

# ETHICS

## **Course Information**

*Title:* Ethics

*Number:* PHIL 2410

*Meetings:* Tuesdays & Thursdays

*Instructors:* Alex Boeglin & Augie Faller

### *Course Description:*

This course is intended to introduce and explore some of the big questions about the content, scope, and nature of morality. We will start with various first-order ethical theories, which offer criteria of right action – *i.e.*, what one ought to do, morally speaking. These will include Consequentialist, Kantian, and Virtue Ethical approaches.

We will then consider the question of why one should be moral, as opposed to merely doing what one wants, or trying to advance one's own interests. We will also discuss whether and in what way morality might be objective, or relative to particular times and places, or more thoroughly subjective. Finally, we will examine some of the more abstract questions about the nature of morality which traditionally fall under the heading of 'meta-ethics.' Interspersed with these theoretical ethical issues will be more concrete ethical questions about what to do as individuals, and how the social world should operate.

Ethics is close to home – it concerns the sort of life we should be leading, the ways we should relate to one another, and the sort of society and even world we should be trying to create. Please come to class prepared for the discussion.

## Learning Objectives

- Develop your capacity to clearly reconstruct complex, sometimes obscure arguments in a way that balances charity with fidelity to the substance of the original text.
- Become better able to discern the underlying, rational structure of arguments, particularly with regard to identifying chains of logical dependence, areas of vulnerability, and effective modes of response.
- Learn how to manage controversies, bracket irrelevant issues, mount focused objections, and practice writing in a way that avoids over-promising, under-delivering, and generally demonstrates a high degree of control.

## Course Policies

*Plagiarism:* Any work you submit must be wholly your own. If you are unsure whether something you've done might count as plagiarism, please consult one of your instructors.

*Deadlines:* We grant all reasonable requests for extensions so long as you (i) notify us *before* the work is due, and (ii) propose a new deadline. Otherwise, late submissions will be penalized at a rate of one third letter grade per 48-hour period that it is late.

## Assessment

*Papers:* 30%

- Paper One (2 pages), worth 10%
- Paper Two (4-5 pages), worth 20%

*Written Exams:* 50%

- Midterm Exam, worth 20%
- Final Exam, worth 30%

*Class Participation:* 20%

- Presentation, worth 10%
- Daily Participation, worth 10%

## Readings

- Ethics: Essential Readings in Moral Philosophy*, ed. George Sher
- Course Reader

## Calendar

### I. Utilitarianism

- Session 1
  - Ursula K. Le Guin, “The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas”
- Session 2
  - John Stuart Mill, selections from *Utilitarianism*, EER
  - Jeremy Bentham, “Pleasure as the Good,” EER
- Session 3
  - John Rawls, “Classic Utilitarianism,” EER
  - Brad Hooker, “Rule-Consequentialism,” EER
- Session 4
  - Peter Railton, “Alienation, Consequentialism, . . .” EER
  - Bernard Williams, “A Critique of Utilitarianism,” EER
- Session 5
  - Derek Parfit, “Over-Population and the Quality of Life,”
- Session 6
  - Peter Singer, “Famine, Affluence, and Morality,” EER
  - Banerjee & Duflo, “More than 1 Billion People are Hungry . . .”

### II. Kantian Ethics

- Session 7
  - Immanuel Kant, selections from the *Groundwork*, EER
- Session 8
  - Christine M. Korsgaard, “The Right to Lie: . . .,” EER
  - Rae Langton, “Maria Von Herbert’s Challenge to Kant,” EER
- Session 9
  - G.E.M. Anscombe, “Modern Moral Philosophy,”
  - Onora O’Neill, “Between Consenting Adults,” EER

*III. Virtue Ethics* Session 10

- Aristotle, "The Nature of Moral Virtue," EER
- Martha Nussbaum, "Non-Relative Virtues: . . .," EER

 Session 11

- John Doris, "A Situationist Theory of Character," EER
- Rachana Kamtekar, "Situationism and Virtue Ethics. . ."

 Session 12

- Martha Nussbaum, "Judging Other Cultures: . . ."
- Amartya Sen, "More than 100 Million Women are Missing"

*IV. Metaethics* Session 13

- J.L. Mackie, "The Subjectivity of Values," EER

 Session 14

- G.E. Moore, "Goodness as Simple and Indefinable," EER
- A.J. Ayer, "The Emotive Theory of Ethics," EER

 Session 15

- David Enoch, "Why I'm an Objectivist about Ethics"
- Philippa Foot, "Morality as a System. . .," EER