CASPER COLLEGE COURSE SYLLABUS  
PHIL 2300-01 Ethics in Practice

Semester and Year:  Fall, 2006

Lectures Hours:  3  Lab Hours: 0  Credit Hours:  3

Class Time: 12:00-12:50 p.m.  Days: MWF  Room: AD 167

Instructor’s Name:  Dr. C. E. (Jay) Graham, Jr.  Office: AD 8

Office Telephone: (307) 268-2272   Email: jgraham@caspercollege.edu

Office Hours:  MW 1:00-1:50 p.m., TTH 1:30-2:00 p.m.

Contact Information:  Kathy Coe  (307) 268-2533 or 800-442-2963, ext. 2533 or kcoe@caspercollege.edu

Course Description:  Beginning with the foundations of the philosophy of ethics in the classic reasoning of Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle, readings will include modern and contemporary assessments of a variety of perennial issues, including, but not limited to, humanism and scientism, absolutism and relativism, and ethics in business and everyday life.

I shall describe Philosophy 2300 Ethics in Practice in the following way:

Beginning with the foundations of ethical thinking in the Classical era of Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle, readings will include modern and contemporary assessments of a variety of perennial issues, including, but not limited to morality and ethics, justice, and happiness.

Statement of Prerequisites:  ENGL 1020 or permission of the instructor.

General Objectives:  The purpose of this course is to acquaint the student with the central questions raised and answers reasoned concerning ethics by philosophers in Western Civilization.

Specific Objectives:  To study writings by philosophers from the Classical period to our own day as they reason about issues in ethics such as happiness, what people ought to do and not do, ultimate good, and so on in their attempts to articulate answers to difficult moral and ethical questions.

Methods:  The professor lectures and leads in-class discussions.

Attendance:  First, see the paragraphs under "Class Attendance" in the latest catalogue of the College.

You must understand that I am convinced that you cannot be as successful in this class as you might be unless you attend all class meetings. In this class, you may consider that "excessive absences" means more than four or five for the semester for a three-day class, and if you are absent excessively, your final grade will be lowered. More than seven or eight absences may well result in my assigning you a failing grade—that is, a grade of "F"—for the course. No exceptions will be made.
Because you are part of the class, you ought to consider yourself responsible to the class and important to it: asking questions, participating in discussions, growing through these and other parts of the process of learning make it imperative that you be present. Moreover, it is not alone for your sake that you should be present: others need to benefit from your presence and active participation.

It is important for you to understand that absences are absences. An absence for a good reason does not constitute presence in class. Although there is nothing wrong with missing class for a reason, or even for occasionally cutting a class, keep in mind that any absence figures into the number allowed.

In the event that you are absent, you must assume responsibility for finding out from a reliable fellow student what transpired in class during your absence. After you have found out, copied notes, learned of any additional assignment or alteration of the schedule, then, if you have any questions, ask me.

**Evaluation Criteria:** Students are evaluated according to the following: attendance; performance on both objective and essay examinations, as well as on short essays, written in or out of class; regularity and quality of in-class participation in discussions; and overall improvement.

**Grading:** All assigned papers and examinations are required. You cannot pass this class without having done them all.

I quantify letter grades on a four-point scale: A = 4; A- = 3.6; B+ = 3.5; B = 3.0; B- = 2.6; and so on. Further, I shall consider assigning so-called “bonus points” up to the value of one whole letter grade if your improvement and attitude warrant it.

Examinations, whether objective or essay or a combination, whether in- or out-of-class, will be graded according to the following scale:

- A = 100 - 94%
- B = 93 - 86%
- C = 85 - 78%
- D = 77 - 70%
- F = 69 - 0%

**Determination of Final Grade:** A strict average of grades for all examinations or written assignments will decide the basis of your grade, and then any so-called “bonus points” will be added for a final total.

**Makeup Examinations and Late Papers:** In general I do not allow students to take makeup tests, and because all examinations and written work are required, you need to be present for examinations and hand in written work on time. If you are unavoidably absent—by which I mean a genuine emergency has detained or waylaid you—you must contact me or Kathy Coe as soon as possible. Any other absence for an examination or permission for an extended due date on written work must be cleared with me prior to the day and hour of the examination or the day the work is due. If a makeup examination is allowed you, you must take it on the day you return to class; if a paper is allowed to be turned in late, it must be no more than one week late.

Vacations and other days off from class are indicated on the “Schedule of Assignments.” Examinations scheduled before midterm break or long weekends must be taken as scheduled. No exceptions will be allowed.
Required Readings: Plato’s *Gorgias*; Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics*; handouts; Peter Kreeft’s *A Refutation of Moral Relativism*

**Last Date to Change to Audit Status:** See catalogue of Casper College.

**Last Date to Withdraw with a “W” Grade:** See catalogue of Casper College.

**Student Rights and Responsibilities:** Refer to the Casper College Student Conduct and Judicial Code for information concerning students’ rights and responsibilities as a Casper College student.

**ADA Accommodations Policy:** It is the policy of Casper College to provide appropriate accommodations to any student with a documented disability. If you have a need for accommodation in this course, please make an appointment to see me at your earliest convenience.

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You say I am repeating
Something I have said before. I shall say it again.
Shall I say it again? In order to arrive there,
To arrive where you are, to get from where you are not,
You must go by a way wherein there is no ecstasy.
In order to arrive at what you do not know
You must go by a way which is the way of ignorance.
In order to possess what you do not possess
You must go by the way of dispossession.
In order to arrive at what you are not,
You must go by the way in which you are not.
And what you do not know is the only thing you know
And what you own is what you do not own
And where you are is where you are not.

As we begin the consider the issues of this class, I should like to set before you a couple of statements that suggests a philosophy of education that, although not in vogue today, has been the foundation of education for excellence for 2500 years. This sort of education is called *liberal education*, about which we shall have much to say during the semester.

The shape of the best education for the best is not unknown to us. But we have been slow to learn how to provide it. Nor have we always been honest in our commitment to democracy and its promise of equality. A part of our population—and much too large a part—has harbored the opinion that many of the nation’s children are not fully educable. Trainable for one or another job, perhaps, but not educable for the duties of self-governing citizenship and for the enjoyment of things of the mind and spirit that are essential to a good human life.

It is crucial that we understand the kind of education that we shall be pursuing in this class: it is the kind suggested by Adler as “essential for a good human life.”

Here is another statement of educational purpose that we ought to keep in mind and reflect upon:

As we have always secretly suspected, democracy has imposed upon us from the beginning an obligation to provide a liberal education for every citizen—a charge that implies not simply literacy but an ability to judge the high from the low, the genuine from the shoddy. We are now failing to perform this task, largely because our schools have discarded the great staple of our education, the poetic mode of thought.

--Louise Cowan, “The Necessity of the Classics”  
(The Intercollegiate Review, vol. 37, No. 2, Fall 2001)

Cowan uses the term I have already introduced: “liberal education.” This term is significant for the kind of education that the wise have perennially pursued in Western Civilization: it is the education best suited to a free human being (liberal: from the Latin libera, “free”). The content and description of this kind of education is, as I have indicated, part of what we shall be accomplishing this semester.

General Policies:

Objectives and Methods: I shall lecture and we shall discuss the ideas explored in the readings in our attempt to understand great ideas about ethics and morality and how philosophers have reasoned about them.

In a recent book on the wisdom of those who lived during the founding of our nation, William Bennett wrote: “...as Abigail Adams warned, if we are surrounded by the trivial and the vicious, it is all too easy to make our peace with it.”

Principles upon Which This Course Will Operate: In Philosophy 2300 we shall be studying several works chosen from among or written against the background of the so-called "classics" or Great Books of Western Civilization. The principle consistently to apply to our readings and any written or oral analyses, including discussions in class, is that interpretations will always be of each work itself, and an evaluation or criticism of its ideas and arguments will always be based on what is in dialogue or essay or other work. Good, careful, disciplined reading (and, when possible, rereading) is always based, as it has always been based, on this principle. Any writing that I assign for you as required for this class should adhere to this principle as the guide for your study and communication about the work of literature. Such an approach does not constitute a particular method or critical philosophy, but rather is one by which the general or "common reader" has always read and appreciated philosophy or literature. It is important to understand that this principle will be insisted on in order to preclude any imposition of agendas or programmes onto readings or ideas in order to twist or slant them toward the politics of so-called political correctness or any other.

In the most general terms three questions are asked of any work that argues ideas:

1. What does it say? About this matter we must be rigorous. This means that we must use good dictionaries and do what we can to understand the words and what they amount to in the readings.
2. What does it mean? Meaning is not random or left up to the undisciplined choice of a reader, but is always carefully set before the reader in the author’s attempts to communicate. It is our job to allow ourselves to be communicated with.

3. Is it true? Because of the illiberality of contemporary education, we are not, in general, free to deal sufficiently with the matter of whether an author’s conclusions are true. That must, finally, be left to students to decide for themselves outside of class. Any speculation about the truth of a philosopher’s conclusions will be limited to an assessment of whether the line of reasoning seemed valid.

“We have begun to see a world in which the classics have virtually disappeared—though they have been woven so tightly into the patterns of our culture that meaning, for us, is hardly separable from them. For a while we may be able to get by on the echoes of their past glory; but when they finally have become perfectly silent, what sort of world shall we inhabit? To lose the classics is to lose a long heritage of wisdom concerning human nature, something not likely to be acquired again. Yet most college curricula now remain sadly untouched by their august presence, or at best make a gesture in their direction with a few samplings for select students. Such neglect is one of the most serious threats our society faces today.”

—Louise Cowan, “The Necessity of the Classics”  
(The Intercollegiate Review, Vol. 37, No. 1, Fall 2001)

Thinking that the rules stated in this syllabus do not apply to you is a serious mistake.

To finish:

We shall not cease from exploration  
And the end of all our exploring  
Will be to arrive where we started  
And know the place for the first time.

—T.S. Eliot, ”Little Gidding,” V, The Four Quartets
At the entrances to public parks in Britain are posted signs to inform people that motorized vehicles of all kinds and electronically amplified or electrified music are prohibited. Boorish Yanks surely wonder how the government would dare to restrict citizens’ rights by banning radios or stereos in a park—a public park. Do not all citizens have equal rights to do what they want? Surely, citizens have rights and more or less equal rights, at that. But people go to parks for two reasons: first, for the greenery, the trees and grass and bushes, and the water and the birds that greenery and water attract, all of which contrast with the pavement and steel and smells of town or city life; and second, for the quiet, the natural, peaceful quiet that contrasts so wondrously to the noise outside the park and that imitates in an artificially limited space the quiet of large natural spaces, the fields and hills and mountains. The Brits have determined that the green and the quiet provide a salubrious alternative to clutter and bustle and noise and that that alternative takes precedence of importance over citizens’ rights to impose ugliness of noise. The 17th Century writer, most famous for his book on fishing, stated their ideal in his practical and philosophical book, *The Compleat Angler*, in which he admonishes fishermen and would-be fishermen to “Study to be quiet.” Chatter and other noise detract from the experience, indeed from one of the main purposes, of angling—the seeking of quiet within which one can learn to listen to the sounds of nature, both internal and external, and by doing so to focus on matters of greater significance than daily work or even the immediate goal of catching a fish.

**our five minutes of quiet**

We all come to class from elsewhere in the world, our attentions scattered from the topics and issues we assemble to study. Whether we arrive with our lives and minds cluttered, we need to focus on those things that make up our purpose in this room. In order for us to enclose ourselves within the proper quiet necessary for focus, I am imposing a five-minute period of quiet following roll at the beginning of each class session. This time of enforced quiet is for each of you to gather your thoughts, review notes from the last class or the reading, to write down or perhaps revise already written questions you intend to ask following the quiet, and in general simply draw yourself into a focused presence in and for this class. It is in support of this purpose that no student will be allowed to enter the classroom during our five minutes of quiet.

During this five minutes no one will be allowed to speak or to communicate in any nonverbal way with classmates or me. Because you will already have discarded your cell phones and physical clutter and will have with you only your book, your notebook, and your pens, you should find it relatively easy to focus; moreover, you will find that as your practice of gathering yourself becomes habitual, it will become increasingly easy.

I expect that our taking five minutes before beginning the lectures and discussions will help us to accomplish more in the remaining time than we might ordinarily manage.
Schedule of Assignments: Philosophy 2300 Ethics in Practice
(44 class-meeting schedule)

1. Introduction to the course
2. Plato: *Gorgias*
3. Plato: *Gorgias*
4. Plato: *Gorgias*
5. Plato: *Gorgias*
6. Plato: *Gorgias*
7. Plato: *Gorgias*
8. Plato: *Gorgias*; DUE: Essay
9. Plato: Gorgias
10. Examination: Plato: *Gorgias*
11. Aristotle: *Nicomachean Ethics*, I
15. Aristotle: *Nicomachean Ethics*, II
16. Aristotle: *Nicomachean Ethics*, selections
17. Aristotle: *Nicomachean Ethics*, selections
18. Adler: *Aristotle for Everybody*
19. Adler: *Aristotle for Everybody*
20. Adler: *Aristotle for Everybody*
21. Adler: handout on moral values
22. Adler: handout, cont’d.
23. Adler: handout, cont’d.
23. Adler: handout, cont’d.
25. EXAMINATION: Adler handout
26. handout: Veatch
27. handout: Veatch
28. handout Veatch
29. handout Veatch
30. handout Veatch
31. handout Veatch
32. EXAMINATION: Veatch
33. Tolstoy: “Religion and Morality”
34. Tolstoy: “Religion and Morality”
35. Tolstoy: “Religion and Morality”
36. handouts: moral relativism
37. handouts: moral relativism
38. handouts: moral relativism
39. Kreeft: Refutation of Moral Relativism
40. Kreeft: Refutation . . .
41. Kreeft: Refutation . . .
42. Kreeft: Refutation . . .
43. Kreeft: Refutation . . .
44. Kreeft: Refutation . . .
45. Kreeft: Refutation . . .

FINAL EXAMINATION