

INTRODUCTORY HANDOUT PHILOSOPHY 13 FALL, 2001
INTRODUCTION TO PHILOSOPHY---ETHICS revised 10/11/01
 (Revisions--In Wed. of week 3 reading and in Arneson's office hours)
 Professor: Richard Arneson. TAs: Luke Robinson and Jeff Stedman.

Lecture MWF 11:15-12:05 in Center 109.

The final exam for this course will take place on Wednesday, December 5, from 11:30a.m. to 2:30 p.m. If you enroll in this class, you must be free to take a regular final exam for this course at this time.

People disagree about moral issues. Are some opinions about what is morally right correct and others incorrect, or do notions of correctness and incorrectness fail to apply to moral claims? This course for the most part examines two types of proposal that hold that reason can determine what actions individuals ought morally to choose and what social policies and laws societies ought morally to uphold. One family of proposals is consequentialist: the point of morality is to promote good outcomes. In the nineteenth century, J. S. Mill argued for a utilitarian version of consequentialism. According to Mill, individual actions and social policies are morally better or worse, depending on the extent to which they promote or reduce the happiness of all humans (and other animals). We study Mill's utilitarianism in part by considering its implications for such issues as the morality of suicide and euthanasia, the limits of our moral obligations to help distant strangers, the morality of terrorism in the sense of deliberate infliction of harm on innocent persons to further political goals, and the ethics of eugenic projects involving interventions designed to improve the genetic makeup of present and future persons. Another family of proposals holds, in a slogan, that the right is prior to the good: We should respect persons by constraining our conduct toward them in certain ways, and we are permitted to pursue our conception of what is good only within the limits set by these moral constraints. According to Immanuel Kant, these constraints on permissible conduct are set by pure practical reason and apply to all of us, regardless of our culture, upbringing, or personal desires. Kant seems to reject consequentialism and holds that there are some things we may not do whatever the consequences. We look at writings by contemporary authors including J. J. C. Smart, Bernard Williams, Thomas Nagel, Amartya Sen, and Thomas Hill to clarify what is at stake in the conflict between consequentialist and nonconsequentialist ethics. At the end of the class we briefly examine "a new kid on the block," an alternative to consequentialist and Kantian perspectives known as virtue ethics. Virtue ethics seeks to characterize the motives and character of the virtuous agent, and according to the bolder versions of this doctrine, what it is morally right to do is fixed by specifying the motives that it is admirable for an agent to have (right action is what emerges from virtuous motives).

The aims of the course are (1) to improve our skills at reading and understanding difficult writings and thinking clearly about complex issues and (2) to become more aware of the structure of our own moral views and of moral positions opposed to our own.

COURSE TEXTS: J. S. Mill, *Utilitarianism*; J. J. C. Smart and Bernard Williams, *Utilitarianism For and Against*; Immanuel Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*; Marcia W. Baron, Philip Pettit, and Michael Slote, *Three Methods of Ethics*; and a course reader available from Cal Copy, 3251 Holiday Court #103 (turn east from Villa La Jolla Drive one block above La Jolla Village Drive, across the street to the east from El Torito restaurant).

COURSE REQUIREMENTS: A midterm exam (Friday of week 6), a short writing assignment, five to seven pages in length, topics to be assigned in class, and a regular comprehensive final examination. On your exams and the writing assignment you will be graded according to the clarity of your prose, the cogency of your arguments, and the soundness of the understanding of course materials that you exhibit. The final examination will comprehend all course materials including required readings, lectures, and handouts distributed in class.

GRADING: If you are taking the course on a PASS/NOT PASS basis, you must get (1) a C- or better on the final examination as well as (2) an overall C- average on all course work in order to

achieve a PASS grade, with one exception: If you have an A- or better average on the midterm exam and writing assignment, and are enrolled on a PASS/NOT PASS basis, you need not take the final exam in order to earn a PASS grade.

The midterm exam counts for 30 per cent of your final course grade, the writing assignment for 30 per cent, and the final examination for 40 per cent.

Only medical excuses certified by a note from your physician or a comparable certified excuse will be accepted for late submission of the writing assignment or absence from the midterm exam, or to justify the assignment of an Incomplete course grade.

DISCUSSION SECTIONS. A discussion meeting for each section will occur once a week and students are expected to attend. Your attendance and performance in section will affect your course grade in borderline cases (e.g., if the average of your grades is on the border between A- and B+). Apart from grades, the discussion sections are essential to the learning process because they provide the opportunity for a structured dialogue in which your opinions on ethical issues can be expressed, debated, and clarified.

SCHEDULE OF LECTURES AND READINGS

Week 1. September 17-23

FRI: Introduction. Moral Puzzles. Reading: None.

Week 2. September 24-30

MON: Introduction to utilitarianism. Reading: Mill, *Utilitarianism*, chapter 1 and paragraphs 1-10 of chapter 2.

WED: Happiness and human good. Reading: Mill, *Utilitarianism* paragraphs 1-10 of chapter 2 again; J. J. C. Smart, pages 12-27 of *Utilitarianism For and Against*; and Robert Adams, "Well-Being and Excellence" (in Cal Copy reader).

FRI: Same topic continued.

Week 3. October 1-7

MON: Utilitarianism and moral rules. Reading: Mill, *Utilitarianism*, chapter 2:

WED: Act and rule utilitarianism. Reading: J. J. C. Smart, pages 3-57 of *Utilitarianism For and Against*.

FRI: Act and rule utilitarianism. Reading: John Rawls, "Two Concepts of Rules" (in Cal Copy reader).

Week 4. October 8-14

MON: Morality and motivation; Mill's proof. Reading: Mill, *Utilitarianism*, chapters 3-4.

WED: Utility versus justice. Reading: Mill, *Utilitarianism*; chapter 5.

FRI: Utility versus justice, again. Reading: Smart, pages 62-73 of *Utilitarianism For and Against*; also John Rawls, "Classical Utilitarianism" (in Cal Copy reader).

Week 5. October 15-21

MON: Utilitarianism and obligations to distant strangers. Reading: Peter Singer, "Famine, Affluence, and Morality" (in Cal Copy reader).

WED: Self and others. Reading: Jean Hampton, "Selflessness and the Loss of Self" (in Cal Copy reader).

FRI: Consequentialism. Reading: Williams, pages 77-93 of *Utilitarianism For and Against*; also Amartya Sen, "Rights and Agency," sections 1-4 (in Cal Copy reader). (Sections 5-8 of "Rights and Agency" are recommended but not required.)

Week 6. October 22-28

MON: Nonconsequentialist ethics; doing and allowing; intended and merely foreseen consequences. Reading: Thomas Nagel, "Autonomy and Deontology" (in Cal Copy reader).

WED: Negative responsibility and integrity. Reading: Williams, pages 93-118 of *Utilitarianism For and against*.

FRI: **MIDTERM EXAM IN CLASS.**

Week 7. October 29-November 4.

MON: Kant's ethics; moral worth. Reading: Kant, *Groundwork*, Preface and Section I; also "Introduction" by Christine Korsgaard.

WED: What if everyone did the same? The categorical imperative test; hypothetical and categorical imperatives. Reading: Kant, *Groundwork*, Section II, pp. 19-31.

FRI: Kant's examples; applying the categorical imperative. Reading: Kant, *Groundwork*, Section II, pp. 19-35.

Week 8. November 5-11

MON: Humanity as an end in itself; morality and autonomy. Reading: Kant, *Groundwork*, Section II, pp. 35-51; also Thomas Hill, Jr., "Humanity as an End in Itself" (in Cal Copy reader).

WED: Kant and absolutism. Reading: Kant, "On a Supposed Right to Lie Because of Philanthropic Concerns" (in Cal Copy reader).

FRI: Conclusion of Kant discussion. Reading: none.

Week 9. November 12-18

MON: NO CLASS. HOLIDAY.

WED: Moral worth, responsibility, and luck. Reading: Thomas Nagel, "Moral Luck" (in Cal Copy reader).

FRI: Kant on free will and moral responsibility. Reading: Kant, *Groundwork*, Section III.

Week 10. November 19-25.

MON: **WRITING ASSIGNMENT DUE.** Free will and moral responsibility. Reading: Thomas Nagel, "Free Will," (in Cal Copy reader); J.J.C. Smart, "Freewill, Praise, and Blame" (in Cal Copy reader); Roderick W. Chisholm, "Responsibility and Avoidability" (in Cal Copy reader).

WED: another approach--virtue ethics. Reading: Elizabeth Anscombe, "Modern Moral Philosophy" (in Cal Copy reader).

FRI: NO CLASS. THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY.

Week 11. November 26-December 2

MON: Virtue ethics. Reading: Michael Slote, "Virtue Ethics," pages 175-238 and 266-281 of *Three Methods of Ethics*.

WED: The Kantian perspective. Reading: Marcia W. Baron, pages 3-92 and 239-251 of *Three Methods of Ethics*.

FRI: The consequentialist bites back. Reading: Philip Pettit, ""The Consequentialist Perspective," pages 92-174 and 252-265 of *Three Methods of Ethics*.

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