KILLING

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MA Elective , 4 Credits; PhD, 2 credits
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There is a prima facie duty not kill people. But, in certain circumstances it seems permissible to do so. The course explores under which conditions killing is morally acceptable and the kinds of constraints that we face when killing someone. We will address some of the following questions: do we have to save the greater number of people? When is killing in self-defence permissible? Is abortion morally acceptable? What constraints do apply when killing in war?

Aims:
• To trigger an understanding of central discussions in contemporary moral philosophy around the problem of killing.
• To foster the ability to analyse and discuss arguments in moral philosophy.
• To foster the ability to communicate both orally and in writing arguments in moral philosophy.
• To develop the capacity to learn new ideas and approaches, and to apply them in research.

Learning outcomes:
At the end of the course the student shall be able to:
• Understand the key positions within contemporary debates in moral philosophy.
• Produce critical and well-structured arguments in moral philosophy.
• Balance and contrast the weakness and strengths of different positions in contemporary debates in practical ethics.
• Summarise arguments clearly and succinctly.

Requirements:
• All students must read the core reading before the lectures and seminars.
• Attendance is compulsory. You need at least 90% of attendance to get a grade.
• There will be a mid-term assignment (only for MA students), and a final 3500 words paper. The paper's title must be pre-approved, so consult me once you have an idea what you want to write about. You can use some of the seminar questions to formulate the title or any other related topic you are interested in

Grades will be awarded as follows:
For MA students (4 credits):

- Mid-term assignment: 25%, participation 15%, presentation 15%, final paper 45%.

For PhD students (2 credits)

- Participation 20%, presentation 35%, final paper 45%.

- Essays are due on the date they are due! Extensions will be granted only in special circumstances. Late submissions will be penalised. Organise your time!
- Academic dishonesty will be severely penalised. Don’t plagiarise!!

Grades mean the following:

F = Fail
C+ = Minimum Pass. Significant confusions; unawareness of some crucial arguments; poor written style
B- = Satisfactory. Struggles to organize main ideas of the paper. Some confusions, but a general sense of the main arguments.
B = Good. Cover material covered in class, good reconstruction of main arguments, written expression is clear and succinct
B+ = Very good. Cover material covered in class, good reconstruction of main arguments, written expression is clear and succinct, plus understanding of subsidiary arguments, familiarity with secondary literature. Some display of analytical skills.
A- = Excellent. Cover material covered in class, good reconstruction of main arguments, written expression is clear and succinct, plus understanding of subsidiary arguments, familiarity with secondary literature; independent reconstruction of arguments; display of good analytical skills.
A = outstanding. Cover material covered in class, good reconstruction of main arguments, written expression is clear and succinct, plus understanding of subsidiary arguments, familiarity with secondary literature; independent reconstruction of arguments; display of good analytical skills, signals of independent thought, critical engagement with the arguments.

The essays must represent a significant piece of independent research; it can be a positive argument of your own, or a critical argument. They should provide succinct, clear statements of your positions and of arguments pro and con. Don’t make claims without arguing strongly for them! Also, when you criticise and argument, use the best counter-argument you find, don’t waste your time with straw men!

Finally, literary or emotive or heavily jargon-laden style is often unhelpful. Do not write a one-sided essay: be sure to evaluate the strongest arguments on both sides!

For more on how to write a philosophy paper check Doug Portmore’s ‘Tips on writing a philosophy paper’ at http://www.public.asu.edu/~dportmor/tips.pdf (also available at the e-learning site). See also James Pryor’s guide at http://www.jimpryor.net/teaching/guidelines/writing.html.

Weekly Program:
Week 1: ‘The Badness of Death’
Week 2: ‘Doing and Allowing: The Doctrine of Double Effect’
Week 3: ‘Self-defence: Responsibility’
Week 4: ‘Self-defence: Rights’
Week 5: ‘Saving numbers’
Week 6: ‘Abortion’
Week 7: ‘Suicide and Euthanasia’
Week 8: ‘Killing Animals’
Week 9: ‘Poverty’
Week 10: ‘War I’
Week 11: ‘War II’
Week 12 ‘Revision and Conclusions’

Books on practical and general ethics, edited collections and introductions:
• La Follette, H. *Ethics in Practice: An Anthology* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997)
• Scheffler, S. *Consequentialism and its Critics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988)

Week 1.
‘The Badness of Death’
The seminar introduces some of the questions to be discussed during the course. Intuitively we think that death is bad for us. But is it puzzling that something can be bad for us, when we exist no longer. We’ll revise some answers to this problem.

Seminar questions:
• How can death be bad for the person who dies?

Core reading:
• Nagel, T. ‘Death’ *Noûs*, Vol. 4, No. 1 (Feb., 1970), pp. 73-80. This paper has been reprinted in many other places.

Supplementary reading:
• Kagan, S. *Death* (YUP, 2012)
Week 2.

‘Doing and Allowing: The Doctrine of Double Effect’

Some theories distinguish between intending something and allowing it to happen as a foreseen consequence of a different act. On many of these views we can explain why bringing about someone’s death is permissible by appealing to the DDE. We explore the plausibility of these views.

Seminar questions:
- Is there a moral difference between doing something and allowing it to happen?
- What is the DDE? Is it plausible?
- Is it permissible to turn the trolley? Is this best explained by the DDE?

Core reading:

Supplementary reading:
- Kamm, F. ‘Harming Some to Save Others’ Philosophical Studies, 57 (1989).
- Tadros, V. The Ends of Harm (OUP, 2011))

Week 3.
Some people think that it is permissible to impose defensive harm only when the person who poses a threat is responsible for posing that threat. We analyse this view.

Core reading:

Supplementary reading:
• Frowe, H. Defensive Killing (OUP, 2014)

Week 4
‘Self-defence: Rights’
A popular view holds that we are entitled to kill a person if this is the only way in which we might save our own life. However, there is some disagreement concerning whether we are always entitled to do so. We will discuss the challenges that innocent threats pose to a theory of the permissibility of self-defence. In this session we focus on the claim that defensive harm is permissible whenever the person who poses a threat will violate a right not to be killed.

Seminar questions:
• Are we ever permitted to kill in self-defence?
• Are we ever permitted to kill innocent people in self-defence?
• What is the morally relevant difference between human shields and innocent threats?
• Is the distinction between eliminative and manipulative agency telling?

Core reading:

Week 5.
‘Numbers’
Consequentialists have no problem explaining why it is better to save more rather than less people. But non-consequentialists struggle with this because they reject aggregating the value of lives. Nevertheless, they still affirm that we are morally required to save more rather than less people. How can they explain this?

Seminar questions:
• Are morally required to save the 5 instead of the 1?
• Can we explain this without appealing to aggregation?
• Should we accept Taurek’s solution?

Core reading:
• Taurek, J. ‘Should Numbers Count’ Philosophy and Public Affairs, 6 (1977), 293-316.
• Scanlon, T. What We Owe to Each Other (Cambridge, MA: HUP, 1998) pp. 229-41.

Supplementary reading:
• Hirose, I. Moral Aggregation, OUP,
• Kamm, F. M. Morality, Mortality, Volume I (Oxford: OUP. 1993)
• Kamm, F. Intricate Ethics (Oxford: OUP, 2007) Ch. 2.
• Lubbe, W. ‘Taurek’s No Worse Claim’ Philosophy & Public Affairs 36 (2008), 69-85.
• Otsuka, M., ‘Scanlon on the Claims of the Many versus the One,’ Analysis 60 (20003), 288–293.
• Otsuka, M. ‘Scepticism about Saving the Greater Number’, Philosophy & Public Affairs 32 (2004): 413–26,

Week 6.
‘Abortion’
Discussions on abortion are some of the hardest problems for political and moral philosophers. Some people think that abortion is morally impermissible insofar as it involves the deliberate killing of a person. Three objections to this position will be discussed.

Seminar questions:
• Is abortion morally objectionable?
• To what extent are questions about personhood essential to discussions on abortion?
• Is legal abortion the best way to protect the sanctity of human life?
• Does abortion implies justifying infanticide?

Core reading:
• Thomson, J. Rights, Restitution and Risk, (Cambridge, Mass: HUP, 1986), Ch. 1

Supplementary reading:
• Harris, J. *Clones, Genes, and Immortality* (OUP, 1998)
• Harris, J. *The Value of Life: An Introduction to Medical Ethics* (London: Routledge, 1985), 136-173.
• Kamm, F. *Creation and Abortion*, (Oxford: OUP)
• McInerney, P. ‘Does a Foetus Already have a Future-Like-Ours?’ *The Journal of Philosophy*, 87 (5), 1990, 264-8
Week 7.

‘Suicide and euthanasia’

Description:
On a popular view suicide is both irrational and immoral. We will examine this position. If it turns out that suicide is not morally prohibited, we will ask whether a right to suicide involves a liberty-right or a claim-right too. We connect this question with issues related to euthanasia.

Seminar questions:
• Is suicide immoral? Is it irrational?
• Under which circumstances is suicide permissible?
• What constraints does the right to suicide place on others?
• Is non-voluntary euthanasia morally permissible? Under what circumstances?
• What other values are at stake?
• Are there lives not worth living? Who can make these claims?

Core reading:

Supplementary reading:
On suicide:


• Kamm, F.M. ‘Physician-Assisted Suicide, the Doctrine of Double Effect, and the Ground of Value’, *Ethics*, 109 (1999), 586-605

• Kant, I. *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals* (Cambridge: CUP, 1998)


• Locke, J. *Second Treatise of Civil Government* (Various Editions)


• O'Keefee, T.M, ‘Suicide and Self-Starvation’, *Philosophy*, 56 (1981), 349–363


• Szasz, T. *Fatal Freedom: The Ethics and Politics of Suicide*, (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2002

On euthanasia:


• Keown, J. *Euthanasia Examined* (Cambridge: CUP, 2005)
• Warnock, M., and E. MacDonald *Easeful Death* (Oxford: OUP, 2008

Week 8.
‘Animals’
In this seminar we will discuss the challenge that killing animals has for moral and political philosophy. We will discuss Singer’s claim that our moral theories are guilty of ‘speciesism’, and what does this entail. Discussion will be centred on the issues of vegetarianism, animal experimentation and animal farming.

Seminar questions:
• Are we guilty of ’speciesism’?
• What’s wrong with eating meat?
• Are animals moral beings?

Core reading:

Supplementary reading:
• Korsgaard, Ch. *Fellow Creatures* OUP , 2018.
• LaFollette, H. *Ethics in Practice*, Sections on animals, various articles.
• Nobis, N., ‘Vegetarianism and Virtue: Does Consequentialism Demand Too Little?’, *Social Theory and Practice*, 28 (2002), 135-156
• Rachels, J., ‘The Basic Argument for Vegetarianism’ in his *The Legacy of Socrates* (New York: Columbia UP, 2007)
• Singer, P. *Animal Liberation* (London: Pimlico, 1995)

Week 9.

‘Poverty’
Perhaps the largest moral catastrophe we face in the contemporary world is that of human poverty. In this seminar we examine what morality requires us to do about it.

Seminar questions:
• How demanding is morality?
• If we can prevent something bad from happening without sacrificing something comparable, are we morally compelled to do it?
• Is non-consequentialism any less demanding?

Core reading:
• Singer, P. ‘Famine, Affluence, and Morality’ Philosophy and Public Affairs, 1, 3 (1971).

Supplementary reading:
• Hurley, P. ‘Fairness and Beneficence’, Ethics, 113 (2003), 841–864.
• Hutchings, K., Global Ethics, (Cambridge: Polity, 2010)
• Pogge, T. Politics as Usual…
• Rachels, ‘Killing and Starving to Death’ in his The Legacy of Socrates (New York: Columbia UP, 2007).
• Unger, P. Living High and Letting Die (Oxford: OUP, 1996) Ch. 1-2

Week 10

‘War’
Most people think that people fighting a war face different constraints when killing than non-combatants. We examine this belief.
Seminar questions:
• Are all combatants morally equal?
• How can it be that in war other constraints about killing take place?

Core reading:
• Walzer, M. Just and Unjust Wars (New York, Basic Books, 1977), Ch. 4.
Supplementary reading:
(see next week)
Week 11.

**War II**
In this seminar we discuss whether the moral equivalence of combatants is true.

**Core reading:**

**Supplementary reading:**
- Jaggar, A. ‘What is Terrorism, Why it is Wrong, and Could it Ever be Morally Permissible?’ *Journal of Social Philosophy*, 36, 2 (2005), 202-17
- Kamm, F.M. *The moral target: aiming at right conduct in war and other conflicts* (OUP, 2012)
• Walzer, *Just and Unjust Wars* (New York, Basic Books, 1977
• *Ethics*, 114, 4 (2004), (Special issue in Terrorism)
• *Journal of Ethics*, 8, 1 (2004). (Special issue in Terrorism)

Week 12.
‘Revision and Conclusions’