

## PHIL\*3350-01

### SELECTED TOPICS IN PHILOSOPHY II - EXPLORING WHAT'S INVOLVED IN LIVING A MORALLY REFLECTIVE LIFE [0.50]

Instructor: J. Harvey

Brief Course Synopsis:

In this course there are two main goals: to explore realistically what living a morally reflective life involves, and secondly, to study biographies of some (selected) famous individuals for insights on this issue.

It's easy to think that living a morally reflective life is just for "saints" and that we have to be extraordinary people in order to take such a goal seriously. One of the main goals of the course is to explore what moral commitment 'looks like' in real life, since there is a great deal of over\_ simplification in everyday thinking about this. Moral heroes are not morally perfect! Moral failures are not the end of the road (unless they are allowed to be). And so on. Hopefully this course will give us a realistic vision of "the moral life" that is approachable and inviting. We will look at the lives of some famous people in order to gather insights about taking moral commitment seriously. We will look at aspects of moral character they developed, what difficulties and challenges they overcame, what stereotypes they resisted, what commonly held social 'mores' they rejected, what failures and disappointments they managed to move past, and so on. Much more, though, is involved in this study than just learning the major facts about their lives. The biographies will be the springboard for insights that students in the course will have to explain carefully and then give reasons for. So you will be looking at the lives of these famous people so as to think, explore, and begin to give reasons for points you have thought of about trying to live a morally reflective life.

In several respects this is not a standard course. First of all, if you want a class where you sit and listen, take notes, learn the material, and write exams and papers, then this is definitely *not* the right class for you. In this course you will need to do some serious thinking and exploring, and you will be working on developing certain skills. You will also need to do some week to week work, and you will need to make regular and thoughtful contributions in classes. (This of course is what makes it interesting.) Secondly, you will need to be comfortable taking seriously what living a morally reflective life might involve and be comfortable talking about the various aspects of such a commitment.

So students in this class will need to be involved and committed throughout, and participation is essential. Skipping classes will radically affect your grade and make it very difficult to pass the course. So will attending classes but without coming prepared and with substantial and *thoughtful* contributions to make! The

preparation, thinking, contributions, and attendance not only affect your own learning experience, but that of your fellow students. For these reasons, the commitment to the whole course and the variety of work involved is very important. It will greatly affect how rewarding you find the course experience and it will greatly affect your grade for the course. It's best that this be explained here, so that there is no misunderstanding as to the nature of the course. So it's a course for students who genuinely wish to think, explore, and participate in some discussions in class, and who will also commit to doing the basic week to week work faithfully. Such students usually get a lot out of a course of this kind.

REQUIRED TEXT / READINGS: TBA

FORMAL EVALUATIONS:

TBA (but a sizeable portion of the grade will be for "preparation and participation", which may include both oral and written work).

PREREQUISITE(S): 1.50 credits in Philosophy, or 7.50 credits