

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

**FALL, 2005**

Professor: Richard Arneson. TAs: Nina Davis and Sharon Skare

Lecture MWF 12:00-noon to 12:50 in Center Hall 216

Handouts, announcements, and other information pertinent to the course will be accessible at the course web site, at <http://philosophy.ucsd.edu/>, click COURSES, click FALL, 2005, then click PHILOSOPHY 13. Enrolled students should check for updates at least once a week, and are responsible for learning course materials provided through this site.

The final exam for this course will take place on Thursday, December 8 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 personal conduct and social policy. 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 recent and contemporary authors including Robert Nozick, Judith Thomson, Thomas Nagel, Amartya Sen, and Brad Hooker to clarify what is at stake in the conflict between consequentialist and nonconsequentialist ethics. Besides not acknowledging constraints, consequentialism opposes common moral views in denying that people have wide options to live their lives as they choose so long as they do not harm others by violating their rights. In an essay that takes up the question, what if anything to well-off people in rich countries owe by way of assistance to badly off people in poor countries, Peter Singer argues that morality limits our permissible options more than most of us tend to think. Consequentialism also opposes common opinion in denying partiality: Most of us think it is sometimes morally permissible, and sometimes morally required, to favor those who are personally related to us by ties of friendship or kinship, over mere strangers. So, how much partiality is OK?

The issues discussed to this point concern the substance of morality. What is right and wrong? What is good and bad? At the beginning and the end of the course, bookending it, we look at two other issues. At the beginning (week 2) we briefly explore the nature of morality. What sort of claims are ethical claims? Some think moral claims are genuine assertions capable of being true or false. Others deny this, and hold that ethical claims are expressions of the speaker's attitudes. At the end of the course (week 11) we briefly look at issues concerning moral responsibility. If human choices are just events in the physical world, caused to be what they are by prior conditions according to basic physical laws like the laws of physics, what room is left for the ordinary notions of personal responsibility for our choices? This discussion illustrates the connections between ethics and other areas of philosophy.

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*; Stephen Darwall, *Deontology*; Immanuel Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*; 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 takehome exam (due Friday of week 6), a short writing assignment, five to seven pages in length, topics to be assigned in class (due Wednesday of week 9), 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 going into the final exam, and are enrolled on a PASS/NOT PASS basis, you need not take the final exam in order to earn a PASS grade.

The take-home midterm exam counts for 25 per cent of your final course grade, the writing assignment for 30 per cent, quizzes held in section for five 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 midterm exam or the writing assignment 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+). Also, during the course of the quarter, unannounced quizzes will be held at the start of three of your section meetings. These quizzes will test basic acquaintance with the course reading to be discussed in that section or perhaps the prior week. As mentioned above, these three section quizzes will count for five per cent of your course grade. 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 (abbreviated week). September 22-25

FRI: Introduction. Reading: None.

Week 2. September 26-October 2

MON: Reading: J. L. Mackie, "The Subjectivity of Values" (in Cal Copy Reader; also available through course web page). Recommended reading: J. Glover, (in Cal Copy reader).

WED: Reading: R. Dworkin, "Objectivity and Truth: You'd Better Believe It," available at course web page. Also J. Rawls, "Some Remarks on Moral Theory" (in Cal Copy reader).

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

Week 3. October 3-9.

MON: Mill on hedonism and higher pleasures. Reading: Mill, *Utilitarianism* paragraphs 1-10 of chapter 2 again.

WED: Happiness, desire satisfaction, perfectionism, and human good. Reading: Richard Kraut, "Desire and the Human Good" (available through course web page).

FRI: Utilitarianism and rules. Reading Mill, *Utilitarianism*, chapter 2.

Week 4. October 10-16.

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

WED: Utilitarianism and justice. Reading: Mill, *Utilitarianism*, chapter 5.

FRI: What are moral rights? Part 1. Reading: Joel Feinberg, "The Nature and Value of Rights" (in Cal Copy reader).

Week 5. October 17-23..

MON: What are moral rights? Part 2. Reading: Joel Feinberg, "The Rights of Animals and Unborn Generations" (in Cal Copy Reader).

WED: **TAKE-HOME EXAM DUE IN CLASS.** Rights, agent-relative duties constraints, and consequentialism. Reading: Robert Nozick, "Moral Constraints and Moral Goals," (In *Deontology*); Amartya Sen, "Rights and Agency" (sections 1 through 4 only), accessible through course web page.

FRI: Absolutism. The Doctrine of Doing and Allowing and the Doctrine of Double Effect.

Reading: E. Anscombe, "War and Murder" (in Cal Copy reader). Recommended reading: Warren Quinn, "Actions, Intentions, and Consequences: The Doctrine of Double Effect" (in *Deontology*, pp. 194-211).

Week 6. October 24-30

MON: Morality, deontology, and the personal point of view. Reading, Thomas Nagel, "Agent-Relativity and Deontology" (in Cal Copy reader).

WED: Nonconsequentialism and rights. Reading: Judith Thomson, "Self-Defense," accessible through course web page.

FRI: Morality and options; the extreme demand. Reading: Peter Singer, "Famine, Affluence, and Morality," accessible through course web page.

Week 7. October 31-November 6.

MON: Against the extreme demand, part 1. Reading: Garrett Cullity, "Asking Too Much," (in Cal Copy reader).

WED: Against the extreme demand, part 2. Reading: R. Miller, "Beneficence, Duty, and Distance" (available through course web page).

FRI: Reading: W. D. Ross, excerpt from *The Right and the Good* (in *Deontology*, pp. 55-80).

Week 8. November 7--13

MON: Reading: Brad Hooker, excerpt from *Ideal Code, Real World* (in Cal Copy reader).

WED: Introduction to Kant's ethics; moral worth. Reading: Immanuel Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, Preface and section 1; plus Editor's Introduction.

FRI NO CLASS. HOLIDAY. **WRITING ASSIGNMENT DUE.**

Week 9. November 14-20.

MON: From the good will to the categorical imperative. Reading: Kant, *Groundwork*, section 1.

WED: Categorical and hypothetical imperatives. Reading: Kant, *Groundwork*, section 2, pp. 19-31.

FRI: What if everyone did the same?. Reading: Kant, *Groundwork*, section 2, pp. 19-36.

Week 10. November 21-27.

MON: The universal law formula. Reading: Kant, *Groundwork*, section 2, pp. 19-36.

WED: Humanity as an end in itself, autonomy, and the kingdom of ends. Reading: Kant, *Groundwork*, section 2, pp. 36-51.

FRI: NO CLASS. HOLIDAY.

Week 11. November 28-December 4.

MON: Absolutism. Reading: Kant, *Groundwork*, section 2; also Kant, "On a Supposed Right to Lie from Philanthropy"; and C. Korsgaard: "Kant on Dealing with Evil," both in *Deontology*.

WED: Two standpoints and freedom of the will.. Reading: Kant, *Groundwork*, section 3.

FRI Free will and ethics. Reading: Thomas Nagel, "Moral Luck" and "Free Will" (both in Cal Copy reader).

**Arneson's office hours: Mondays 3-4 and Wednesdays 4-5 in HSS 8057. Office phone 534 6810. Email [rarneson@ucsd.edu](mailto:rarneson@ucsd.edu)**