Reading Exam #1 Study Guide

Chapter 1.
1. What are the differences between the terms moral, immoral and nonmoral.
2. What differences are implied between the concepts of good and evil versus morally right and wrong?
3. Why can’t neuroscience & psychology tell us all we need to know about moral value?
4. What are the differences between religious values, cultural mores and secular moral values?
5. Why does having a religiously diverse society complicate the issue of moral philosophy?
6. Is there a difference between what is legally permissible and what is morally permissible?
7. Explain naturalism (natural law) and legal positivism.
8. What is the difference between deductive and inductive arguments? Briefly explain the following fallacies: hasty generalization, appeal to authority, begging the question, ad baculum, ad hominem, slippery slope, straw man, false dichotomy, red herring and, ad misericordiam.
9. How can story telling be useful to discussions of moral philosophy?
10. What are the strengths and weaknesses of emotion in moral deliberations?
11. Explain Nussbaum’s position on the role of fiction in moral examinations.
12. What parallels does Zimbardo draw between the Stanford Prison Experiment and what happened in the Abu Ghraib prison?

Chapter 2.
13. What are didactic stories?
14. How have stories been used as moral laboratories in contemporary society?
15. What is the difference between using stories that moralize and using stories to discuss moral problems?
16. What is the difference between historical truth and poetic truth in stories? Can a story have both kinds of truth embedded in it?
17. How can certain story genres like Westerns, action-adventure tales, science fiction, crime dramas and even reality shows, be useful in moral philosophy?
18. What was Plato’s position on Drama? What reasons does he offer?
19. How did Aristotle regard Drama? What elements are necessary to a good tragic story?
Chapter 3.

20. Briefly describe the differences between moral nihilism, skepticism and subjectivism.
21. What is ethical relativism?
22. What is soft universalism and how does it differ from the other responses to moral differences?
23. What is hard universalism and how does it differ from soft universalism?
24. What is “the first step” of ethical relativism and what does Anthropology have to do with it?
25. What is cultural relativism and how does it contribute to ethical relativism?
26. What is the difference between descriptive and normative theories?
27. How did Ruth Benedict contribute to ethical relativism?
28. What is Benedict’s goal for readers approaching other cultures?
29. Explain each of the six problems with ethical relativism presented in the text.
30. Explain the “Flat Earth” refutation of ethical relativism.
31. What is the problem of induction for ethical relativism?
32. What are the three universal values Rachels suggests? Briefly explain some of the issues associated with maintaining them as universal moral values.
33. What is inclusive multiculturalism? What are the different implications between the metaphors of “the melting pot” and “the salad bowl?”
34. What is exclusive multiculturalism? What challenges exist for exclusive multiculturalism?
35. Does cultural relativism automatically support multiculturalism? Why or why not?
36. What is the difference between claiming an ethnic and a national identity? Does this difference present any special ethical challenges for Americans?
37. How does Benedict define morality? For Benedict is there a distinction between normal and abnormal morality?
38. Why does Furrow object to ethical relativism? Why does he claim that not all values are relative?
39. What ethical problems are raised in Walker’s essay, “Possessing the Secret of Joy?” Do you think Alice Walker should be praised for raising this issue or is she betraying her African heritage?
40. In Spike Lee’s movie, “Do the Right Thing,” do any of the characters do the right thing? What message do you think Spike Lee wanted convey in this movie?

Chapter 4.

41. What is psychological egoism? Does this position admit to the possibility of a selfless act?
42. What is the difference between egoism & egotism?
43. What is the difference between being selfish and being self-interested? Might a selfish action be contrary to one’s own best interests?
44. What is Glaucon’s idea about acting in one’s own interests in Plato’s Republic? How does the story about Gyges support his ideas?
45. What critical differences exist between Gyges in The Republic and Frodo from The Lord of the Rings trilogy according to Erik Katz?
46. What is Hobbes’ theory about the origin of pity?
47. What three reasons does the author of our text give to explain the popularity of psychological egoism?
48. Briefly explain the three problems discussed in our text associated with psychological egoism.
49. What is ethical egoism and how is it different from psychological egoism?
50. What is individual ethical egoism?
51. How can ethical egoism be compared to the Golden Rule?
52. Explain some of the shortcomings of ethical egoism.
53. Review the story of Lincoln & the piglets. Is this a clear example of a purely self-interested act?
54. What is Altruism? Explain the difference between psychological and ethical altruism.
55. What is Emmanuel Levinas’ position regarding the interests of the “other?”
56. How does Peter Singer’s position differ from that of Levinas?
57. What is Mackie’s “law of the jungle” and what implications does this theory from sociobiology have on morality?
58. What is Dawkins’ selfish-gene theory? How does this theory explain the origin of our sense of values?
59. How does Midgley explain altruistic behavior? For Midgley, how does one’s definition of family affect one’s moral responses to the needs of others?
60. According to David Hume, what is the foundation for morality? For Hume, would lacking empathy imply one is less likely to act morally towards the suffering of others? Why is reason insufficient as a foundation for morality according to Hume?
61. Briefly explain Ayn Rand’s theory she calls “objectivism.” What reasons does she offer in rejection of altruism? Why does she argue that a “selfless,” “disinterested” love is a contradiction in terms? Upon whose interests should we act according to Rand?
62. In Rand’s, Atlas Shrugged, who goes on strike? Who are the “movers and shakers” and why does Rand hold that they have been abused?