

Advanced Ethics Survey

[Note: the syllabus is preliminary; a finalized version will be uploaded at the end of August 09]

Course Description

The course offers an introduction to and survey of ethical theory, covering topics in metaethics and major approaches in normative ethics (no applied ethics).

The class is designed for graduate students, who wish to get an overview of the field. While it is impossible to cover all topics relevant to ethical theory, the class aims to offer introductions to topics of widely shared interest:

- (1) Metaethics I (The Good, Ethical Judgment).
- (2) Utilitarianism and Consequentialism (Contemporary).
- (3) Kantian ethics (Kant and Contemporary Kantians).
- (4) Virtue ethics (Ancient and Contemporary).
- (5) Metaethics II (Reasons and Values).
- (6) Agency: Desiring the Good

Requirements (for E-Credit)

Reading: It is essential to do the readings prior to the class for which they are assigned. Please note that the class, while introductory, is rather ambitious. We cover a lot of ground, and difficult material. Many of our readings are so-called classics: they have had and continue to have tremendous influence. As is to be expected, they are rich and require very careful reading. In preparing for class, you are expected to make yourself precise outlines of the key arguments in the readings. Preparation for class is time-consuming.

Presentations: Each class, we discuss several readings. For every reading, one student agrees to give a quick introductory presentation, which facilitates in-class discussion. The student prepares a short handout, where key terminology and distinctions are explained. These mini-presentation should take ca. 5-10 minutes. You are expected to give a brief account of key theses and arguments, and to raise some questions (about concepts that you find hard to understand, or about the argument, or the relationship to other texts we are reading, and so on). Ideally, every student should give two of these short presentations. Students who wish to take the class for R-credit should give one short presentation and submit three outlines of assigned readings.

Writing: Three papers, 5-8 pages. Papers are response papers. Each paper should critically engage with **one** of the assigned readings.

- Every student is expected to write her/his first paper on a reading assigned in section (1) or (2).
- The deadline for this paper is the 4th meeting of our class.
- From then on, students can choose when to write a paper.
- The second paper must be submitted at the latest 3 weeks before the last day of classes.
- The third paper must be submitted at the latest 1 week after our last class meeting.

Readings

Almost all readings will be available online through Butler Library, either via Courseworks or via JSTOR (log in with your UNI). Some classics are on the web, and I will send out links prior to class. Students should buy Tim Scanlon, *What We Owe To Each Other*, and they should have available a copy Kant's *Groundwork*, a copy of Plato's *Republic* and a copy of Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*.

Outline of Readings and Topics

Part (1): Introduction to Metaethics

Week 1

Introduction to the beginnings of 20th century metaethics. Students are expected to do the reading either prior to class or after having attended the first class. The readings are short selections. Outlines of key arguments will be distributed in class.

G.E. Moore, *Principia Ethica*, §§ 5-13). <http://fair-use.org/g-e-moore/principia-ethica>

William Frankena, "The Naturalistic Fallacy," *Mind* 48 (1930), 464-77.

<http://www.jstor.org/stable/2250706>

C.L. Stevenson, "The Emotive Meaning of Ethical Terms", *Mind* 46 (1937): 14-31.

<http://www.jstor.org.monstera.cc.columbia.edu:2048/stable/pdfplus/2250027.pdf>

R.M. Hare, *Freedom and Reason* (Oxford, 1963), Chapter 6.

Part (2): Utilitarianism and Consequentialism

Week 2

Shelly Kagan, *The Limits of Morality* (Part I).

Peter Railton, "Alienation, Consequentialism, and the Demands of Morality."

Week 3

Bernard Williams, "A Critique of Utilitarianism."

Tim Scanlon, selections from *What We Owe to Each Other* on aggregative reasoning (229-241).

F.M. Kamm, "Aggregation and Two Moral Methods."

Part (3): Kantian Ethics

Week 4

Kant, *Groundwork*, Introduction, Parts I and II.

Week 5

Stephen Darwall, "Kant on Respect, Dignity, and the Duty of Respect."

David Velleman, "Love as a Moral Emotion."

Christine Korsgaard, "Responsibility and Relationships."

Week 6

Kant, *Groundwork* Part III.

Christine Korsgaard, "Morality as Freedom."

Week 7

Kant, *Metaphysics of Morals* (selections).

Barbara Herman, "Obligatory Ends."

Part (4): Virtue Ethics

Week 8

G.E.M. Anscombe, "Modern Moral Philosophy."

Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* Book II.1-4.

Plato, *Republic* Book IV (selections).

Gilbert Harman, "The Non-Existence of Character Traits."

Week 9

John McDowell, "Virtue and Reason."

John McDowell, "Some Issues in Aristotle's Moral Psychology"

Part (5): Metaethics II—Reasons and Values

Week 10

Bernard Williams, “Internal and External Reasons.”

Tim Scanlon, *What We Owe to Each Other*, Chapter 1 “Reasons.”

Week 11

Harry Frankfurt, “The Importance of What We Care About.”

Tim Scanlon, *What We Owe to Each Other*, Chapter 2 “Values.”

Part (6): Agency: Desiring the Good

Week 12

Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* Book I.

Week 13

David Velleman, “The Guise of the Good,” *Noûs*, Vol. 26, No. 1. (Mar., 1992), pp. 3-26.

<http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0029-4624%28199203%2926%3A1%3C3%3A%3ATGOTG%3E2.0.CO%3B2-G>

Joseph Raz, “On the Guise of the Good.” (manuscript)