

Division of Humanities
Course Syllabus

Course Code:	HUMA 1920
Course Title:	Introduction to Moral Philosophy
Course Offered in:	Fall 2017
Course Instructor:	Nahum Brown
Class Schedule:	Tuesdays and Thursdays, 12:00- 13:20
Classroom:	1104
Office Hours:	Tuesdays, 16:30- 18:30
Office:	3334
Email:	hmnahumbrown@ust.hk
Teaching Assistant	Nicole Lai
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1. Course Description:

This course introduces students to moral philosophy by way of themes about universal morality and global justice. It uses philosophy as well as examples from film, literature, and history to explore some of the most pressing moral and political dilemmas we face in the world today. Students begin by reading short selections from Plato's *Republic*, Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*, Mencius' story of the child in the well, Hobbes' *Leviathan*, Berlin's "Two Concepts of Liberty," Kant's *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*, and Buber's *I and Thou*, while focusing on debates about whether self-interest or a regard-for-others is the more primary characteristic of human nature. The course then offers resources for how students can apply these philosophical ideas to historical and contemporary debates about global justice. Students look at selections from the political philosophy of Hannah Arendt, Henry David Thoreau, Mohandas K. Gandhi, Martin Luther King, Jr., and Giorgio Agamben, and analyze films such as *Citizenfour* (about Edward Snowden), *12 Angry Men*, and *Gandhi* as a way to learn about international law, crimes against humanity, and human resistance to unjust political regimes.

*This syllabus may go through modifications during the semester so please look for further versions on Canvas.

2. Course Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs): Upon completion of this course, students are expected to be able to:

**Division of Humanities
Course Syllabus**

1	Rehearse important arguments about human nature in the history of moral philosophy
2	Critically analyze contemporary debates about moral philosophy
3	Develop argumentation and reasoning skills
4	Develop clear writing and clear thinking skills

3. Course Outline:

Class	Date	
1	Sept 5	Course Introduction
2	Sept 7	Plato, “the Story of Gyges’ Ring”
3	Sept 12	Hobbes, <i>Leviathan</i>
4	Sept 14	Hobbes, <i>Leviathan</i>
5	Sept 19	Hobbes, <i>Leviathan</i> ; Berlin, “Two Concepts of Liberty”
6	Sept 21	Hobbes, <i>Leviathan</i> ; Berlin, “Two Concepts of Liberty”
7	Sept 26	Rachels, “A Critique of Ethical Egoism”; Socrates’ Response to Glaucon
8	Sept 28	Mencius’ story of the child falling into the well; Buber, <i>I and Thou</i>
9	Oct 3	Buber, <i>I and Thou</i>
--	Oct 5	No Class: Holiday
10	Oct 10	Quiz 1

**Division of Humanities
Course Syllabus**

11	Oct 12	Aristotle's <i>Nicomachean Ethics</i>
12	Oct 17	Aristotle's <i>Nicomachean Ethics</i>
13	Oct 19	Aristotle's <i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> ; Gansberg, "Moral Cowardice"; Colson, "The Volunteer at Auschwitz: Altruism"
14	Oct 24	Kant's <i>Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals</i>
15	Oct 26	Kant's <i>Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals</i> ; <i>12 Angry Men</i>
16	Oct 31	<i>12 Angry Men</i>
17	Nov 2	Quiz 2
18	Nov 7	Arendt's <i>Eichmann in Jerusalem</i>
19	Nov 9	Arendt's <i>Eichmann in Jerusalem</i>
20	Nov 14	Arendt's <i>Eichmann in Jerusalem</i>
21	Nov 16	Thoreau, "Civil Disobedience"; Gandhi, "The Practice of Satyagraha"; King, "Letter from the Birmingham City Jail"
22	Nov 21	Agamben, "On What We Can Not Do"
23	Nov 23	Citizenfour (Edward Snowden)
24	Nov 28	Citizenfour (Edward Snowden)
25	Nov 30	Quiz 3

Division of Humanities
Course Syllabus

4. Requirements

Students are expected to read each week's assigned text carefully and in advance. There will be a number of individual and group exercises that combine with class lectures.

5. Readings:

Agamben, "On What We Can Not Do"
Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem*
Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*
Berlin, "Two Concepts of Liberty"
Buber, *I and Thou*
Colson, "The Volunteer at Auschwitz: Altruism"
Gandhi, "The Practice of Satyagraha"
Gansberg, "Moral Cowardice"
Hobbes, *Leviathan*
Kant, *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*
King, "Letter from the Birmingham City Jail"
Mencius, *The Book of Mencius*
Plato, *The Republic*
Pojman, "The Case Against Moral Relativism"
Rachels, "A Critique of Ethical Egoism"
Thoreau, "Civil Disobedience"

6. Assignments:

Attendance:	17% (1% x 17 out of 18 classes)
Three Quizzes:	83% (Quiz 1: 30%; Quiz 2: 23%; Quiz 3: 30%)

7. Attendance and Lateness Policy

Students are expected to attend classes regularly and on time. Attendance will be checked only at the beginning of class. Missing one or more classes makes it

Division of Humanities
Course Syllabus

increasingly difficult to keep up with the material. Attendance and punctuality will affect your grade (cf. course evaluation). As a general rule, there will not be any make-up exams or written participation assignments. In severe and justified cases, a make-up exam might be offered, which will be at least as difficult as the original exam.

8. Academic Honesty

Plagiarism and cheating of any kind will not be tolerated. Any evidence of plagiarism will result in immediate failure of the assignment or exam. I also reserve the right to take further appropriate steps, including consultation of the dean, with the possibility of expulsion from the University.