

**INTRODUCTORY HANDOUT PHILOSOPHY 13
INTRODUCTION TO PHILOSOPHY---ETHICS**

**Fall, 2015
revised November 28 final version**

Professor (lecturer): Richard Arneson.

Teaching Assistants: Joseph Stratmann (section meetings Monday 9-9:50 am and Monday 10-1050 a.m.; email jtstratm@ucsd.edu)
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For further information about the course, which will change week by week, consult the Philosophy 13 course TED page. Required and recommended readings (other than the course texts available in the Bookstore), occasional class notes, this course syllabus, and eventually advance information handouts on the final exam will be made available at this TED page.

Lectures Tuesdays and Thursdays 9:30 a.m. to 10:50 a.m., in HSS (Humanities & Social Sciences) Bldg. 1330. The final exam for this course will take place on Thursday, December 10 from 8:00-11:00 a.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 and ethical issues. These are issues about what we fundamentally owe one another by way of conduct, and about what, if anything, is really good or choiceworthy in human life. We have these disagreements in ordinary life, not just in philosophy classes or in academic journals. If someone says "Abortion is wrong" and another person says "Abortion is not wrong," what sort of disagreement is this? One view is that moral disagreement is disagreement in attitude. One person is expressing a favorable attitude toward abortion, the other is expressing an unfavorable attitude. On this view, moral statements are not genuine assertions, and cannot be true or false. Another possible view is that moral claims are a type of order or command, so "abortion is wrong" means something like "Don't have an abortion!" On yet another view, moral claims make genuine assertions, and can be true or false, correct or incorrect. Most of the authors of the writings we will read in this class assume the latter view just described. In the last week of the course, we look briefly at what might be said on both sides of this issue, and also ask, what could make moral claims true, if they are true.

Moral codes concerning the right and the good differ from society to society and change over time within any single society. Is there some uniquely valid fundamental standard for determining what is right and good or not? We study two contrasting proposals for identifying fundamental standards. Call them "consequentialism" and "nonconsequentialism." One proposal holds that we should assess laws, social practices, actions and policies by their consequences. What's morally right is always the act or policy that would produce the best reachable outcome.

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). Critics of Mill's views deny that happiness as Mill conceives of it (pleasure and the absence of pain) is really the correct standard for assessing the quality of a person's life, what makes someone's life go better for worse for the person who is living it. Critics also deny that what's morally right is always doing what aggregate maximizes human happiness.

The other proposal as to the standard of morally right conduct rejects consequentialism. This 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. Along with affirming moral constraints, nonconsequentialist morality also affirms options. So long as we aren't violating the moral constraints, each of us has wide freedom to choose and pursue our own projects and live as we choose, even if our choices and actions aren't maximizing good consequences. Some nonconsequentialists hold that some moral constraints are absolute and exceptionless: there are some things we may not do whatever the consequences. In our course readings, the 17th-century English writer John Locke and 20th-century philosophers Robert Nozick and Judith Thomson affirm moral positions that take respect for individual human rights to be fundamental.

We test rival approaches to morality by examining some controversial moral issues. (1) One is whether abortion is morally permissible or morally forbidden. A further issue is what stance the state should adopt toward the practice of abortion. (2) A second issue involves marriage. Some believe that marriage, in which romantic partners pledge to love, honor, and cherish one another for the long term, has special moral value and should be promoted by the state.

Some believe that the uniquely valuable type of marriage is between one man and woman; others disagree. Some worry that marriage practices tend to be unfair to women. Elizabeth Brake casts doubt on the idea that marriage vows even make sense, and suggests it is unfair for the state to privilege one type of romantic or friendship relationship over other that people might choose. (3) A third issue concerns immigration and border control. Do people living on a territory, acting through their state, have the right to exclude foreigners from entering with a view to becoming permanent members of society? If not, why not? And if so, why so, and under what conditions? (4) A related issue is whether morality requires, or even permits, people to favor their fellow countrymen over others. A simple cosmopolitanism says No. (5) Another issue is the stringency of duties to distant needy strangers.

THE AIMS OF THE COURSE are (1) to improve our skills at reading and understanding difficult writings and thinking clearly about complex issues and writing about those issues (2) to become more aware of the structure of our own moral views and of moral positions opposed to our own.

COURSE TEXTS: All course readings are available for downloading at the course TED page, except for three readings (see Schedule of Lecture Topics and Readings).

READINGS & FURTHER RECOMMENDED READINGS. The required readings for each class are listed as “Readings” on the Schedule of Lecture Topics and Readings below. For some classes there will be a list of “Further recommended list of readings” in smaller print—like this. These MERELY RECOMMENDED NOT REQUIRED readings will not show up on exams. They are optional. I include them for anyone who wants to explore the topic for that day a bit further.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS: Attendance at class is required, but will not affect the course grade except in borderline judgment calls and as it enters into discussion section participation. There may possibly be some quizzes in discussion section meetings. There will be a midterm exam in class (week 5), a short writing assignment, five to seven pages in length, topics to be assigned in lecture, 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.

(In the course of each lecture, a question or topic will be posed, and you will be asked to discuss the question or topic for a couple of minutes with the person sitting next to you. A short class discussion of the topic/question will then ensue, and each student will be asked to write a short analytical response to it. These short writing exercises will be commented on by your TA and returned to you, but not graded. These consult-discuss-write exercises will take up about 15 minutes of each of the Tuesday and Thursday lecture classes. Their point is to get us actively thinking about course materials.)

GRADING FOR PASS/NOT PASS ENROLLEES: 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, section quizzes, 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.

GRADING: Participation in discussion section meetings count for ten per cent of your final course grade, the midterm exam counts for 20 per cent, 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. Quizzes posed in discussion section will be based on the reading to be done for that specific section meeting, as your TA will explain. Your attendance and performance in section will also 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. Helped by your TA, you learn from your classmates and they from you. Also, the TA will sometimes offer a different perspective on the issues from what the lectures provide.

DISABILITY. If you have a certified disability that requires accommodation, you should register with the campus Office for Students with Disabilities (OSD) and provide me a current Authorization for Accommodation (AFA) letter issued by that Office. A copy of this same letter should also be given to the OSD liaison person in the Philosophy Department at the start of the term, so accommodation can be arranged. Please let me know your disability status at the start of the course, so I can work with the office to comply with the accommodation it stipulates as appropriate.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY. Integrity of scholarship is essential for an academic community. The University expects that both faculty and students will honor this principle and in so doing protect the validity of University intellectual work. For students, this means that all academic work will be done by the individual to whom it is assigned, without unauthorized aid of any kind. No dishonesty or cheating, in other words. See the University Policy on academic Integrity at <http://students.ucsd.edu/academics/academic-integrity/index.html/>

OFFICE HOURS: You are welcome and encouraged to come to my (Arneson's) office hours or those of your TA whenever you want to talk about the course material and themes, the assignments, or any other course-related concerns you have.

Writing: Your success in this class will depend in part on your ability to express yourself clearly. The course readings provide exemplars of clear philosophical writing. At the TED course page are some handouts with tips about how to write philosophy essays. As you work on your writing assignment (due on Tuesday, November 24, your TAs and I can help you talk through your ideas. Another resource is the UCSD Writing Center (located at 127 Mandeville; writingcenter@ucsd.edu). Their staff can help you with drafts of essays and generally provide advice for you at all stages of the writing process.

SCHEDULE OF LECTURE TOPICS AND READINGS

Note: All readings are available at the course TED page, except for the David Mamet reading (week 1), the Mill reading, excerpts from *Utilitarianism* (week 2) , and the Locke reading (week 5).

Week 1. September 21-27.

THURSDAY: Introduction to ethics and moral theory.

Reading: David Mamet, *Glengarry Glen Ross*. Text available at UCSD Bookstore.

Further recommended reading: Jonathan Glover, "The Scope and Limits of Moral Argument"; also Theron Pummer, "Introduction to Moral Philosophy."

Week 2. September 28-October 4.

TUESDAY: Mill's utilitarianism.

Reading: J. S. Mill, *Utilitarianism*, chapters 1 & 2. Available at www.utilitarianism.com/jsmill.htm

Also: Russ Shafer-Landau, "Fundamentals of Ethics: Introduction"

THURSDAY: Hedonism (what is good in itself for anyone is feeling good). Mill on "higher pleasures."

Reading: Mill, *Utilitarianism*, paragraphs 1-12 of chapter 2; Robert Nozick, "The Experience Machine"; Roger Crisp, "Hedonism Reconsidered."

Week 3. October 5-11.

TUESDAY: What makes someone's life good for that very person? Another view: desire satisfactionism.

Reading: Derek Parfit, "What Makes Someone's Life Go Best?"; also Richard Kraut, "Desire and the Human Good."

THURSDAY: Objective list views, perfectionism, and hybrid views of the good.

Reading: Robert Adams, "Well-Being and Excellence"; also Shelly Kagan, "Well-Being as Enjoying the Good."

Further recommended reading: Christopher Heathwood, "The Desire-Fulfillment Theory; Thomas Hurka, "Objective Theories"; also Richard Arneson, "BOL! Defending the Bare Objective List Account of Well-Being."

Week 4. October 12-18.

TUESDAY: Utilitarianism and consequentialism; arguments against consequentialism; the doctrine of double effect and the doctrine of doing and allowing.

Reading: Russ Shafer-Landau, "Ethical Pluralism and Absolute Moral Rules."

THURSDAY: The structure of nonconsequentialist morality; constraints and options; prima facie duties.

Reading: Russ Shafer-Landau, "Ethical Pluralism: Prima Facie Duties and Ethical Particularism"; Thomas Nagel, "Agent-relativity and Deontology."

Further recommended reading: J. J. C. Smart, "Extreme and Restricted Utilitarianism"; R.M. Hare, "The Archangel and the Prole."

Week 5. October 19-25.

TUESDAY: Moral rights; natural moral rights; overriding rights.

Reading: Robert Nozick, "Side Constraints"; also John Locke, *Second Treatise on Government*, chapters 1-5. Available at www.gutenberg.org/files/7370/7370-h/7370-h.htm

Further recommended reading: Amartya Sen, "Rights and Agency."

THURSDAY: **MIDTERM EXAM IN CLASS.**

Week 6. October 26-November 1.

TUESDAY: Abortion.

Reading: Judith Thomson, "A Defense of Abortion."

THURSDAY: Abortion and infanticide.

Reading: Don Marquis, "Why Abortion Is Immoral"; Mary Anne Warren, "On the Moral and Legal Status of Abortion."

Further recommended reading: Jeff McMahan, "Infanticide."

Week 7. November 2-8.

TUESDAY: Should the state promote marriage? Do marriage vows make sense? Is marriage specially morally valuable?

Reading: Elizabeth Brake, "The Marriage Promise: Is Divorce Promise-Breaking?"

THURSDAY: Should the state promote marriage? If not, why not? If so, what sort?

Reading: Elizabeth Brake, "Minimal Marriage: What Political Liberalism Implies for Marriage Law"; also John Finnis, "Marriage as a Basic and Exigent Good."

Week 8. November 9-15.

TUESDAY: Immigration and border control.

Reading: Joseph Carens, "The Case for Open Borders" and "The Claims of Community, chapters 11 and 12 of his *The Ethics of Immigration*".

THURSDAY: Immigration and border control. Reading: Christopher Wellman, "Immigration and Freedom of Association"; and Michael Blake, "Immigration, Jurisdiction, and Exclusion."

Week 9. November 16-22.

TUESDAY: Beneficence and distant needy strangers.

Reading: Peter Singer, "Famine, Affluence, and Morality"; also Jean Hampton, "Selflessness and the Loss of Self".

THURSDAY: Global poverty. Reading: Thomas Pogge, "Are We Violating the Rights of the Global Poor,?" Jan Narveson, "We Don't Owe Them a Thing! A Tough-minded but Soft-Hearted View of Aid to the Faraway Needy."

Further recommended reading: Garrett Cullity, "Asking Too Much"; also Leif Wenar, "Poverty is No Pond: Challenges for the Affluent"; Liam Murphy, "The Demands of Beneficence"; Richard Arneson, "Moral Limits on the Demands of Beneficence?"

WEEK 10: November 23-29.

TUESDAY: **WRITING ASSIGNMENT DUE IN CLASS.** Cosmopolitanism, nationalism, patriotism. Reading: Samuel Scheffler, "Conceptions of Cosmopolitanism"; also Thomas Hurka, "The Justification of National Partiality" (skip section 1, read only the second two sections of the essay).

Further recommended reading: Jeremy Waldron, "Minority Cultures and the Cosmopolitan Alternative"; also Richard Arneson, "Extreme Cosmopolitanisms Defended."

THURSDAY: **NO CLASS. THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY.**

Week 11. November 30-December 6.

TUES: Is there any true or false, right or wrong, in ethics? Reading: J. Mackie, "The Subjectivity of Values"; also "Ronald Dworkin, "Objectivity and Truth: You'd Better Believe It."

THUR: Continuation of Tuesday discussion. Moral objectivity, moral skepticism, moral relativism. Reading: Michael Huemer, "Revisionary Intuitionism."

Arneson's office hours: Wednesdays 1-2 & Thursdays 3:00-4:00 in HSS 8057.

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