

Ethics Institute Newsletter

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Upcoming Films in the Ethics Series

All films are scheduled to begin at 6pm.

- Monday, Oct. 19, "V for Vendetta"
- Monday, Nov. 16, "Whose Life Is It Anyway?"
- Monday, Feb. 15, "Crash"
- Monday, Mar, 15, "Glengarry Glen Ross"
- Monday, Apr. 19, "Dr. Doolittle 2"

Ethics Brown Bags Continue!

The Brownbag series got off to a great beginning, September 24.

Dr. Tony Coumoundouros welcomed the gathering. He was followed by President Docking indicating his support and enthusiasm for the institute.

Dr. James Spence's presentation followed with a presentation on "Ethics, Morality, Codes, and Law: Essential Distinctions".

As the first presentation in the series, Dr. Spence laid a good foundation for making distinctions for our understanding of the boundaries of ethical conversation. His remarks generated a lot of lively discussion.

The next Brownbag presentation will be on **Thursday, October 22**, in Knight Auditorium in Valade Hall. It will begin at **12:10 pm**

and end at **12:45 pm**. Dr. Tony Coumoundouros (Philosophy and Religion) will be the presenter.

He will discuss some of the major ethical positions in history at a beginner's level. The topic include **eudaemonism** (right actions will produce happiness – Plato and Aristotle), **hedonism** (pleasure is the highest goal of life – Epicurus), **utilitarianism** (actions are morally judged by their consequences – Mill, Bentham, Singer), **deontology** (ethics of duty – Kant), and **virtue ethics** (character and virtue are the focus of ethics – MacIntyre, Foot).

Tony will also offer some reflections on the major differences between ancient, modern, and contemporary ethical approaches.

The Brownbag series is designed to begin conversations about ethics on

campus and integrate that conversation into courses and capstone experiences. The presenters treat these topics as a beginning point for discussion.

Remember: Thursday, October 22 at 12:10 in Knight Auditorium in Valade Hall. The Brown Bag sessions are open to the public.



Dr. Tony Coumoundouros,
Assistant Professor,
Department of Philosophy and Religion.

Ethics Film Series Details

The Institute of Ethics film series will begin, Monday, October 19, with a 6pm showing in Knight Auditorium in Valade Hall.

The first film in the series is "V for Vendetta." It is a story about the ethical questions,

concerning the limits and/or justification of violence vis-a-vis resistance to an oppressive government, the legitimization of torture, and the ethics of political power.

Discussion on the ethical issues and implications of the

film will follow led by Dr. Tony Coumoundouros (Philosophy and Religion) and Dr. Michael McGrath (History).

The remaining films and dates in the series are :

Monday, Nov. 16, "Whose Life

Brown Bag Schedule:

- Sept. 24, Dr. James Spence
- Oct. 22, Dr. Tony Coumoundouros
- Nov. 5, Prof. Nathan Goetting*
- Dec. 1, Dr. Fritz Detwiler
- Jan. 28, Prof. Bill Bachman
- Feb. 25, Dr. Sheri Bleam*
- Mar. 18, Rev. Dr. Chris Momany
- Apr. 22, Dr. Melissa Stewart

* Denotes change in schedule

Times and Location:

- Knight Auditorium, Valade Hall
- 12:10—12:45. Twenty-minute presentations . Fifteen minute Q&A.

Ethics Film Series cont.

is it Anyway?" (Dr. Fritz Detwiler – Philosophy and Religion and Ms Marcia Boynton – Institute for Health Studies);

Monday, Feb. 15, "Crash" (Dr. Scott Elliott – Philosophy and Religion and Idali Feliciano – Office of Multicultural Programs);

Monday, Mar. 15, "Glengarry

Glen Ross" (Dr. James Spence – Philosophy and Religion and Prof. Bill Bachman – Accountancy and Business Administration); and

Apr. 19, "Dr. Doolittle 2" (Dr. Melissa Stewart – Philosophy and Religion and Dr. Janes Salzwedel – Biology).

Due to copyright issues, the film series is open only to the Adrian College community.

Please contact Dr. Scott Elliott at selliott@adrian.edu if you would like a formal part in the discussion.



Adrian College Students Headed to "Ethics Bowl"

Adrian College students will attend the *Upper Midwest Regional Ethics Bowl* which will be held at Northeastern Illinois University, Chicago, Illinois, November 21, 2009.

From the Center for the Study of Ethics in the Professions webpage: "The Intercollegiate Ethics Bowl (IEB) combines the excitement and fun of a

competitive tournament with a valuable educational experience for undergraduate students. Recognized widely by educators, the IEB has received special commendation for excellence and innovation from the American Philosophical Association, and received the 2006 American Philosophical Association/Philosophy

Documentation Center's 2006 prize for Excellence and Innovation in Philosophy Programs. The format, rules, and procedures of the IEB all have been developed to model widely acknowledged best methods of reasoning in practical and professional ethics."

Dr. James Spence is



Ethics Series on TV, Website, and YouTube

Ethics has come into the 21st century!

A wildly popular university course on ethics is now available on PBS, its own website and YouTube.

Harvard Prof. Michael J. Sandel has offered his course "Justice: What's the Right Thing to Do" for years to packed audiences. Now the course is available through the Public

Broadcasting Network. It also has its own website, justiceharvard.org, and can be seen on YouTube by searching for "justice Harvard".

According to the New York Times, Prof. Sandel uses a lively, upbeat teaching method that incorporates humor.

The Times also hints that Sandel "has a television

avatar: Montgomery Burns, Homer Simpson's soulless ghoul of a boss at Springfield's Nuclear Plant.

Dr. Gordon Hammerle (Psychology) said he plans to use some of the episodes in his classes.

Thanks also to Drs. Tony Coumoundouros and Scott

*"To enjoy the things
We ought and to hate
The things we ought
has the greatest
bearing on excellence of
character"
Aristotle*

A Profile in Ethics: Aristotle

Aristotle is one of the most important philosophers in the history of Western culture. He was among the first to gather the main issues in philosophy into a coherent system based on logic. His most important work in moral philosophy is his *Nicomachean Ethics*.

Aristotle was born sometime in the fourth century BCE. The traditional date given for his birth is 384. His family was a part of the Athenian aristocracy which gave him a privileged education. At a young age, his physician father died at about the same time his mother died. Aristotle was raised by a uncle. About age 17-18, he went to study at Plato's Academy in Athens where he was soon identified as a brilliant student. Aristotle's brilliance showed in his drive to understand the world in which he lived in a systematic fashion. During his adulthood, he became Alexander the Great's teacher although he was later highly critical of Alexander's desire to see himself as a god.

He was a "life time learner" and became a leading authority in almost every field of study in his time. He studied and lectured on anatomy, astronomy, economics, embryology, geography, geology, meteorology, physics, psychology, rhetoric and theology. It has been said about Aristotle that "His combined works constitute a virtual encyclopedia of Greek knowledge. It has been suggested that Aristotle was probably the last person to know everything there was to be known in his own time."

Some of Aristotle's enduring fame comes through his work in ethics. He defined "ethics" as an examination of the true meaning of

happiness and how to attain it. There are three key terms that are useful in understanding Aristotle's moral philosophy: eudamonia, arete, and the Golden Mean.

For Aristotle, true happiness is eudamonia, a rich and fulfilling life. It is a matter of flourishing as a human being rather than a feeling of contentedness or pleasure. The important question for moral philosophy, then, is how to attain such a life. Here Aristotle emphasizes the importance of developing excellent habits or character traits. He discusses these in terms of virtues, but the word does not have the heavy moral connotations that it does for us today. The word we translate as virtue (*arete*) is more closely related to personal excellence and success than it is to moral rules about how to interact with others. Aristotle believed that to attain excellence and flourish we needed to follow a path of moderation.

Although it may sound odd to modern ears to recommend moderation as the key to success, it isn't hard to understand what he means. In choosing to eat, or exercise, or work or play, it is possible to choose in excess and it is possible to err on the side of deficiency. A good life is going to have all of these things, though not too much or too little.

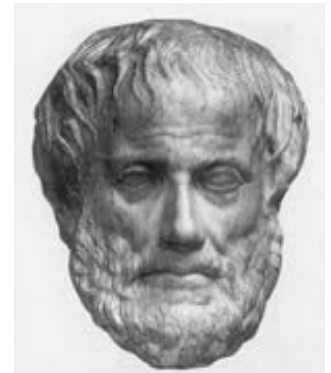
What we should do, Aristotle maintains, it to choose a middle path appropriate to who we are. He calls this the Golden Mean. A good life, then, involves a high degree of self knowledge and also an understanding of what it means to be a human being.

As a human being we must think and make choices, and we must do this well. We must identify important and universal aspects of human life - such as facing danger or intimidating situations, pursuing pleasure, interacting with others, and so on - and determine the appropriate middle path. A person who does this will develop excellent habits - virtues - and is likely to have a good life. A person who does not will not flourish as a human being man being.

Aristotle's views on ethics may sound odd today. We tend to think that ethics involves drawing a line between acceptable and unacceptable behavior. So long as a person isn't harming others, for example, we tend to mind our own business. Aristotle's ethics is more of an attempt to draw up a blue print for a successful life than a list of don'ts. It has been profoundly influential, and the idea that we should focus on character traits rather than rules (a view known as virtue ethics) has recently found a renewed popularity among philosophers.

Thanks to Cleary Murphy, Adrian College Philosophy major for the major contribution he made to the content of this article.

Some biographical material is taken from "Aristotle," <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aristotle>



"All virtue is summed up in dealing justly."

—Aristotle

*Pictures
from the first
Brown Bag*



President Docking welcoming the audience to the inaugural Brown Bag.



Dr. James Spence, presenting. Dr. Spence was named the initial Adrian College Institutes of Ethics Fellow

