

Office hours in H601C: T,W,F 3-5 and by appointment. Phones: 3494; 645-8321. E-mail: langerak
Class alias: 2009-10-semester2-philosophy-252a@stolaf.edu

Description: What is the good life? Is it the same as the happy life? The fulfilled life? A life of service? The moral life? What is a good person? What are the virtues and principles that inform the moral life? How do they relate to religious values? To political values? How can one have commitments that provide structure and meaning to one's life and still get along with those who flatly disagree? Can one avoid rigid dogmatism without accepting wishy-washy relativism? What are the main normative perspectives in today's ethical debates, where did they come from, and what are their notable strengths and weaknesses? What is your own normative perspective, and what does it imply for a moral issue that matters to you? Using philosophical methods such as conceptual analysis, creative thinking, sound argument, coherent development of ideas, and dialectical inquiry, we will integrate historical survey with personal experience and reflection, while applying what we learn to practical ethical issues.

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>

Student contributions: Careful reading and responsible class participation (10% of grade). A moral decision and commentary due Feb. 10 and 17 by email (and attached Word doc.) before class. Eight informal response paragraphs, due on Mondays or Wednesdays or Fridays by 8am on the dates indicated (10%). A two-part formal paper due Nov 3 and Dec 5 (15%&15%=30%), quizzes (10%), a mid-term (15%), and a final exam (25%).

Writing: The informal response paragraphs of 125-200 words should briefly summarize or explain or evaluate (part of) the reading for the day and raise question(s), including at least one discussion question; they must be sent by email (both copied into the text and also as an attached Word doc) to <langerak> before 8am of that class day. The formal papers should be inquiries (handout) that explain and defend your own normative perspective, in comparison to some of the perspectives we study (1000-1250 words, 4-5 pages), and then be revised and expanded to include application to an ethical issue (for a total of 2000—2500 words, 8-10 pages). Alternatives to the formal paper assignment can be discussed with the instructor early in the semester.

Academic accommodations: Any student with a documented cognitive, physical or social/emotional disability needing academic accommodations should talk with me during the first two weeks of class. All discussions will remain confidential. Students with a disability who do not have an accommodation letter to present to me must also contact Ruth Bolstad (bolstadr@stolaf.edu) or Connie Ford (ford@stolaf.edu) in Student Disability Services in the Academic Support Center (x3288) located in the back of the Modular Village.

Some links: Here is the link to St. Olaf’s Academic Integrity Policy, which the course instructor endorses and enforces: <http://www.stolaf.edu/stulife/thebook/academic/integrity.html>

Here is the link to St Olaf’s Honor Policy: <http://www.stolaf.edu/stulife/thebook/academic/honor.html>

Here is the link to St. Olaf’s recently revised grading system:

<http://www.stolaf.edu/committees/cepc/cepcgreensheets/2006-07/cepcpreissuedgs060707.html>

Texts: John Stuart Mill, *Utilitarianism*; Immanuel Kant, *Foundations of Ethics [Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals]*; Julia Driver, *Ethics: the Fundamentals*; Langdon Gilkey, *Shantung Compound*. Handouts: Langerak’s *Civil Disagreement: Personal Integrity in a Pluralistic World* and handouts.

Some helpful websites: <http://ethics.sandiego.edu> this very useful website has material on all the ethicists and topics that we discuss (Click on “The Reference Room” for classic texts. The site also has good tips on writing a philosophy paper).

<http://plato.stanford.edu/contents.html> this site is an excellent encyclopedia with articles on all the thinkers, concepts, and topics that we discuss.

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>

Topics

Reading

Writing

Feb 8: Introduction. **Questionnaire.**

10: Ethical inquiry. Handouts (H): Nussbaum, Barber, Pojman; Langerak’s *Civil Disagreement* 1-32; Driver’s Introduction. **Moral Decision.**

12: Egoism and hedonism. H: Epicurus, Nozick, Melchert, pp.198-204; Langerak’ “Covenantal Ethics” (CE), pp. 1-4, Driver 31-39. **First Friday comment (F 1)**

15: Stoics; coping with desires. H: Epictetus, Buddhism, Melchert 204-08. **M 1**

17: Desires, and “Why be moral?” Driver chap 10. **Moral Commentary; and W 1 (or Friday)**

19: What is utilitarianism? Mill’s *Utilitarianism* 1-26; Langerak’s CE, 4-9; Driver, 40-50. **F 2**

22: Utilitarianism defended. Mill 27-34 (35-41 is recommended); Driver 50-60. **M 2.**

24: Utility and rights. Mill 42-64; Driver 61-79. **W 2**

26: Catch up and elaboration. Review past readings.

March 1: The Enlightenment. Kant’s “What is Enlightenment?” **M 3**

3: Kant’s ethics. Kant’s *Foundations*, Section I; Langerak’s CE, pp. 9-12; Driver 80-87. **W 3**

5: Categorical imperative. Kant, Section II; Driver 87-100. **F 3**

8: “Common Sense” (Intuitionism, Principlism) ethics. Langerak’s CE, 14-15; Driver 121-35. **M 4**

10: Catch up and elaborations. Review past readings.

12: Aristotle’s ethics. H: Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethic* pp.1-9; Melchert, pp. 185-89; Langerak’s CE, p. 4; Driver 136-47. **F 4**

- 15: Aristotelian virtues. H: Aristotle, pp. 9-20; Melchert, 189-93; Driver 149-52; (Rec: Driver 147-49). **M 5**
- 17: Feminist ethics. Driver 152-69 H: Audi. **W 4**
- 19: Gilkey's laboratory. Langdon Gilkey's *Shantung Compound* ix-xi and 1-75; Langerak's CE, 15-22. **F 5**
- 22: Things go wrong. Gilkey 75-193; Langerak's CE, 22-33. **M 6**
- 24: **Catch up and review**
- 26: **Midterm Exam (through Aristotle)**

Spring and Easter Break

- April 7:** Vocation and the meaning of life. Gilkey 193-242; H: Langerak's "Duties to Others and Covenantal Ethics." **W 5**
- 9: Religion and ethics. Driver 22-31; H: Berry and Aronson. **F 6**
- 12: Catch up and elaborations. **First part of paper due, 5pm.**
- 14: Pluralisms. Langerak's *Civil Disagreement* 33-56 (70-79); H: Smith. **W 6**
- 16: Pluralism and relativism. Langerak's *Civil Disagreement* 58-70 (79-89). **F 7**
- 19: Relativism and common values. Driver chap 1; H: Bok **M 7**
- 21: Toleration. Langerak's *Civil Disagreement* 90-105 (113-121). **W 7.**
- 23: Compromise and respect. Langerak's *Civil Disagreement* 106-13 (121-27). **F 8**
- 26: Civil disagreement, legislation, interventions. Langerak's *Civil Disagreement*, Chap. 4. **M 8**
- 28: Justice. H: Rawls, Nozick, and letters; Langerak's CE 12-15; Driver 102-20. **W 8**
- 30: Rights. H: UN Declaration; Glendon; Langerak's CE 11; and review Mill's *Utilitarianism* 42-64.

May 3: Catch up and elaborations.

5: Ethical issues.

7: Ethical issues.

10: Ethical issues.

12: Ethical issues

14: Ethical issues

Full paper (first part revised) due, 5pm.

17: Review and conclusion.

Final Exam: May 20, 9-11