

ETHICS

Lecturer: Yuliya Kanygina
Number of credits: 2
Semester: Winter
Time: Thursday 15:30 – 17:10
Place: N13 / 311
PHIL5650 / Core MA course

I. COURSE DESCRIPTION

The course is designed to cover a wide range of topics in moral philosophy, including normative ethics and moral psychology. Apart from the introductory session, during which we will discuss the merits of the arguments for anti-theory in ethics, the topics are divided into three sections. The first section (*Helping and harming*) concerns the nature and scope of moral requirements. How demanding is our duty to help those in need? Are we required to help as many people as we can? What are the grounds and the scope of our powers of consent and of promise? Should moral principles be justified to each individual? What are the grounds for accepting the individualist restriction? By tackling these topics, we will implicitly ascertain the strengths and weaknesses of consequentialism, deontology, and contractualism.

In the second section (*Moral responsibility*), we will cover hotly debated questions concerning moral responsibility. What is the nature of blame and why does it matter? What principle governs our practice of blaming people whose faults are partly the result of bad luck? When is it and when is it not appropriate for a third party to blame the wrongdoer, and why?

In the third section (*Moral psychology*), we will discuss moral motivation, character and practical reasoning. Does moral motivation require that we deliberate about what reasons we have? We will touch upon virtue ethics by inquiring whether being virtuous is a matter of having certain character traits and dispositions. What does psychology tell us about character traits and the way we acquire them? Are our reasons for action grounded in our desires and motivations?

II. LEARNING OUTCOMES

Students will familiarise themselves with widely debated questions in moral philosophy. They will acquire detailed knowledge of the arguments in the studied texts and gain understanding of the relation between various topics. Through close-reading, detailed analysis, and critical discussion of the arguments in the set texts, students will further develop their powers of philosophical analysis and argument.

III. COURSE OUTLINE

Mandatory readings are marked by asterisk

This list of readings is preliminary and can be changed upon the consideration of the instructor.

Week 1: Theory versus Anti-Theory in Ethics

*Hooker, Brad. "Theory versus Anti-theory in Ethics." In Ulrike Heuer and Gerald Lang (eds.) *Luck, Value, and Commitment: Themes from the Ethics of Bernard Williams* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), pp. 19-40.

Robertson, Simon. "Anti-theory: Anscombe, Foot and Williams." In Golob, Sacha and Timmerman, Jens (eds.) *The Cambridge History of Moral Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 678-691.

HELPING AND HARMING

Week 2: Beneficence I: Demands

*Murphy, Liam B. "The Demands of Beneficence," *Philosophy & Public Affairs* 22, No. 4 (Autumn 1993): 267-92.

Singer, Peter. "Famine, Affluence, and Morality," *Philosophy & Public Affairs* 1, No. 3 (Spring 1972): 229-43.

Week 3: Beneficence II: Aggregation

*Norcross, Alastair. "Comparing Harms: Headaches and Human Lives," *Philosophy & Public Affairs* 26, No. 2 (April 1997): 135-67.

Scanlon, T.M. "Aggregation," in his *What We Owe to Each Other* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap, 1998), pp. 229-41.

Taurek, John M. "Should the Numbers Count?" *Philosophy & Public Affairs* 6, No. 4 (Summer 1977): 239-316.

Week 4: Normative Powers I: Consent

*Korsgaard, Christine. "Kant's Formula of Humanity," *Kant Studien*, 77 (1986): 183- 202. Reprinted in her *Creating the Kingdom of Ends* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

O'Neill, Onora. "Between Consenting Adults," *Philosophy & Public Affairs* 14, No. 3 (1985): 252-77.

Week 5: Normative Powers II: Promise

*Owens, David, *Shaping the Normative Landscape* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2012), ch. 5.

Owens, David, *Shaping the Normative Landscape* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2012), ch. 8.

Rawls, John. "Two Concepts of Rules," *Philosophical Review* 64, No. 1 (January 1955): 3-32.

Scanlon, T.M. "Promises and Practices," *Philosophy & Public Affairs* 19, No. 3 (Summer 1990): 199-226. Reprinted in his *What We Owe to Each Other* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998), ch. 7.

Week 6: Justifiability of Moral Principles

Parfit, Derek. "Justifiability to Each Person," *Ratio* 16, No. 4 (December 2003): 368-390.

Gerald A. Cohen. *Rescuing Justice and Equality* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2008), ch. 1, part I (Incentives, Inequality, and Community).

MORAL RESPONSIBILITY

Week 7: Blame and the Problem of Normative Tension

- *McGeer, Victoria. "Civilizing Blame" in Coates, Justin D. and Tognazzini, Neal A. (eds.) *Blame: Its Nature and Norms* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), ch. 9.
Coates, Justin D. and Tognazzini, Neal A. (eds.), *Blame: Its Nature and Norms* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), ch. 1.

Week 8: Blame and the Problem from Moral Luck

- *Williams, Bernard. "Moral Luck" in *Moral Luck* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981): 20-39.
Enoch, David. "Being Responsible, Taking Responsibility, and Penumbral Agency" in *Luck, Value, and Commitment: Themes from the Ethics of Bernard Williams*, edited by Ulrike Heuer and Gerald Lang (Oxford University Press, 2012): pp. 95-132.
Sussman, David. "Is Agent-Regret Rational?," In *Ethics* 128, No. 4 (July 2018): 788-808.

Week 9: Blame and The Problem of a Stranger

- *Sher, George. "Wrongdoing and Relationships: The Problem of the Stranger," in *Blame: Its Nature and Norms*, edited by Coates, J. D. and Tognazzini, N. A. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 49-65.
Radzik, Linda. "On Minding Your Own Business: Differentiating Accountability Relations within the Moral Community," *Social Theory and Practice* 37, No. 4 (October 2011): 574-598.

MORAL PSYCHOLOGY

Week 10: Moral Motivation

- *Smith, Michael. *The Moral Problem* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994), chs. 3 & 4.
Brink, David O. "Moral Motivation," *Ethics* 108, No. 1 (October 1997): 4-32.

Week 11: Character: Virtues, Vices, and Moral Leaning

- Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, edited by R. Crisp (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), bk. 2, chs. 1-7; bk. 6, chs. 9-11.
Anscombe, G. E. M. "Modern Moral Philosophy." *Philosophy* 33, No. 124 (January 1958): 1-19.

Week 12: Practical Reasoning

- *Williams, Bernard. "Internal and External Reasons," in T.R. Harrison (ed., *Rational Action: Studies in Philosophy and Social Science* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), pp. 17-28. Reprinted in B. Williams, *Moral Luck* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), pp. 101-13.

Darwall, Stephen. *Impartial Reason* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1983), ch. 5 (Humean internalism).

IV. REQUIREMENTS

All students, irrespective of whether registered to audit or taking the course for credit, are expected to come to class and participate actively in the discussion. Ask questions and try answering questions posed by others. In addition, for students taking the class for credit there will be the following written assignments, for which questions will be provided:

- 1) One position paper during the term, 800-1,000 words (word count including footnotes but not including bibliography). To be submitted by **February 15, 2019**.
- 2) Either a final exam (required for two-year Philosophy MA students), or a 2500-word final paper. Final paper to be submitted by **April 15, 2019**.

V. ASSESSMENT

Two-year Philosophy MA students will be graded according to an in-class written final exam, taken as part of the Theoretical and Practical Philosophy exam scheduled for the end of spring term. The instructor has the right to modify the grade by a third of a grade on the basis of the student's performance in the classroom and on written assignment.

The performance of other students who take the course for credit will be assessed in the following way:

1. Attendance and participation: 15%
2. Position paper: 15%
3. The final paper: 70%

Grading criteria for the final paper:

In order to get a good grade, final paper should have a combination of the following features:

- The paper should demonstrate that you understand the material.
- The reconstruction of the author's argument should be charitable; you should not expose a view that resembles, but that is *not*, the author's argument, in order to make it easier to criticize it.
- The reconstruction of the author's argument should be something that anyone who hasn't read the text could understand. You should not assume that the person who will read your essay knows the paper you're discussing.
- The paper should demonstrate argumentative skills. Any claim you make should be supported by reasons, and objections should be anticipated. Make sure the reasons you give genuinely support your conclusion.
- The paper should be clear and structured. The reader should always be able to tell what you are trying to say and what you are up to. Announce the plan of the paper in the introduction, and use signposts throughout. The paper should have a sense of flow and structure.

- You should reference – both in the text and in a separate bibliography – all the sources you have used (including websites and the textbook). The bibliography does not count towards the word limit.

Grading criteria for the written exam

The usual length of answers is 600-900 words (1.5, 2 pages)

- In order to earn an “A-“ the written exam paper has to cover most of the relevant material covered in the lectures. It has to show evidence of a thorough understanding of, and familiarity with, the relevant readings. It has to be written clearly and concisely, in competent academic English. One of the most important criteria will be the quality of the arguments. The text must be relevant to the question: it should not contain materials that do not pertain to the issue discussed. Failing to meet these criteria will result in the appropriate reduction of the grade.
- In order to earn an “A”, all the above are required, plus evidence of *independent thinking* or *independent organization of the material*. This means that the paper does not simply reproduce the lecture notes, or copies a sample answer prepared by someone else. An “A” paper presents the material in a way that shows that you have thought through the question yourself (consulting further readings can help this). You can also add your own assessment of the question. The emphasis is not on originality; you don't need to invent something nobody has said before. Rather, the idea is that you make these problems your own, and develop, as best as you can, your own view of them (which can very well agree with the views defended by some others).