

Philosophy and the Ethical Life

Course: Philosophy 1301, Section 08
Meeting Time: 11:00am-12:20pm, TuTh
Meeting Place: Braniff 4
Office Hours: TBA

Instructor: Dr. William Dembski
Office: Braniff 344 (Dr. Wood's Office)
Office Phone: 721-5161
Home Phone: 258-5235

Required Texts: *Plato Complete Works* (Hackett); *Aristotle Selected Works* (Apostle); *Introduction to St. Thomas Aquinas* (Pegis paperback); *On Liberty* by John Stuart Mill (Hackett or Oxford Paperback); The Bible.

Course Description: What exists? Who are we? How should we live? The aim of this course is to provide you with a complete answer to each of these questions so that you'll never have to think about them again. NOT!! The actual aim of this course is to *engage* several key philosophical texts that attempt to answer these questions. Engaging a text is much more than absorbing information passively. It is to ask and answer: What is the text saying (SENSE)? Is what it's saying true (REFERENCE)? Why is this text important (SIGNIFICANCE)? What are its strengths and weaknesses (ANALYSIS)? What is the text trying to get you to think or do (RHETORIC)? Where is the text coming from (CONTEXT)? What type of text is it (GENRE)? What are we and the author bringing to the text (PRESUPPOSITIONS)? In this course we shall put these questions to several key philosophical texts, notably, Plato's *Republic*, which we shall read in its entirety.

Day to Day Mechanics: This will be a reading and discussion course. What lecturing I do will serve mainly to frame our discussions. Readings are assigned in class. I expect you to thoroughly engage the assigned readings. To facilitate this I want you to prepare DAILY TRACTS, which are to be typed or written legibly *before* class, and handed in at the end of class. Your daily tracts will consist of answering the following questions:

- (1) Briefly, and in plain English, what is the reading about?
- (2) What are the key words and concepts that come up in the reading?
- (3) On what points is the reading trying to influence and persuade you?
- (4) How successful was the reading at influencing and persuading you on these points?
- (5) What do you regard as the most memorable quote from the reading?
- (6) What for you was the biggest unanswered question in the reading?
- (7) What was the most important thing you took away from the reading?

Requirements: (1) Diligent reading of assigned texts as demonstrated through the daily tracts (25% of grade) and class participation (5% of grade). (2) A midterm exam (15% of the grade) (3) A paper approximately 3000 words in length—no less than 2500, no more than 3500 (25% of the grade); (4) A comprehensive final exam—30% of the grade.

The Paper: Your paper is due in class Tuesday, November 25, 1997. The paper will examine the degree to which ethics are either relative or absolute. You are to state the position you intend to argue, and then make your best case. I'll provide more details as we proceed along.

QUESTIONNAIRE

Full Name: _____ Date of Birth: _____

How do you want to be addressed in class: _____

What was your favorite subject in high school: _____

What was your least favorite subject in high school: _____

Your favorite author(s): _____

Your favorite book(s): _____

Your favorite musician(s): _____

Your favorite piece(s) of music/album(s): _____

Your favorite actor(s): _____

Your favorite movie(s): _____

Your favorite quote:

Describe the individual (outside of your relatives) who has influenced you the most profoundly:

Describe the thoughts and ideas that have influenced you most profoundly:

To what ideal do you aspire?