

SYLLABUS FOR PHI 120 ~ *ETHICS*
Augsburg College – Rochester Campus – Fall 2009
Dr. Michael Lotti

I. Texts

1. Plato, *Gorgias*. Trans. by Donald Zeyl. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1987. (ISBN: 0872200167)
2. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*. Trans. By Martin Ostwald. New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1999. (ISBN: 0023895306)

II. Contact

If you have any concerns or questions, please contact me. I'm here to help. E-mail should be the first avenue of communication. I will generally respond within 24 hours. The address is lotti@augsborg.edu. If there's something urgent, my phone number is 651-457-2933. Please call after 9:00pm (when the kids are finally in bed), but before 10:30pm (when I go to bed).

III. Schedule

September 17, 2009

Please bring your books (or at least *Gorgias*) to class. We will be reading and discussing *Gorgias*, pages 1-26.

Reading assignment for Sept. 25: *Gorgias* pages 26- 50 (and be ready to discuss the following questions):

1. How does Polus understand power? How does Socrates?
2. "Committing an injustice is worse than suffering an injustice." Why is this statement false according to Polus and true according to Socrates?
3. Why, according to Socrates, is Archelaus a miserable man? (please note: both Socrates and Polus agree that Archelaus *feels no remorse*, so you can't say that he's miserable because he feels bad about what he's done. And no, "deep down inside" doesn't count.)
4. What is good about punishment according to Socrates?

November 12, 2009

Lecture: “Action, choice, and wish in *Nicomachean Ethics*”

Presentations and discussions on *Nicomachean Ethics*, Books III and IV

Lecture: “Justice in *Nicomachean Ethics*”

Reading Assignment for Nov. 13: Book VIII, Chapters 1-8, 12-14

December 5, 2009

Presentations and discussions on *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book VIII

Lecture: “Practical Wisdom in *Nicomachean Ethics*”

Review for *Nicomachean Ethics* Exam

December 10, 2009

Nicomachean Ethics Exam

IV. Grading

This course has five components that are each worth 20% of the final grade:

1. *Gorgias* Exam
2. *Nicomachean Ethics* Presentation
3. *Nicomachean Ethics* Exam
4. Essay (due on Dec. 5)
5. On-line participation

Each of these components is worth 100 points. Thus, your final grade will be based on 500 possible points. This is the scale I will use:

Grading Scale

91% – up	4.0
86-90	3.5
81-85	3.0
76-80	2.5
71-75	2.0
66-70	1.5
61-65	1.0
56-60	.5
Below 56%	Fail

V. Exams and Assignments

I don't think there should be many surprises in academia, so most of the contents of each test and the stipulations for the other graded assignments are on the following pages.

Gorgias Exam

Time limit: 90 minutes.

I. You will have to answer three of the following questions. I will choose the questions. 20 points per question.

1. How does Socrates refute Gorgias' claim that the teacher of oratory is also a teacher of justice?
2. What is the difference between a "knack" and a "craft", and why does Socrates classify oratory as a "knack"?
3. How does Polus understand power? How does Socrates?
4. "Committing an injustice is worse than suffering an injustice." Why is this statement false according to Polus and true according to Socrates?
5. Why, according to Socrates, is Archelaus a miserable man? (please note: both Socrates and Polus agree that Archelaus *feels no remorse*, so you can't say that he's miserable because he feels bad about what he's done. And no, "deep down inside" doesn't count.)
6. What is good about punishment according to Socrates?
7. Summarize Callicles' personal philosophy, encompassing his views on nature, law, power, business, and philosophy (as Socrates practices it), and pleasure.
8. How does Socrates undermine Callicles' personal philosophy? In particular, how does he get Callicles to distinguish "the pleasurable" from "the good"?
9. How does Socrates' brief discussion of friendship fit in with his discussion of self-control? How do both influence the life of a city?
10. Why can't a tyrant have a friend (or be a friend)?
11. Why is Socrates the only true politician in Athens (according to Socrates)?

II. You must answer one of the following questions. You can choose. 40 points.

1. What is the difference between speechmaking and conversation? Why is this an important distinction for Socrates?

2. What is Socrates up to? Consider carefully what he says about himself (for example, on p. 10, p. 16, and other places) and whether you think he's telling the truth (or if it matters).
3. "Law and morality are natural." Defend this claim against Callicles' assertion that law and morality are artificial conventions.
4. Socrates is fairly polite and straightforward with Gorgias and Callicles, but rather rude and mocking to Polus. Based especially on what he says about himself and his mission, explain why this is what one should expect of Socrates.

***Nicomachean Ethics* Presentation**

Each person will have to present a part of Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*. These will be assigned the first day of class.

The presentation should address the following questions:

1. What questions are being addressed by Aristotle in this section?
2. How does Aristotle answer these questions?
3. How does this section fit into the larger project of *Nicomachean Ethics*?
4. How does Aristotle's thinking help make sense of life?

You decide the format of the presentation: lecture, PowerPoint, etc. In general, visuals and diagrams are helpful for teacher and student alike. Lots of concrete examples will also help (something Aristotle does not generally provide!).

The presenter also needs to take questions from the teacher and classmates.

While the work of the presentation will be yours, I will be happy to help you as you are preparing for it.

The grading for this component breaks down like this:

Mastery of the material: 80 points

Clarity of presentation: 20 points

Nicomachean Ethics Exam

I. Means and Extremes Chart. A chart like the following will be on the test. 15 points.

Deficiency	Mean	Excess	Concerned With
self-depreciation			
	self-control		
		short-temperedness	
niggardliness			
			feelings of fear and confidence
	generosity		
		vanity	
unambitiousness			
			the use of humor
	friendliness		

II. Short Answer. 35 points.

Examples:

Aristotle identifies three types of excessive anger besides “short-temperedness”. Name one.

T or F: A person who goes television excessively would count as “self-indulgent” to Aristotle.

A person with the vice of _____ would be happy to work as a cashier at Cub Foods even though he/she has a Ph.D. in chemistry.

III. I will choose five of the following questions. 10 points per question.

1. Why is happiness considered the greatest good for humans?
2. Why shouldn't young people study politics?
3. Why is it that the happy man can never become miserable?
4. Explain how it is possible for the mean to be “one and the same for all men” yet still relative to each person.

5. Two people stand their ground in battle; one is courageous, one is not. Explain why.
6. Why is self-indulgence more voluntary than cowardice?
7. Briefly describe an act that is a violation of distributive justice OR rectificatory justice OR reciprocal justice. Make sure you define the type of justice that is violated.
8. In what ways can two thieves be friends, and in what way can they never be friends?
9. Explain why a political leader should possess practical wisdom.

Essay

Write a moral evaluation of a person – either fictional or non-fictional – using Socrates’ framework as presented in *Gorgias*. More details to follow.

Please note that I am happy to read and comment on drafts of essays, but **I will not read any drafts submitted after Friday, Nov. 27.**

The essay will be scored as follows:

Introduction:	10 pts.
Presentation of the character:	20 pts.
Socratic analysis:	20 pts.
Use of <i>Gorgias</i> text:	10 pts.
Grammar, bibliography, general readability:	20 pts.
Total:	100 pts.

Online Participation

In between the first six sessions, you should log on to the course’s Moodle site and contribute to one of the discussions. Your contribution should be substantial (about 150-300 words) and focused on understanding some part of the text. If you post after a classmate, make sure that you address their ideas in your posting.

Each of the test questions for the *Gorgias* and *Nicomachean Ethics* exam will be posted online. Other questions and discussions may pop up.

If you make five substantial postings at the appropriate times, you will receive 100 points. If you make four substantial postings, you will receive 80 points, etc.