This course offers a survey of some central figures, themes, and texts in the history of ethics. We will focus on Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics*, Cicero’s *On Duties*, Kant’s *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, and Nietzsche’s *On the Genealogy of Morality*.

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? Why do people fear death? Is fear of death well founded? What reasons do we have to be moral, and is it always in our interest to do the right thing? What does it mean to have a good will, and why is a good will valuable? Is there one (and only one) criterion for right action that enables us to determine what actions are morally permissible, and, if so, what is it? How did we come to hold the values we take to be central to morality in the first place? Are they good for us, and do they promote human health?

**REQUIRED TEXTS**

- Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, trans. and ed. Mary J. Gregor

**COURSE MATERIALS**

Please purchase the specific editions/translations of the texts listed above. Also, please bring the text we’re discussing with you to class. You need to complete the reading assignments before class, and I encourage you to re-read the material after the class meeting in which we’ve discussed it. Although this is an introductory course, the texts we’re reading are very difficult and therefore require careful, multiple readings.

For each assignment, I’ve listed the book and/or the chapter, followed by the page number in the editions we’re using. For example, “EN 1, 1-7, pp. 1-10” refers to Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book I, Chapters 1-7 found in pages 1-10 of Terence Irwin’s translation.
NE = Nicomachean Ethics  
OD = On Duties  
Gr = Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals  
G = On the Genealogy of Morality

SCHEDULE OF READINGS AND TOPICS

Tues Aug 31  Introduction

ARISTOTLE
Thurs Sept 2  A Final Good; Eudaimonia;  
Three Common Conceptions
Tues Sept 7  The Human Function
Thurs Sept 9  External Goods; Posthumous Goods;  
The Dominance of Virtue
Tues Sept 14  Aristotle's Moral Psychology
Thurs Sept 16  The Doctrine of the Mean
Tues Sept 21  Bravery and Temperance
Thurs Sept 23  Weakness of Will and Vice
Tues Sept 28  Comprehensive vs. Intellectual
Conceptions of Happiness
Wed Sept 29  First Paper due by 4pm
Philosophy Department
208 Wilson Hall

NE I, 1-7, pp. 1-10
NE I, 7-8, pp. 7-11
NE I, 8-12, pp. 10-16
NE I, 13 – II, 1-7, pp. 16-27
NE II, 7-9, pp. 25-30
NE III, 6-12, pp. 40-49
NE VII, 1-9, pp. 99-113
NE X, 6-8, pp. 162-167
Review NE I, 1-13, pp. 1-18

CICERO
Thurs Sept 30  Noble/Honorable Human Conduct
Tues Oct 5  Virtue and Duty
Thurs Oct 7  Vices and Virtues
Tues Oct 12  Virtue, Self-Interest, and Responsibility
Thurs Oct 14  First In-Class Exam

OD I, 1-35, pp. 1-15
OD I, 36-67, pp. 15-27
OD I, 68-108, pp. 27-42
OD I, 109-161, pp. 42-62

KANT
Tues Oct 19  The Good Will, Moral Worth, and Duty
Thurs Oct 21  Kant’s Examples of Good Will
Tues Oct 26  Moral vs. Non-Moral Motivation
Thurs Oct 28  The Categorical Imperative (FUL)
Tues Nov 2  The Categorical Imperative (FH)
Thurs Nov 4  Radical Evil and Weakness of Will
Tues Nov 9  Happiness as a Conditioned Good
Wed Nov 10  Second Paper due by 4pm
Philosophy Department
208 Wilson Hall
Gr I, pp. 7-18
Gr I, pp. 7-18;
Gr II, pp. 19-26
Gr II, pp. 26-36
Gr II, pp. 36-40
TBA
TBA
NIETZSCHE
Thurs Nov 11  Morality's Ancestors  G, Preface 1-8, pp. 1-7
Tues Nov 16  Nietzsche's Naturalism  G, 1st Treatise, 1-10, pp. 9-21
Thurs Nov 18  Dionysus and Human Health  G, 1st Treatise, 11-17, pp. 21-33
Tues Nov 30  Napoleon and Socrates  G, 2nd Treatise, 1-9, pp. 35-47
Thurs Dec 2  Re-Evaluating Our Values  G, 2nd Treatise, 10-25, pp. 47-66
Tues Dec 7  Course Summary and Wrap-Up  
Thurs Dec 9  Second In-Class Exam  

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 extenuating circumstances or emergencies and must
be cleared with me. Late papers will automatically be penalized a portion of a letter grade per
day, so please turn your papers in on time.

Exams: The exams will consist of terms and passages to identify and explain and discussion
questions to answer. Prior to the exams, I will say something more specific about their content
so that you'll know 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. You are
expected to attend all of the class meetings unless you have a legitimate excuse, such as a
medical reason or an emergency. Please remember that if you miss class, it is your responsibility
to catch up on the material.

PASS/NO PASS
If you're taking the course for this grade option, you must attend class regularly, and you must
complete and pass all of the course requirements in order to receive a passing grade for the
semester.