

Honors 203I, Section 01/02: Virtue
California State University, Chico
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In this course we will explore questions about the nature of virtue. At its most basic, virtue is a concern with the sort of person that we think we ought to be, or the sort of character that we want to see in other people. While the term ‘virtue’ can be used in a wide variety of contexts (one might speak of the virtues that characterize a good doctor, an effective teacher, a talented chef, or a skilled public speaker, for instance), we will mostly be interested in uses that correspond to *moral* or *ethical* thinking: thus, virtues can be thought of as character traits that are in some deep or fundamental way connected with being a morally good or admirable person. Many character traits may be and have been cited as virtues of this sort—courage, honesty, charity, compassion, wisdom, and loyalty are some common examples in the Western tradition—but there is no single master list on which everyone agrees. Rather, just as different people give different accounts of what makes a particular character trait a virtue, different people will also give different accounts of which particular character traits count as virtues.

Discussions of virtue usually open up a host of questions, and this course will try to explore some of those. What makes something a virtue, and which particular traits count as virtues? How does virtue inform specific choices that we make in life, and do people who are virtuous necessarily strike us as being better people as a result? What is the relationship between “virtue” and “vice”, and do our views of one inform the other? Can virtues be taught, and if so, how? Is being virtuous something one can simply choose, or does it require skills, abilities, and sensitivities that can only be developed through a long period of training? Even if most cultures have some notion of and recognition of a standard or ideal of virtue, are specific virtues universal and timeless, and are the same virtues shared and respected across different cultures in different eras? Is virtue role specific—that is, is what counts as a virtue a function of the job or role or vocation to which a person is committed (e.g. soldier, parent, teacher, physician)? We will draw on ideas, methods, and tools from a variety of disciplines in order to explore and attempt to answer such questions.

We should note that, as this is a writing intensive course, there will be significant attention focused on your writing assignments, which will include frequent one-page reading responses or other writing assignments, a short paper due midway through the semester, and a final writing project. It is also important to realize that, as this is an Honors seminar, there is a substantial reading component. Some of these readings are dense or in other ways demanding; they will need to be read slowly and carefully, and with full attention, and you will need to read some more than once.

Course Texts and Readings:

Always bring required readings with you to class. *You are required to purchase the following four books.* Additional readings will be provided via the Blackboard Learn page. Most of these PDF's will need to be PRINTED and BROUGHT TO CLASS on the days they are due for discussion!

Books you must purchase (available at the Used Bookstore (118 Main Street, Chico):

Arendt, Hannah. *The Portable Hannah Arendt.*

Shawn, Wallace. *Aunt Dan and Lemon.*

Kurt Vonnegut, *Mother Night.*

Mitchell, Stephen. *The Book of Job* (will arrive later in the semester).

GRADING

Grade determination – The Basics:

Short writing assignments.....	20%
Midterm paper.....	10%
Final paper.....	20%
Attendance and Participation.....	20%
Cultural Events.....	10%
Final Exam.....	20%

Writing Assignments

Short Writing Assignments

Frequently throughout the semester (though not *necessarily* every week) students will be asked to turn in a short writing assignment. (“Short” will typically mean 400-500 words, though we may sometimes ask for more.) (Some of these assignments may take the form of posts on online Discussion Boards.)

Sometimes a specific prompt or study question will be provided, to which the assignment must respond. Sometimes the task will simply be to provide a concise and critical summary of the week’s reading.

NOTE: When an assignment is due, you are required to bring TWO copies of it to class. You will hand in one at the beginning of class, and keep the other to refer to. The instructors may ask you to read your assignment or parts of it. This means that you must be present in the classroom when class begins in order to receive credit for a short assignment for that week.

Midterm and Final Paper

A mid-length paper of (1000-1500) words will be due midway through the semester. A more substantial final paper (3000-4000) words will be due at the end of the semester. More details about these assignments will be made available later in the semester.

Standards for All Written Assignments

All of the written assignments are to be considered formal writing. They should be outlined, drafted, proofread; and typed in MLA format, 1” margins, Times New Roman, 12-point type. Each assignment must be titled. The midterm and final paper should be double-spaced; the weekly writing assignments should be single-spaced. The purpose of these papers is to promote a careful reading and understanding of the material. The papers should will help you think seriously about the reading; help you formulate questions, concerns, and criticisms that you have with the reading; and assist you develop a stronger, leaner, and felicitous writing style. This will be especially helpful for the writing of your final project and other writing that you will be expected to do while a student at CSUC.

Grading of these papers is based on content—including a demonstration of your deep attempts to understand the materials we study—as well as your language skills (including word choice, grammar, spelling, syntax, attention to grace and style) and the seriousness with which you undertake the assignment, determined by judging, among other things, the time and attention the essay or paper reflects.

Note that, and we cannot stress this enough, **plagiarism and other forms of cheating will not be tolerated.** Students guilty of cheating (including those who turn in plagiarized papers or assignments) will automatically fail the course and will be reported to Student Judicial Affairs. It is important to make sure you know what plagiarism is and how to avoid it, and that you do not expect the instructors to make an exception in your case. See “Academic Integrity” and the Appendix at the end of this syllabus (“What is Plagiarism and Why Is It Important?”) for more information.

Attendance and Participation

You will only be able to succeed and excel in this class if you consistently attend class, engage the material, and complete assignments. We allow three absences from class without penalty. (Being present means being there on time and remaining until the end of class.) All absences beyond the first three may count against your attendance / participation grade, regardless of whether you feel you have a good reason to be absent. (After all, what matters is simply whether you are there, learning and contributing. If you aren't, you aren't. See "Why Bad Grades (Sometimes) Happen to Good People," below.) (Note that we reserve the right to drop students who miss a significant number of classes or assignments.)

Remember that you are evaluated not just on your attendance (i.e. mere physical presence), but on your level of participation. This includes being prepared (see "Class Preparation: The Reading," below), paying attention, and having something to contribute. Some people are naturally more talkative than others, and quality of contribution matters as much as or more than quantity: talking a lot without saying very much will not earn you a good participation grade. On the other hand, please attempt to make at least some contribution to conversation, even periodically; it would be difficult to imagine a situation in which a student was silent through every class session and still received full points for participation.

Final exam

A comprehensive final exam will be held at the end of the semester.

Additional Required Events

(1) All "Virtue" students are required to attend TWO cultural events, and submit brief reviews / write-ups. We suggest films being shown in the University Film Series, Tuesdays, 7:30 pm in Ayres 106 (schedule at <http://www.csuchico.edu/humanitiescenter/events/film-series/>). We will consider other cultural events, but **please get it approved by us first**. (This includes films being shown at Tinseltown or in other forums – most films today are not cultural events!)

(2) All "Virtue" students are required to attend the Honors Thesis Presentations on **May 5th at 4pm**.

Late Assignment Policy

No late papers or assignments will be accepted under any circumstances. Please make note of this!

Class preparation: The Reading

You should understand from the outset that it is your main task in this course to understand the assigned texts. The topics are difficult, the texts are often difficult. Therefore, you will have to put a lot of work into this task.

We ask that you come to class (and approach their quizzes) well-prepared. Prepared for what? Prepared to understand what goes on, and to take part in the discussion. This will require, at a bare minimum, that

you have *carefully read* the assigned readings. Make notes (i) summarizing what you understand, and (ii) noting what you do not (yet) understand. Also, make a note of any words whose meanings you do not know and look them up in a dictionary. *Write down the definitions.* After completing the initial reading, take a short break: go for a walk or bike ride, sit in the bath, or put some music on. Let your brain do its work (which often requires distracting it a bit). Then ask yourself what you recall from the reading, and what you do and do not understand. At that point it is time to return to the text and seek out the difficult passages. WE CANNOT STRESS ENOUGH the importance of reading twice—not right in a row, but with a day or so in between. Take notes when you read! (See below for a few helpful tips on this.)

There are ample studies that show retention of material is at its highest when students read and make notes on PAPER. Please consider this for the PDF's we post—especially if you feel you tend to struggle with difficult reading. Please try not to read the material for this course on your MOBILE DEVICE. This is not a good way to retain the complex ideas presented.

All required reading is due at the beginning of class on the day for which it is assigned. Do the reading beforehand, and bring your copy of the reading to class. (You will need to print paper copies of those readings that are not included in the assigned books, since laptops and other technological devices are not permitted in class.) Plan to spend significant time with the readings. In some of your other courses you will, perhaps, be fed a diet of simplistic, pre-digested information that you can memorize and absorb without really thinking about it. This will not happen here. We're going to work with some difficult, edgy material, and it will require your full attentions.

Class preparation: Note-Taking

(1) In class—Please purchase a small notebook for this class only!

You should plan to take notes in class, every day. Since laptops, etc. are not permitted you will have to take notes by hand. Interestingly, there are many studies confirming that people understand and retain more when they take notes by hand. If you are medically unable to do this, and have a DSS accommodation for computer note taking, please send your DSS information to Professor Jollimore immediately.

(2) On the readings

When taking notes on readings, it is useful to think of yourself as being engaged in three distinct but related tasks: *describing*, *interpreting*, and *evaluating*.

DIE: (this is not a command to your enemies, but rather....Describe=Interpret=Evaluate!!)

1. *Describe*: What is happening in the reading? What is the author's main point—i.e. what is the most important idea the author wants to convince you is true? (There may sometimes be more than one.) How does she try to persuade you of this point?
2. *Interpret*: How does the author's claims relate to our understanding of virtue? What implications do the author's claims have for that understanding?
3. *Evaluate*: Are the author's claims plausible? Are there objections that need to be considered? Is the author relying on questionable or undefended assumptions? What potential complications need to be addressed? What further questions need to be asked?

On occasion, our writing assignments may take the form of a DIE. (Not as often as Beauty Seminar, though!)

Technology in the Classroom

The use of cell phones, laptops, tablets, iPods, Sony Playstations, and any other electronic devices is not permitted in the “Virtue” classroom. If you have a medical condition that necessitates some sort of technology, please bring appropriate documentation to us immediately.

Cell phones are to be OFF or SILENT and STORED IN BACKPACKS UNDER YOUR DESK. This is non-negotiable. If you have some sort of family emergency and need to be able to be reached, you may let us know at the beginning of class. USING YOUR PHONE IN CLASS WILL HAVE SEVERE CONSEQUENCES FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION GRADE!

By way of rationale, please refer to the following article: <http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/answer-sheet/wp/2014/09/25/why-a-leading-professor-of-new-media-just-banned-technology-use-in-class/> .

UNIVERSITY POLICIES AND CAMPUS RESOURCES

Dropping and Adding

You are responsible for understanding the policies and procedures about add/drops, academic renewal, etc. found <http://www.csuchico.edu/catalog/>. You should be aware of the new deadlines and penalties for adding and dropping classes. Consult the CSU Chico website.

Academic Integrity

The standards of academic honesty as set forth in the CSU, Chico University catalog are to be conformed to. **Cheating will result in a failing grade for the course, and will be reported to Student Judicial Affairs for resolution. (Please note: there will be no exceptions to this policy. Please don't ask.) In particular, plagiarism will not be tolerated.** Students should understand that plagiarism includes *any* uncredited use of another person's words, ideas, or intellectual work, or any attempt to claim as one's own the product of someone else's intellectual labor. This means that assignments must be written in your own words, and that any use of other people's words or ideas *must* be footnoted and cited. The Appendix to this syllabus, “What is Plagiarism and Why is it Important?”, provides more information and assistance in distinguishing legitimate usage from plagiarism.

Faculty members are required to report all infractions to the Office of Student Judicial Affairs. The university's policy on academic integrity and other resources related to student conduct can be found at: <http://www.csuchico.edu/sjd/integrity.shtml>

Disability Policy

Please let the professor know if you have a disability and have course-related accommodation needs. It is your right, in accordance with the provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act, to make such requests.

The Writing Center

Students who are having difficulties with the writing component of the course, which is substantial, are encouraged to seek assistance and guidance from the Student Learning Center. The SSCs hours are: Monday - Thursday 9:00 am-6:00 pm, Friday 9:00 am-3:00 pm. For more information call 898-6839.

Information about the Writing Center can be found online at <http://www.csuchico.edu/slc/wtutorinfo.shtml>.

The Writing Center now offers online services for all students. Make sure to submit your paper at least 3 days in advance.

STANDARDS FOR CONDUCT, ETC.

Why Bad Grades Sometimes Happen to Good People

Students should keep in mind that a grade reflects one thing and one thing only: the quality of the work submitted by that student *for that particular course*. The fact that a student does well in *other* classes is not relevant; the fact that she is a very nice (or not nice) person, or that he *really needs* this grade in order to graduate, keep his scholarship or financial aid, etc., is sadly not relevant at all. A grade is not an evaluation of a person's character or personality; nor is it an evaluation of what she does in her other courses, or what she could have done in this one under ideal conditions. Rather, one's final grade will reflect *the quality of the work actually submitted in order to complete the course*.

For this reason, personal circumstances, etc., are entirely irrelevant to the question of grading. A student who is having a difficult semester, for any of various reasons, might perform less well than he or she would have under other circumstances. Nevertheless, if the work she actually performs is of C quality, she will receive a C. Students, in other words, will be evaluated on the basis of the work they do, and not on the basis of the work they might have done under other, more favorable circumstances.

If a student should face extraordinarily difficult circumstances that prevent her from completing the course in a satisfactory manner (for instance, a serious accident or disruptive illness), the instructor may be willing, should it be appropriate, to drop the student from the course without penalty. Under no circumstances, however, will the professor raise a student's grade in order to reflect his estimate of what that student might have done under better conditions. *Thus the only way to earn an A for this course is to submit excellent work that merits an A.*

Classroom Conduct: The Classroom as Free Speech Zone

It is important that students feel free to express or bring up any idea that they may wish to discuss. The point of philosophy is to try to get at the truth (or as near the truth as possible) and that will only happen if people are committed to free and open discussion. The philosophy classroom, then, ought to be a free speech zone—with one important exception, which is discussed in the box below.

Note what the phrase “free speech zone” *does* mean and what it *does not* mean. It *does* mean that students should be free in, and should not be prevented from, introducing and discussing any idea they think is worthy of discussion—even ideas that might strike some people as offensive.¹ It does *not* mean that everything that is said must be “respected” or treated (by the professor or by other students) as true or reasonable. (One can respect a person’s right to speak freely and truly while not respecting what is being said. Indeed, if we *prevent* others from disagreeing, or even from strongly disagreeing, then we are violating *their* right to free speech.) And it does *not* mean that there are no standards, or that it does not matter what is said in the classroom since, after all, “anything goes.” Some contributions are more reasonable, more articulate, better thought out—than others, and in the context of the classroom, students should always be trying to think and speak at the highest level possible.

The one exception to the free speech rule

The one exception to the free speech rule is this: **no one, student or professor, may address another individual in an abusive manner or launch a personal attack.** At the risk of repetition: you may criticize the *ideas* of other people as strenuously as you like – indeed, we should all feel *obligated* to criticize all ideas as strenuously as we can – but at the same time, the people who voice the ideas must always be treated with respect. This is a fine but usually clear line; if the professors feels it is being crossed, we will say so, and students are expected to defer to our judgment on this matter. (Of course, if you feel you are being personally attacked and the professors don’t say anything, then you should speak up. But don’t respond by attacking the attacker.)

Self-criticism

As mentioned above, students are encouraged to be critical of the ideas discussed. The hardest, but perhaps most important, part of this is being critical of one’s *own* ideas. The ability to be self-critical—to ask, “why do I believe this, and is my reason for believing it good enough?”—is what separates many otherwise competent thinkers from those who truly shine. We all know people who are so bound up in their own beliefs and prejudices that they cannot even take seriously the possibility that they might be mistaken. What is hard, but *essential*, is that you do your best to make sure that you yourself are not one of those people.

¹ What do you do when someone offers an idea you find offensive? You don’t have the right to keep them from speaking; but you certainly do have the right, as well as the obligation, to speak up and say what you think of the proposal under consideration, and why you disagree. (Students also have the right to leave the room if they feel very uncomfortable. It’s usually better, however, to stay and speak up, than to get up and leave.)

Four Conversations *Not* to Have with your Instructor:

What not to do after you miss a class:

Student: I wasn't here on Tuesday. Did we do anything important?

Instructor (sarcastically): Fortunately, no. When we realized you were absent we were so demoralized we considered just going home. In the end I decided we would go ahead but would not cover anything important on Tuesday. I only talked about trivial things that you don't need to know at all. In fact I'd say that I completely wasted the time of everyone who did show up.

Student: Oh, good.

How not to ask for help (1):

Student: I need help. I'm not doing well on the quizzes.

Instructor: How much time are you putting into the readings?

Student: Not much. I have a full-time job. And my other courses are really demanding.

Instructor: So you're not putting a lot of work into the readings, and you're not getting good grades?

Student: Right, exactly.

Instructor: That sounds about right.

How not to ask for help (2):

Student: I need help. I'm not doing well on the quizzes.

Instructor: How much time are you putting into the readings?

Student: Not a lot. It's a waste of time anyway; I don't understand them. They hurt my head. It's like they're not even writing in English. In my other courses they spoon-feed me exactly what I need to know and I just regurgitate it right back to them. We just have to memorize a few simple points.

Instructor: So essentially, your other instructors treat you like you're really stupid and not capable of thinking on your own or learning anything difficult?

Student: That's right!

Instructor: And you're not insulted by this?

Student: What do you mean?

Instructor: Right. Anything else I can help you with?

How not to express concern about your grade:

Student: I'm concerned about my grade.

Instructor: It's the second to last week of the semester. If you were concerned about your grade why didn't you come in early in the semester, when there was still time to do something about it?

Student: Yeah, I don't know. Can't we do something now? Maybe I could do something for extra credit?

Instructor: I don't offer extra credit. If I gave you that chance I'd have to offer the same chance to every student in the class.

Student: But I really need a passing grade.

Instructor: Didn't you really need a passing grade three months ago? Why didn't you do your work then, if you're so willing to put that much effort into extra credit work now?

(long pause)

Student: So, like, is there anything I can do about my grade?

Instructor: Do you, like, have a time machine?

Student Learning Objectives: General Education and Its Pathways

This course is a lower division wildcard for General Education (GE), meeting the goals for the following areas: A2, C1, C2, D1, D2, and E. You may use this course to satisfy one of those requirements. You do not need to decide now which requirement it will satisfy. The following GE Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs) will be especially promoted in this course:

Active Enquiry will be promoted through in-class activities and discussion, and writing assignments that require students to produce an original argument.

Written Communication will be promoted through the reflection pieces and argumentative essay.

Critical Thinking will be promoted throughout the course through the introduction of a variety of views about that often conflict with standard views as well as each other. Students will be asked to assess these views in both class discussion and written assignments. Moreover, there will be emphasis on techniques of logical reasoning and common errors.

Global Engagement will be promoted through the substantial coverage of East Asian and Islamic thought concerning truth and knowledge.

This course may not satisfy the minor requirements for the particular pathway you may be pursuing. Talk to your instructor

APPENDIX: PLAGIARISM

What is Plagiarism and why is it Important?

(Adapted from a pamphlet produced by Writing Tutorial Services, Indiana University, Bloomington, IN)

In college courses, we are continually engaged with other people's ideas: we read them in texts, hear them in lecture, discuss them in class, and incorporate them into our own writing. As a result, it is very important that we give credit where it is due. Plagiarism is using others' ideas and words without clearly acknowledging the source of that information.

To avoid plagiarism, you must give credit whenever you use

- another person's idea, opinion, or theory;
- any facts, statistics, graphs, drawings--any pieces of information--that are not common knowledge;
- quotations of another person's actual spoken or written words; or
- paraphrase of another person's spoken or written words.

How to Recognize Unacceptable and Acceptable Paraphrases

Here's the ORIGINAL text, from page 1 of *Lizzie Borden: A Case Book of Family and Crime in the 1890s* by Joyce Williams et al.:

The rise of industry, the growth of cities, and the expansion of the population were the three great developments of late nineteenth century American history. As new, larger, steam-powered factories became a feature of the American landscape in the East, they transformed farm hands into industrial laborers, and provided jobs for a rising tide of immigrants. With industry came urbanization the growth of large cities (like Fall River, Massachusetts, where the Borden family lived), which became the centers of production as well as of commerce and trade.

Here's an UNACCEPTABLE paraphrase that is plagiarism:

The increase of industry, the growth of cities, and the explosion of the population were three large factors of nineteenth century America. As steam-driven companies became more visible in the eastern part of the country, they changed farm hands into factory workers and provided jobs for the large wave of immigrants. With industry came the growth of large cities like Fall River where the Borden family lived which turned into centers of commerce and trade as well as production.

What makes this passage plagiarism? The preceding passage is considered plagiarism for two reasons:

- the writer has only changed around a few words and phrases, or changed the order of the original's sentences.
- the writer has failed to cite a source for any of the ideas or facts.

If you do either or both of these things, you are plagiarizing.

Here is an ACCEPTABLE paraphrase:

Fall River, where the Borden family lived, was typical of northeastern industrial cities of the nineteenth century. Steam-powered production had shifted labor from agriculture to manufacturing, and as immigrants arrived in the US, they found work in these new factories. As a result, populations grew, and large urban areas arose. Fall River was one of these manufacturing and commercial centers (Williams 1).

What is Plagiarism and why is it Important? (page 2)

Why is this passage acceptable? This is acceptable paraphrasing because the writer:

- accurately relays the information in the original
- uses her own words.
- lets her reader know the source of her information.

Here's an example of quotation and paraphrase used together, which is also ACCEPTABLE:

Fall River, where the Borden family lived, was typical of northeastern industrial cities of the nineteenth century. As steam-powered production shifted labor from agriculture to manufacturing, the demand for workers "transformed farm hands into factory workers," and created jobs for immigrants. In turn, growing populations increased the size of urban areas. Fall River was one of these manufacturing hubs that were also "centers of commerce and trade" (Williams 1).

Why is this passage acceptable? This is acceptable paraphrasing because the writer:

- records the information in the original passage accurately.
- gives credit for the ideas in this passage.
- indicates which part is taken directly from her source by putting the passage in quotation marks and citing the page number.

Note that if the writer had used these phrases or sentences in her own paper without putting quotation marks around them, she would be PLAGIARIZING. Using another person's phrases or sentences without putting quotation marks around them is considered plagiarism EVEN IF THE WRITER CITES IN HER OWN TEXT THE SOURCE OF THE PHRASES OR SENTENCES SHE HAS QUOTED.

Plagiarism and the World Wide Web

The World Wide Web has become a more popular source of information for student papers, and many questions have arisen about how to avoid plagiarizing these sources. In most cases, the same rules apply as to a printed source: when a writer must refer to ideas or quote from a web site, she must cite that source.

If a writer wants to use visual information from a web site, many of the same rules apply. Copying visual information or graphics from a web site (or from a printed source) is very similar to quoting information, and the source of the visual information or graphic must be cited. These rules also apply to other uses of textual or visual information from web sites; for example, if a student is constructing a web page as a class project, and copies graphics or visual information from other sites, she must also provide information about the source of this information. In this case, it might be a good idea to obtain permission from the site's owner before using the graphics.

Strategies for Avoiding Plagiarism

1. Put in quotations everything that comes directly from the text especially when taking notes.
2. Paraphrase, but be sure you are not just rearranging or replacing a few words. Instead, read over what you want to paraphrase carefully; cover up the text with your hand, or close the text so you can't see any of it (and so aren't tempted to use the text as a "guide"). Write out the idea in your own words without peeking.
3. Check your paraphrase against the original text to be sure you have not accidentally used the same phrases or words, and that the information is accurate.