This course offers a survey of some central figures and texts in the history of ethics and political theory. We will focus on Plato’s Republic, Aristotle’s Nicomachean Ethics, Kant’s Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals, and Mill’s Utilitarianism and On Liberty. Some of the questions we will address are: What constitutes the good life for a human being? Is it happiness? If so, in what does happiness consist? What does it mean to be a virtuous person, and how, if at all, does virtue contribute to happiness? Is there a price to be paid for being virtuous, and is that sacrifice worth the cost? What reasons do we have to be moral, and is it always in one’s interest to do the right thing? What is pleasure, and is there a distinction in kind between different sorts of pleasure? How should we understand the relationship between politics and personal happiness? What is the nature of individual rights, and is it ever permissible to violate one person’s rights for the good of the whole? Is censorship ever justified, and, if so, on what grounds?

REQUIRED TEXTS
Plato, Republic, trans. G.M.A Grube and revis. C.D.C. Reeve
Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics, trans. Terence Irwin, 2nd edition
Immanuel Kant, Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals, ed. Mary Gregor
John Stuart Mill, Utilitarianism, ed. George Sher, 2nd edition
John Stuart Mill, On Liberty, ed. Elizabeth Rapaport

COURSE MATERIALS
Please purchase the specific editions of the texts that I have ordered through the University bookstore. Also, please bring the text we are currently discussing with you to class. The reading assignment should be done carefully, prior to the class meeting for which it is listed, and I encourage you to read the material again, after the class in which we have discussed it. Although this is an introductory course, the texts we’re reading are difficult and require careful, multiple readings.
For each assignment you’re supposed to read, I’ve listed the book and/or the chapter, followed by the page number in the editions we’ll be using. For example, “R I, pp. 1-31” refers to Plato’s *Republic*, Book I, which is found in pages 1-31 of the Grube/Reeve translation.

R=Republic
N=Nicomachean Ethics
G=Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals
U=Utilitarianism
O=On Liberty

**SCHEDULE OF READINGS AND TOPICS**

Jan 15
Introduction and Overview

**PLATO**

Jan 17
The Puzzle About Justice

Jan 17
The Ring of Gyges

Jan 22
The City-Soul Analogy

Jan 29
Plato’s Guardians

Jan 31
Political and Psychic Virtues

Feb 5
Plato’s Philosopher-King

Feb 7
Four Characters and Constitutions

Feb 12
Plato’s Defense of Justice

Feb 13
First Papers Due

4:30pm Wilson Hall 208

**ARISTOTLE**

Feb 14
A Final Good; Three Common Conceptions of Happiness;
The Human Function

Feb 19
External Goods; Posthumous Goods

Feb 21
Aristotle’s Moral Psychology

Feb 26
The Doctrine of the Mean

Feb 28
Bravery and Temperance

March 4
Comprehensive vs. Intellectual Conceptions of Happiness

March 6
First Exam (on Plato and Aristotle)

**KANT**

March 18
The Good Will, Moral Worth, and Duty

March 20
Kant’s Examples of Morally Worthy Action

March 25
Moral vs. Non-Moral Motivation

March 27
The Formula of Universal Law

April 1
The Formula of Humanity
### MILL

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>April 3</th>
<th>The Greatest Happiness Principle; The Doctrine of the Higher Pleasures</th>
<th>U I, pp. 1-12</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>April 4</td>
<td><strong>Second Paper Due</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4:30pm Wilson Hall 208</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 8</td>
<td>Objections to Utilitarianism</td>
<td>U II, pp. 12-26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 10</td>
<td>Mill’s Proof of the Principle of Utility</td>
<td>U IV, pp. 35-41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 15</td>
<td>The No Harm Principle</td>
<td>O I, pp. 1-13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 17</td>
<td>Against Censorship</td>
<td>O II, pp. 15-52</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### NOZICK

| April 22        | The Pleasure Machine                                                  | Handout       |
|                 | Conclusion and Review                                                 |               |
| April 24        | **Second Exam (on Kant, Mill, and Nozick)**                           |               |

### COURSE REQUIREMENTS

- Two 5-page papers: 25% each
- Two in-class exams: 25% each

**Papers:** I will distribute topics for the papers well in advance of the due dates. Extensions for the papers will be granted only in the case of emergencies. Late papers will automatically be penalized a portion of a letter grade per day.

**Exams:** The exams will consist of terms and passages to identify and explain as well as short discussion questions. Prior to the exams, I will say something more specific about their content so that you will know precisely what to expect.

**Class participation:** Though there is no explicit participation component for your overall course grade, keep in mind that active and informed participation in class discussions as well as marked improvement in your work over the course of the semester will weigh in your favor.

**PASS/NO PASS**

If you are taking the course for this grade option, you must attend class regularly, and you must complete all of the course requirements in order to receive a pass for the semester.

**OFFICE HOURS**

I have not set regular office hours, but I am always readily available and happy to meet with you at a time that’s convenient for you. Please email me to set up a time to meet if you would like.