

INTRODUCTORY HANDOUT PHILOSOPHY 13 FALL, 2008
INTRODUCTION TO PHILOSOPHY--ETHICS revised November 25, 2008
 Professor: Richard Arneson. TAs: Damon Crockett and Nanhee Byrnes.

For further information about the course, which will change week by week, consult the Philosophy Department web site at <http://philosophy.ucsd.edu/> and click on Courses, then on Fall 2008, then on Philosophy 13. An alternate way to gain access to this web page is to go to the UCSD Philosophy Department web page, click on Faculty, click on Richard Arneson web, then scroll down to the undergraduate courses section (just above family pictures), click on Fall 2008, Philosophy 13.

Lectures Tuesday and Thursday 11:00 a.m.-12:20 p.m. in Cognitive Science Bldg. 002
 The final exam for this course will take place on Wednesday, December 10, from 11:30 a.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 friendship and partiality to friends and the limits of our moral obligations to help distant strangers.

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. Besides upholding constraints, most versions of this family of views also uphold moral options. This is the idea that within the limits set by moral constraints, we are free to live our lives as we choose, whether or not our choices maximally promote good outcomes. On this view, provided your actions do not violate moral constraints, you are morally at liberty to lie on the beach or go to the movies or generally to act as you please regardless of whether or not your actions bring about maximally good outcomes. In course readings, Judith Thomson, John Rawls, Warren Quinn, Robert Nozick, and Amartya Sen explore the possible and desirable shape of a morality of constraints and options.

It might seem that at the fundamental moral level, moral principles must be impartial: one person's interests count for no more and no less than the identical interests of anyone else. If morality says that people have rights, then morality must stipulate that at the fundamental level, each of us must have the same rights. But even if this is so, it is compatible with the possibility that an impartial morality dictates partiality at the level of how one should act. Maybe morality rightly construed dictates that parents be partial to their own children, that friends favor their own friends, and that members of one country favor one another over mere strangers or outsiders. Is this so? And if morality does dictate partiality, does morality by the same token dictate that members of one tribe or ethnic group should favor one another, or that people of the same skin color should favor one another? If this is not so, how do we draw a principled line between the partiality that we think is morally acceptable and the partiality that we think is morally unacceptable? In course readings, Jean Hampton and Thomas Hurka wrestle with aspects of this issue.

In many societies, people are deemed to have moral rights. To have a moral right is to have a valid claim that others act or refrain from acting toward one in a certain way. (If you have a moral

right to walk down the street, then that means (a) you are morally at liberty to walk down the street and (b) others are morally obligated not to interfere in certain ways with your walking down the street. (To fill in the substance of the right, one has to specify what “certain ways” of interference by others are ruled out.) Are these rights matters of convention, so that what moral rights a person possesses is relative to the entrenched practices and shared values of her particular society? Or are moral rights universal? John Locke defends the idea that people have natural moral rights to live as they choose within certain limits, and the corresponding idea that a morally legitimate government must respect and enforce these rights. A political regime that massively violates people’s moral rights is a tyranny, against which it is right to rebel, adds Locke. He also asserts and defends the slogan that the moral basis of a legitimate government is the consent of the governed. Some respond that this slogan might sound good, but collapses under critical scrutiny. In an ongoing society, people just find themselves under the rule of a government that claims their allegiance, and they have no real choice to “consent” or not. A. John Simmons, Robert Nozick, Jeremy Waldron, and Christopher Wellman explore, defend, and criticize Locke’s views on moral rights. (The consequentialist will respond that rights properly understood are not morally compelling or binding for their own sakes, but are rather—when they make sense-- good means for bringing about better outcomes. The rights we should uphold, and the degree to which we should uphold them, are set by a morally more fundamental question: what would best promote good lives for people, on the whole, over the long run?)

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*; also John Locke, *Second Treatise of Government*. Other course readings are available at the course web page.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS: Surprise quizzes to be posed occasionally in discussion section meetings, a midterm take-home exam (due Tuesday of week 6), 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 (but not merely recommended) 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, 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.

The quizzes 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.

Disability. If you have a certified disability that requires accommodation, you should register with the campus office for students with disabilities. 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.

SCHEDULE OF LECTURES AND READINGS

Week 1. September 22-28

THUR: Introduction. Moral Puzzles.

Week 2. September 29- October 5

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

THUR: Happiness and human good. Reading: Mill, *Utilitarianism* paragraphs 1-10 of chapter 2 again; Robert Adams, "Well-Being and Excellence." Further recommended reading: Richard Kraut, "Desire and Human Good", also Derek Parfit, "What makes Someone's Life Go Best?".

Week 3. October 6-12.

TUES: The place of rules in utilitarianism. Reading: Mill, *Utilitarianism*, rest of chapter 2; also John Rawls, "Two Concepts of Rules." Further recommended reading: J. J. C. Smart, "Extreme and Restricted Utilitarianism."

THUR: Reading: Mill, *Utilitarianism*, chapters 3-4.

Week 4. October 13-19.

TUES: Utilitarianism, rights, and justice. Reading: Mill, *Utilitarianism*, chapter 5; also John Rawls, "Classical Utilitarianism."

THUR: Against moral options; morality demands self-sacrifice. Reading: Peter Singer, "Famine, Affluence, and Morality."

Week 5. October 20-26.

TUES: Doubts about self-sacrifice; the duty to favor oneself. Reading: Jean Hampton, "Selflessness and the Loss of Self."

THUR: Favoring one's friends and fellow citizens. Reading: Thomas Hurka, "The Justification of National Partiality," (sections 2 and 3 only).

Week 6. October 27-November 2.

TUES: **Midterm takehome exam due in class.** The doctrine of double effect and the doctrine of doing and allowing. Reading: Warren Quinn, "Actions, Intentions, and Consequences: The Doctrine of Double Effect"; also Judith Thomson, "The Trolley Problem."

THUR: Moral rights. Reading: Robert Nozick, "Moral Constraints and Moral Goals"; also Amartya Sen, "Rights and Agency" (sections 1-4 only).

Week 7. November 3-9.

TUES: Moral rights and prohibitions against harming. Reading: Judith Thomson, "Self-Defense"; also Thomson, "Tradeoffs."

THUR: Natural moral rights; Locke's version. Reading: John Locke, *Second Treatise of Government*, chapters 1-4.

Week 8. November 10-16.

TUES: NO CLASS. VETERANS' DAY HOLIDAY.

THUR: Property, family, and political society. Reading: Locke, *Second Treatise of Government*, chapters 5-7.

Week 9. November 17-23.

TUES: Consent, tacit consent, and absolute government. Reading: Locke, *Second Treatise of Government*, chapters 8-12. also A. John Simmons, "Tacit Consent and Political Obligation."

THUR: Reading: Locke, *Second Treatise of Government*, chapters 13-19.

Week 10. November 24-30.

TUES: Locke and Divine command ethics. Reading: Robert Adams, "Abraham's Dilemma."

THUR: NO CLASS. THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY.

Week 11. December 1-7.

TUES: Political obligation and fairness. Reading: Robert Nozick, "The Principle of Fairness,"; A. John Simmons, "The Principle of Fair Play." Recommended reading: Jeremy Waldron, "Special Ties and Natural Duties."

THUR: Political obligation and secession. Reading: Christopher Wellman, "Liberalism, Samaritanism, and Political Legitimacy"; Allen Buchanan, "Theories of Secession."

Arneson's office hours: Tuesdays 2-3 and Thursdays 3-4 in HSS 8057.

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