

PHI V 3653 Fall 2011
323 Milbank Hall
MW 2:40-3:55

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Milbank 326E

MIND AND MORALS

Course Description:

An introduction to the central theories of normative ethics: consequentialism, deontology, and virtue ethics. We will draw upon insights and challenges provided by work in the cognitive and social sciences to address questions about: moral motivation, responsibility, the rationality of certain ethical intuitions, and the role of the emotions in moral reasoning, among others. The focus of the course is on *ethical theory*, its *assumptions*, and its *methodology*. The course has two main objectives: to investigate the bearing of empirical discoveries on questions in normative ethics and metaethics, and to sharpen your skills in writing philosophical arguments.

Course prerequisite:

One course in Philosophy.

Required Texts:

All required reading is available online in the 'Assignment' section of Courseworks, which is password-protected and available only to students enrolled in the course. It's a good idea to get a folder or 3-ring binder in which to keep the course readings together. Late work will not be excused for reasons concerning difficulties in accessing the course texts. Unexpected glitches can and do appear at any time; do not leave retrieval of the reading material to the last minute.

Required work and Grading:

- ▶ Four short (400 word) papers – 15% each
- ▶ A revised (500 word) version of one of the first two papers – 15%
- ▶ Cumulative final exam – 25%
- ▶ Class participation in the form of a minimum of four postings on the course's electronic bulletin board. Failure to contribute to the discussion board will lower your final grade by a full letter.
- ▶ Class attendance and participation in class discussion. Quality of participation is determined by your level of preparedness for class (all readings must be completed *before* the class for which they are assigned), as well as by factors such as your degree of thoughtfulness about the issues addressed.

- ▶ Please note the following:

- Students are responsible for the material covered in both readings and lectures. Course lectures may differ in content from the required readings.
- **For each paper:** You should *identify a question, present a position, and argue* for it (i.e., you should provide *reasons* in defense of your position). These assignments are short, and thus may seem easy, but the rigor in thought and writing skill required to do them well is not trivial.
- **No late assignments will be accepted.** Assigned papers are due at the beginning of class on the date due. You must keep a hard copy of all your written work.
- **There will be no makeup exams.** If and only if you have a well-documented *bona fide* emergency, please discuss it with me as soon as is practically possible.
- Be sure to acknowledge all ideas and words not your own with appropriate citations of the original sources. **ALL violations of academic integrity will be dealt with in accordance with college policies.** Consider this statement your only warning.
- I may anonymously share the papers you write for this course with the class, unless you instruct me otherwise.

Assignment due dates: *Readings and written assignment dates are subject to change.*

First short paper:	Monday, September 19
Second short paper:	Monday, October 10
Revised paper:	Monday, October 24
Third short paper:	Wednesday, November 9
Fourth short paper:	Wednesday, November 28
Final Exam:	See course bulletin; currently scheduled for Wednesday Dec 21 st , 1:10-4:00pm

Tentative list of readings

Week 1

Moral responsibility

- R. Smullyan, “Is God a Taoist?”

Week 2

- H. Frankfurt, “Freedom of the Will and the Concept of a Person”
- S. Wolf, “Sanity and the Metaphysics of Responsibility”
- J. Kennett, “Autism, Empathy, and Moral Agency”

Week 3

- P.F. Strawson, “Freedom and Resentment”
- G. Watson, “Responsibility and the limits of evil: Variations on a Strawsonian theme”
- S. Nichols “After Incompatibilism: A Naturalistic Defense of the Reactive Attitudes”

Week 4

Moral motivation

- J. Feinberg, “Psychological Egoism”
- M. Gansberg, “38 Who Saw Murder Didn’t Call Police”
- Plato, “The Ring of Gyges”
- P. Foot, “Morality as a System of Hypothetical Imperatives”

Week 5

- E. Sober and D. Wilson, “Psychological Evidence”, ch.8 in *Unto Others*
- J. Campbell, “Can philosophical accounts of altruism accommodate experimental data on helping behaviour?”

Weeks 6 – 7

Moral theory

- Kant, “Good Will, Duty, and the Categorical Imperative”
- Kant, from *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, trans. by Mary Gregor
- J.J.C. Smart, “Utilitarianism”
- R.M. Hare, “Loyalty and Evil Desires”

Weeks 8 – 10

Objectivity and intuitions

- J. Sabini and M. Silver, “Emotions, Responsibility, and Character”
- J. Bennett, “The Conscience of Huckleberry Finn”
- L. Young and M. Koenigs, “Investigating Emotion in Moral Cognition”
- J. Greene, “From Neural ‘Is’ to Moral ‘Ought’”
- J. Knobe, “The Concept of Intentional Action”
- R. Shweder and J. Haidt, “The Future of Moral Psychology”
- N. Daniels, “Wide Reflective Equilibrium and Theory Acceptance in Ethics”
- K.A. Appiah, “The Case Against Intuition”
- S. Stich, “Moral Philosophy and Mental Representation”
- P. Singer, “Ethics and Intuitions”

Weeks 11-14

Virtue ethics

- W. Schaller, “Are Virtues No More than Dispositions to Obey Moral Rules?”
- R. Hursthouse, “Are Virtues the Proper Starting Point for Morality?”
- G. Harman, “Moral Philosophy Meets Social Psychology”
- J. Doris, “Persons, Situations, and Virtue Ethics”

Value incommensurability

- D. Kahneman, “Objective Happiness”
- S. Beardman, “The Choice between Current and Retrospective Evaluations of Pain”