

**INTRODUCTORY HANDOUT PHILOSOPHY 160 WINTER, 2009**  
**ETHICAL THEORY RICHARD ARNESON revised 1/20/2009**

This class meets Monday & Wednesday 6:00-7:20 p.m. in Solis 111.  
 The final exam for this class will be held on Wednesday, March 18, 2009, from 7 p.m. to 10 p.m.  
 If you enroll in this class, you must be free to take a regular final exam for this course at this scheduled date and time.

Information about the course and some course readings are available at the course web page,  
<http://philosophy.ucsd.edu/courses/>  
 (Go to the USCD Philosophy Department home page, click on COURSES from menu at upper left, then click on Winter, 2009, then on Philosophy 160 Ethical Theory.)

People make moral claims on each other, and argue about the legitimacy of such claims. Ethical theories seek to understand the nature of moral claims and moral disagreement. In this course we will examine a wide range of views, from broad skepticism, to the idea that what's reasonable for an individual to do is always what's most in that person's interest, to the position that we can discover an objectively correct set of moral principles that every rational person will accept and obey.

Moral codes differ from society to society and change over time within any single society. Is there some uniquely valid fundamental standard for appraising the variation or not? We study two contrasting proposals for identifying fundamental standards. One holds we should assess laws, social practices, actions and policies by their consequences. This proposal identifies rationality with maximizing the fulfillment of goals and moral rationality with maximizing the fulfillment of an impartial goal, human well-being fairly distributed. The other proposal identifies morality with orienting one's will toward respecting the dignity of persons as rational agents, which involves respecting their moral rights. The first proposal is perhaps better understood, the second is a work in progress, and most course authors are trying to develop it or figure out what it might amount to. One might opt for one or another of these proposals, try to split the difference between them, or reject the whole lot.

At the root of ethical theory, people are trying to reflect on how to live. In the course we try to focus on issues and puzzles that are genuinely controversial and strike us as genuinely significant in ordinary life, outside moral philosophy classrooms. The goals of the class are to improve our skills at reading and criticizing challenging readings and to reflect on our own moral views in the light of the philosophical theories we survey.

**COURSE TEXTS:** Immanuel Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*; Stephen Darwall (ed.), *Deontology*; Christine Korsgaard, *The Sources of Normativity*; T. M. Scanlon, *What We Owe To Each Other*; and Brad Hooker, *Ideal Code, Real World*. Other readings will be downloadable from the course web page.

**COURSE REQUIREMENTS:** Regular participation in class discussions including one short (five minute) presentation; a takehome midterm exam, a writing assignment (a six-eight page essay on a topic from a list of specified topics), and a regular final examination. The final exam will comprehend all course materials including required readings (but NOT recommended readings), lectures, and class handouts.

There will be about 20 minutes or more of discussion at the start of each class. The focus of discussion will be a question or questions on some portion of the reading, posed well in advance of class. A class presentation explains some significant point in the reading and raises a question or criticism regarding it. You make the presentation to the class and at the same time turn in a

one-page (maximum length) statement of your discussion point. (Besides joining in weekly class discussions, you can participate in class discussion by sending me (by email) questions or comments on the readings for any given class prior to that class meeting.)

**GRADING:** Twenty per cent of your overall grade will be based on class participation, 20 per cent on the midterm takehome exam, 25 per cent on the writing assignment, and 35 percent on the final exam. If you are taking the course on a PASS/NOT PASS basis, you must achieve a C minus or better grade on the final exam and a C minus or better average on all other course work in order to receive a PASS grade, with one exception: If you have an A minus or better average on coursework up to the final exam, you will have earned a PASS grade for the course without being required to take the final exam.

### **SCHEDULE OF READINGS AND LECTURE-DISCUSSION TOPICS**

Week 1. January 4-10

MON: Introduction; Consequentialism. Reading: none.

WED: Egoism and morality. Reading: David Gauthier, *Morals by Agreement*, chapters 1 and 2.

Week 2. January 11-17

MON: Egoism and morality. Reading: David Gauthier, *Morals by Agreement*, chapter 6.

WED: Morality as rational self-determination. Reading: Kant, *Groundwork*, Editor's Introduction and section 1.

Week 3. January 18-24

MON: NO CLASS. Martin Luther King, Jr. Holiday.

WED: Moral worth and moral luck. Reading: Thomas Nagel, "Moral Luck," and Nomy Arpaly, "Moral Worth." (This class is rescheduled; will take place Tuesday, Jan 20.)

Week 4. January 25-31

MON: [Guest lecturer: Mr. Charlie Kurth.] Morality as rational self-determination; the categorical imperative. Reading: Kant, *Groundwork*, section 2.

WED: Moral absolutism. Reading: Kant, "On a Supposed Right to Lie from Philanthropy"; also Christine Korsgaard, "The Right to Lie: Kant on Dealing with Evil" (both in the Darwall anthology on *Deontology*). Also relevant: Kant, *Groundwork*, section 2.

Week 5. February 1-7

MON: The categorical imperative idea. Also: The structure of nonconsequentialist morality.

Reading: Philippa Foot, "Morality as a System of Hypothetical imperatives" (available at course web page); also Thomas Nagel, "Autonomy and Deontology," in Darwall (ed.), *Deontology*.

WED: Skepticism about morality. Reading: John Mackie, "The Subjectivity of Values" (available from course web page).

Week 6. February 8-14

MON: TAKEHOME MIDTERM EXAM DUE IN CLASS. Morality and rationality, again. Reading: Christine Korsgaard, *The Sources of Normativity*, Lectures 1 & 2.

WED: Morality and rationality, again. Reading: Korsgaard, *The Sources of Normativity*, Lecture 4 and pp. 131-145 of Lecture 4. Recommended reading: Comments by Cohen, Geuss, Nagel, and Williams and Korsgaard reply; all in *The Sources of Normativity*.

Week 7. February 15-21

MON: NO CLASS. President's Day Holiday.

WED: Reading: T.M. Scanlon, *What We Owe to Each Other*. (Specific reading assignment to be made later.)

Week 8. February 22-28

MON: Reading: Scanlon, *What We Owe to Each Other*. (Specific reading assignment to be made later.)

WED: Reading: Scanlon, *What We Owe to Each Other*. (Specific reading assignment to be made later.)

Week 9 March 1-7

MON: The structure of consequentialisms, direct and indirect. Reading: R. M. Hare, "The Archangel and the Prole"; William Talbott, "Toward a Revival of Consequentialist Human Rights Theory.

WED: Friendship, agent-relativity and agent-neutrality. Reading: Niko Kolodny, "Love as Valuing a Relationship"; also Peter Railton, "Alienation, Consequentialism, and the Demands of Morality"; Also Samuel Scheffler, "Relationships and Responsibilities" (all three readings available from course web page).

FRI: WRITING ASSIGNMENT DUE in ARNESON'S FACULTY MAIL SLOT, 7<sup>th</sup> floor, HSS Bldg.

Week 10. March 8-14

MON: Rule consequentialism. Reading: Brad Hooker, *Ideal Code, Real World*.

WED: Rules consequentialism. Reading: Brad Hooker, *Ideal Code, Real World*.

**Arneson office hours:** Wednesdays 1-3 in 8057 H & SS Bldg.