert on Evolutionary Ethics

May 2: Laura Linder-Scholer on Ideology and Will in Nietzsche and Althusser

May 4: Nora Kopping on Human Rights

May 6: Stina Attebery on Cyborg Manifesto

May 9: Michael Jeffrey on Narrative Ethics

May 11: Katie Fitzgerald on Humanitarian Intervention

May 13: Religion in the Public Square. Langerak's *Civil Disagreement*, chap. 4

May 16: Review and conclusion

Final Exam: Monday 23, 2-4pm