

THURSDAY 8 AUGUST 2013

INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS OF PHILOSOPHY

Joint Master's Course in Moral Philosophy

I have the pleasure to inform you of the syllabus, the activities, the perspectives and the role of our common postgraduate programme in Ethics.

It has been organized since 2009 jointly by the Faculty of Philology of the University of the Peloponnese and the Department of Philosophy, Pedagogics and Psychology of the Athens University and works successfully for a fifth year in the academic period 2013-2014. During the last four years 107 postgraduate students were registered and 39 of them are graduated.

A major incentive and spur for this joint academic effect of our two Universities was the lack of a postgraduate programme in Ethics in Greek Universities as a whole. The importance of such a programme for our modern globalized societies suffering mainly and primarily from a crisis in cultural values was obvious.

The programme was published on July 2008 in the official Journal of the Greek State and began life in the academic year 2009-2010. The selection criteria, mainly focused on the candidates qualifications, are also checked and confirmed by a special interview.

The Syllabus, characterized by its coherence and lucidity, is divided into four semesters, namely two academic years, and comprises eight (8) obligatory and six (6) optional courses, each of them lasting at least for a period of 13 weeks of teaching. In the fourth semester the postgraduate students prepare their Master Thesis on a subject on Ethics of their own choice from the material of the Syllabus.

The main keystones of the Syllabus are two: a) the History of Ethics from Antiquity, Middle Ages and Renaissance to Modern and Contemporary Era and b) important issues of Systematic and especially Applied Ethics, mainly concerning contemporary societies. A conjunction of the past with the present is thus achieved.

Regarding obligatory courses, the Syllabus includes: Systems of Ethics, Texts of Ancient Greek Moral Philosophy, Social Philosophy and Ethics, Bioethics, Technology and Ethics, Law and Ethics, Environment Ethics and Business or Work Ethics.

Indicatively, some highlights of the issues taught:

The course **SYSTEMS OF ETHICS** deals with the principal relevant theories from Socrates to Stoicism and in Modern Era from Utilitarianism and Idealism to the Phenomenological and Analytical approaches of Ethics. The examination of issues of epistemology and terminology in the field of Ethics in its historical development is also included.

THE TEXTS OF ANCIENT GREEK ETHICS focus on students' acquaintance with the cornerstone of Ethics, the Ancient Greek Philosophy and particularly the Presocratics (Xenophanes, Heraclitus, Parmenides, Empedocles, Anaxagoras and Democritus), Socrates, Plato, Aristotle and from Hellenistic Philosophy to Neoplatonism.

Key-values examined are indicatively: ἀρετή and αγαθόν, dialectic, irony, έρως (love), idea, ευδαιμονία (prosperity), δόξα and αλήθεια (truth), επιστήμη (knowledge) and άγνοια (ignorance), ψυχή, αθανασία (immortality), justice, law and free will. Students are familiarized with the real dimension of Ethics as a par excellence applied branch of Philosophy of the ΠΩΣ ΒΙΩΤΕΟΝ. The interrelation of fundamental texts, such as among others, the *Phaedrus, Symposium and Republic* of Plato and Aristotle's writings of Ethics contributes to the approach of substance of Moral Philosophy and its tremendous reception and influence on Later and Modern Philosophical thinking.

The course **SOCIAL PHILOSOPHY AND ETHICS** examines the differences of Social Philosophy from the other branches of Philosophy, its relations with Social Sciences and its development from earlier to modern trends, especially regarding social institutions and reforms.

The particularly important nowadays course of **BIOETHICS** contributes to the familiarity with modern crucial issues, such as euthanasia (mercy killing), abortion and cloning, and points out their strong links with philosophical thought.

Bioethics is examined as a separate field of Applied Ethics dealing with moral and social issues resulting from the rapid progress of Biology and Medicine.

TECHNOLOGY or better, **TECHNOLOGICAL PROGRESS AND ETHICS**

The course refers to serious moral problems that society faces today as a result from the effects caused by the rapid and often uncontrolled development of Science and Technology. Man's influence on the environment, the need for the protection of personal data and particularly the tremendous effect of technology, especially of the Internet, on a young person's character and social behaviour are among the issues discussed. The course also examines the ways that modern practices of Biomedicine and Biotechnology, such as cloning and eugenics, affect moral thought and action.

LAW AND ETHICS

The relations between fundamental moral and social values, human and civic rights as well as legal institutions and principles from the antiquity to modern times form the core of the course Law and Ethics.

The Sophistic antithesis between Law and Nature, the concept of justice and law in Plato and Aristotle and the modern trends on the Philosophy of Law propounded by influential thinkers such as Nietzsche, Heidegger, Foucault as well as Max Weber and Leo Strauss, are presented and analyzed.

ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS

The important for today course of Environmental Ethics belongs to Applied Ethics. Its main purpose is to examine Environment as a common ecumenical GOOD (ΑΓΑΘΟΝ) and to emphasize the need for its protection and maintenance for the sake of future generations. The relevant theories on Environmental Ethics are discussed, such as those of Emerson, Thoreau, Muir, Brennan and Katz. The Movement of Deep Ecology of Naess is extensively examined in its reception of the Ethics of Spinoza and the views of Martin Heidegger, while the role of Greenpeace and Earth First as well as the Declarations of Political Movements on Environment are also explored.

WORK OR BUSINESS ETHICS

The specific course, using team teaching and active learning serves this objective: to familiarize its students with the concept of business, its social role, the need for ethical behaviour and, given the global cultural differences, the varying degrees of ethical adaptation of the human enterprise. The course discusses briefly the main elements of business ethics, from accounting to marketing, but primarily focuses on the ethics of the work force.

Today's business operates on totally different premises than those before the Industrial Revolution! Business also seeks 'talents' and their work 'happiness'. Business aims to the continuing education of its work force, its ethical behaviour, its self-actualization.

Those are the main issues included in this course of work ethics, which Professor John Thanopoulos teaches for us. Incidentally, after 36 years of world-wide teaching, last year the World Education Congress named him as 'Best Professor of International Business'

This very brief reference to some aspects of the principal courses of our joint Postgraduate Programme suffices, I hope, to show the welcome amalgamation of tradition and innovation, the blending of the prestige of ancient philosophy with the understanding of the contribution of the modern era to Ethics and the necessity of ethical behaviour at all its aspects.

The following optional courses also combine the history and modern developments in Ethics. Indicatively, the Syllabus includes:

TEXTS OF MEDIEVAL AND RENAISSANCE ETHICS

The specific course forms an appropriate sequel to that of the Texts of Ancient Greek Philosophy. The freedom of will and the Divine Providence, the meaning and the significance of τὸ ἄγαθόν are fundamental concepts characterizing that period. The views of the era's influential thinkers such as John of Damascus, Thomas Aquinas, Saint Augustine on the one hand and Marsilio Ficino, Giordano Bruno, Niccolo Machiavelli on the other, reveal important trends in the development of Ethics.

TEXTS OF MODERN AND CONTEMPORARY ETHICS

These two specific courses complete the reference to the history of Ethics.

The main purpose of this course on **Modern Ethics** is to examine the individual within the social nexus, in interaction with other human existences, so as to explore the moral constituents of human action. In this frame, the concepts of agony, pain, death, fear, despair, loss, passion, virtue, love, justice (among many of others) are examined, through the work of major philosophers.

Pascal, as a predecessor to existentialism, and the concepts of "logic" and the "heart" (reference to the *Pensées*) are followed thereafter by the theories of ethics formulated by Descartes and Spinoza. A

reference to Dostoyevsky is determined in accordance with the impact of Kierkegaard. A number of other important philosophers are examined, such as Nietzsche, Sartre and Camus (*The Plague, The Stranger, The Rebel, The Myth of Sisyphus*).

Subjects for subsequent study are David Hume's views on Ethics; most notably his moral anti-rationalism and the definition of the disparity between reason and the moral judgments, the function of will, the natural and artificial virtues. Kierkegaard's main views on Ethics are examined and analyzed in the context of later existentialism and with regard to this theological and anthropological admittances. Part of the lesson is dedicated to the presentation of the Ethics of Arthur Schopenhauer; specifically an analysis of the basic concepts of will, love (as a metaphysical principle), and the motives of moral action, namely egoism, malice and compassion.

Emphasis, moreover, is given to the evaluation of the Hegelian interpretation of certain moral concepts in the work *Philosophy of Right*. In continuation, the concept of justice as fairness and that of the global democracy according to John Rawls, along with the dialectical materialism and Karl Marx, are given significant consideration.

In Contemporary Ethics among others, and more specifically in the *Philosophy of Life*, Bergson's thinking on intuition, memory and elan vital is explored, followed by the views of Miguel de Unamuno influenced, by Kierkegaard and Nietzsche.

In the *Philosophy of Existence* or *Existentialism* the works of Nicolas Berdiaeff and Martin Buber are examined and in *Structuralism* the innovative views of Michel Foucault on justice and punishment and Franz Kafka's concept of anxiety and its moral deadlock of people and modern societies are also discussed.

ETHICS AND ARCHAEOLOGY

This is an innovative course introduced in the programme in view of the special interest for Archaeology and Cultural Management at the School of Humanities of the University of the Peloponnese. The innovation consists in the special emphasis laid on the moral duty of the preservation, promotion and management of cultural heritage, especially of the archeological treasures. The relevant legislation, the code of professional ethics and the principles of human rights are examined in the framework of this significant course.

INTERCULTURAL ETHICS

The course deals with the critical analysis of moral beliefs developed in the course of Western Civilization in different eras and cultures. Special emphasis is given to the significant issues in cross-cultural ethics raised after the Second World War and especially in our globalization era.

ETHICS AND RELIGION

This specific, very important for the coherence of modern societies, course shows the support and the hope religion offers in difficult situations of human life. It also reveals some positive and encouraging answers that faith gives to metaphysical questions, such as the mystery of death. The issues commonly

examined by Ethics and Religion play an important role in this course.

The multidimensional character of the Syllabus attracts the interest of the students, widens their knowledge, strengthens their mental skills and critical power in focusing in many cases on the continuity of thinking from Antiquity to Modern Era and supports their career perspectives.

All postgraduate students are evaluated in accordance with specific scholarly standards, such as essays on particular topics relating on each course of the first three semesters, and in the fourth semester by a written dissertation. The examination system, rational and lucid as it is, promotes excellence and distinction.

A special aim of the programme is to familiarize its audience with the modern method of scientific work, regarding the composition of essays centred on collecting the appropriate bibliography, using of courses and citing them with accuracy. Teaching from the original texts of the great thinkers contributes remarkably to this goal. Critical thinking and not useless memorization is thus achieved offering scientific maturity and experience. In addition, the programme has proved to be particularly useful for young persons regarding their character-forming experience, energizing them and revitalizing their skills through intensive research.

It is also worth noting that the Teaching Staff is not limited only to members of the Academic Staff of the collaborating Universities of Athens and Peloponnese, but it also embraces Professors from other Hellenic Universities, a fact that secures high quality specialization in teaching the various courses of the programme.

In conclusion, the programme reveals the added value for the effective collaboration of Universities in Greece and elsewhere in the field of postgraduate studies in teaching and research. It seems to provide a model in Greek academic community for fruitful joint efforts with promising and welcome results for the upgrading of Higher Education

Professor Georgia Xanthaki-Karamanou