

The Well-Trained Mind Academy
Introduction to Ethics and Moral Philosophy

Course Blackboard site: wtma.blackboard.com

Course texts:

Nota Bene: This class uses online versions of texts available for free to all students. Please use the edition linked here.

Aristotle—[The Nicomachean Ethics \(Selections\)](#)

Aquinas, Thomas—[Selections from the Summa Theologiae](#), specifically the Treatise on Virtues

Augustine—[Retractions \(Selection\)](#)

Kant, Immanuel—[What is Enlightenment?](#)

Plato—[Crito, Meno](#)

Le Guin, Ursula—[The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas](#)

Melville, Herman—[Billy Budd](#)

Twain, Mark—[The Facts Concerning the Recent Carnival Crime in Connecticut](#)

Course Description:

Introduction to Ethics and Moral Philosophy challenges the high school student to learn and acquire the skills necessary to think about, analyze, and discuss ethical dilemmas. This course will center around a three-fold theme of questions regarding the meaning of the word “Good.”—“What is the Good?”, “How can we know what is the Good?”, and “Can we live the Good in our lives?” The course will examine foundational texts from Plato, Aristotle, Augustine, Thomas Aquinas, and Immanuel Kant, among others, and will continue to examine contemporary ethical issues through the lens provided by these classic authors. Because this will be the first introduction for many students to these key thinkers, the passages selected will be abbreviated and students' work will focus on learning how to read these key thinkers and consider the questions they ask.

Work in the course will consist of the following: 1) a weekly reading assignment in a key text from the philosophical tradition; 2) a set of reading questions to assist the student in comprehension of the text; 3) in-class discussion of that week's text or passage; 4) a weekly ethical “case-study” discussion forum which will be relevant to the student's life, where the student will be asked to articulate their position on right and wrong; 5) two extended papers (approximately three pages each) on a text discussed in class; 6) a take-home midterm test; and 7) a take home final exam.

Students are not expected to have any background in the material. The reading passages selected will be appropriate for a high school student with a good ability to read and to comprehend texts on their own. The course will challenge the student to examine their own personal answers and beliefs to the questions listed above. While the course will not necessarily push a particular ethical theory, the course is not an open-ended questioning of all ethical thought. The goal of the course is to help the student understand that a “good” life is possible, and that the examination of

Week 16

Is the Good Life Desirable?

Tuesday—Reading and Reaction—Herman Melville—[Billy Budd](#)

Friday—Paper #2 Due

Week 17

Exam Week Only, no class