

PHIL 202: Core Ethics; Winter 2013
2011-13 History of Ethics Sequence
Quarter IV: 19th and 20th Century Ethics
Syllabus

This Syllabus is already highly selective about which figures and issues to read and discuss. We may have to revise and abridge this Syllabus as well, especially if we spend more time on some figures (e.g. Mill or Sidgwick) than presently planned. For instance, if necessary, we might restrict our coverage of Moore to one session on the open question argument, and we might forego the discussion of Williams altogether. The Syllabus assumes that seminar members will have access to the following five books.

- John Stuart Mill, *Utilitarianism* [1861], ed. R. Crisp (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998).
- Henry Sidgwick, *The Methods of Ethics* [1874/1907], 7th ed. (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1981).
- T.H. Green, *Prolegomena to Ethics* [1883], ed. D. Brink (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2003).
- G.E. Moore, *Principia Ethica* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1903).
- John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* [1971], 2d ed. (Cambridge: Harvard, 1999).

Required readings are drawn from these texts or will be made available electronically and are preceded by '(A)'. Recommended readings are preceded by '(B)'. I've been extremely selective about recommended readings. There are many other things worth reading; I have tried to offer a manageable number of resources I know well and think would be helpful. Especially recommended readings are preceded by an asterisk. Some required and some recommended texts will be available as Electronic Reserves [ER] on the course website or by email. Some recommended texts will be available as Hard Reserves [HR] in the departmental library (H&SS 8025). Other recommended texts can be found at the university library. If you are having trouble locating a particular text, let me know, and I can try to help (e.g. lend you a copy myself).

0. General.

- (B) *Terence Irwin, *The Development of Ethics*, vol. 3 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2009) [HR] and *Thomas Hurka, *The Golden Age of Moral Philosophy* [tentative title] (manuscript), chs. 1-9 [ER]. (Note that because Hurka's chapters are thematically arranged, whereas our Syllabus is arranged by philosophers, it's not feasible to assign particular chapters in connection with individual philosophers.)

1. Jeremy Bentham (1748-1832). Bentham was perhaps the founding father of utilitarianism and was the initial intellectual leader of the Philosophical Radicals. Our brief discussion of Bentham will focus on his doctrines of psychological egoism and hedonistic utilitarianism.

- (A) Jeremy Bentham, *An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation* <http://files.libertyfund.org/files/278/0175_Bk.pdf> Chapters I and IV.
- (B) David O. Brink, *Mill's Progressive Principles* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2013), ch. 1 [ER].

2. John Stuart Mill (1806-73). Though John Stuart Mill inherited the utilitarian and Radical legacy of Bentham and his father James Mill, he transformed those doctrines considerably, making fundamental contributions to the utilitarian and liberal traditions. We will focus on Mill's conception of happiness and his doctrine of higher pleasures, his utilitarian conception of duty, and his account of the proof and justification of utilitarianism.

- (A) John Stuart Mill, *Utilitarianism*, especially chs. II, V, I and IV. (You can read *Utilitarianism* consecutively; this is the order in which we will discuss chapters.) Though the Crisp edition is the most convenient, other editions are acceptable, including the version available online (for free) in Mill's *Collected Works* volume X from the Online Library of the Liberty Fund <<http://oll.libertyfund.org>>.
- (B) *John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty Collected Works* XVIII; *Fred Berger, *Happiness, Justice, and Freedom: The Moral and Political Philosophy of John Stuart Mill* (Berkeley: University of California, 1984), chs. 1-4; *David Lyons, *Rights, Welfare, and Mill's Moral Theory* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), chs. 2-3; Roger Crisp, *Mill's Utilitarianism* (London: Routledge, 1997); *Dan Jacobson, "Utilitarianism without Consequentialism: The Case of John Stuart Mill" *Philosophical Review* 117 (2008): 159-91; Irwin, *The Development of Ethics*, chs. 79-80 [HR]; and Brink, *Mill's Progressive Principles*, chs. 2-5 [ER].

3. Henry Sidgwick (1838-1900). Sidgwick is sometime viewed as the first analytical moral philosopher. He examines three distinct methods of ethics -- egoism, utilitarianism, and intuitionism. Though he is usually, and with good reason, regarded as a utilitarian, he finds an important element of truth in each of the three methods. Intuitionism turns out to be defensible as a sort of foundationalist moral epistemology, and egoism and utilitarianism are each an object of a fundamental intuition, which is what produces the Dualism of Practical Reason with which *The Methods of Ethics* ends. We will look at Sidgwick's hedonist conception of the good, his defense of intuitionism, his claim that commonsense morality is inchoately and imperfectly utilitarian, and his dualism of practical reason.

- (A) Henry Sidgwick, *The Methods of Ethics*, Preface to 6th ed, I.i, I.iv, I.vi--II.iii, II.v, III.i, III.xi, III.xiii-xiv, IV.i-IV.v, Concluding Chapter.
- (B) *Henry Sidgwick, "The Establishment of Ethical First Principles" *Mind* 4 (1879): 106-11; C.D. Broad, *Five Types of Ethical Theory* (London: Routledge, 1930), ch. 5; Jerome Schneewind, *Sidgwick and Victorian Moral Philosophy* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977); David O. Brink, "Sidgwick and the Rationale for Rational Egoism" in *Essays on Henry Sidgwick*, ed. B. Schultz (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992) and *"Common Sense and First Principles in Sidgwick's *Methods*" *Social Philosophy & Policy* 11 (1994): 179-201; and Irwin, *The Development of Ethics*, chs. 81-83 [HR].

4. T.H. Green (1836-82). The *Prolegomena to Ethics* is Green's major philosophical work. For our purposes, its interest lies in the fact that he develops a perfectionist ethical theory that aims to bring together the best elements in the ancient and modern traditions. We will examine Green's conception of agency, his perfectionist ethics of self-realization, the connections he sees between self-realization and the common good, and the contrast he draws between perfectionism and utilitarianism.

- (A) T.H. Green, *Prolegomena to Ethics*, Books II-IV.
- (B) T.H. Green, "On the Different Senses of 'Freedom' as Applied to Will and the Moral Progress of Man" in the *Collected Works of T.H. Green* (London: Thoemmes, 1997), vol. II; *Henry Sidgwick, *Lectures on the Ethics of T.H. Green, Mr. Herbert Spencer, and J. Martineau* (London: Macmillan, 1902); *Terence Irwin, "Morality and Personality: Kant and Green" in *Self and Nature*, ed. A. Wood (Ithaca, Cornell university Press, 1984); David O. Brink, Introductory Notes to the *Prolegomena*; Irwin, *The Development of Ethics*, ch. 85 [HR].

5. F.H. Bradley (1846-1924). Bradley's *Ethical Studies* also develops an ethics of self-realization. His defense of that doctrine, though livelier than Green's, is less systematic and more polemical. We will focus on the most famous and Hegelian chapter, "My Station and its Duties."

- (A) F.H. Bradley, *Ethical Studies* [1st ed. 1876], 2d ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1927) ch. V [ER].
- (B) Bradley, *Ethical Studies*; Irwin, *The Development of Ethics*, ch. 84 [HR].

6. G.E. Moore (1873-1958). Moore was extremely polemical. He claimed that the open question argument exposed the naturalistic fallacy allegedly committed by many ethicists. He criticized both Mill and Sidgwick for their claims about the good. He claimed that egoism and the idea of relational goodness were incoherent. But he was also constructive, advocating a form of non-naturalism, a conception of absolute goodness, the doctrine of organic unities, and a form of ideal consequentialism.

- (A) G.E. Moore, *Principia Ethica* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1903), chs. I-III, V-VI.
- (B) David O. Brink, *Moral Realism and the Foundations of Ethics* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989), ch. 6 and "Realism, Naturalism, and Moral Semantics" *Social Philosophy & Policy* 18 (2001): 154-76; Connie Rosati, "Naturalism, Normativity, and the Open Question Argument" *Nous* 29 (1995): 46-70; Irwin, *The Development of Ethics*, ch. 86 [HR].

7. H.A. Prichard (1871-1947). In a famous but perplexing essay, Prichard argues that it is a mistake to try to demonstrate the authority of moral requirements, by appeal to any non-moral standard. Prichard seems to defend a form of moral rationalism that takes the authority of morality as a fixed point.

- (A) H.A. Prichard, "Does Moral Philosophy Rest on a Mistake?" in H.A. Prichard, *Moral Obligation* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1914) [ER].
- (B) Irwin, *The Development of Ethics*, §1400 [HR].

8. W.D. Ross (1877-1971). Ross agrees with many of Sidgwick's and Moore's metaethical commitments but sharply disagrees with their normative conclusions. Ross is a deontologist who embraces a plurality of distinct and fundamental right-making factors. Central to this picture is the contrast between prima facie and sans phrase duties and his account of moral conflict as the interaction of distinct prima facie duties.

- (A) W.D. Ross, *The Right and the Good* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1930), ch. 2 [ER].
- (B) W.D. Ross, *The Right and the Good* and *The Foundations of Ethics* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1951); Irwin, *The Development of Ethics*, ch. 87 [HR].

9. C.D. Broad (1887-1971). Broad also shares the metaethical commitments of the rational intuitionists, but disagrees yet again with them normatively. In particular, he thinks that neither of Sidgwick's two substantive methods -- egoism and utilitarianism -- captures commonsense morality. Instead, he proposes to model commonsense morality with a new theory -- self-referential altruism -- that combines consequentialist and agent-relative ideas about duty.

- (A) C.D. Broad, "Self & Others" reprinted in *Broad's Critical Essays in Moral Philosophy*, ed. D. Cheney (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1971) [ER].

10. A.J. Ayer (1910-1989) & C.L. Stevenson (1908-1979). Ayer and Stevenson were noncognitivists who accepted the rational intuitionist critique of ethical naturalism but rejected the intuitionists' metaphysics and epistemology as extravagant. Instead, they appealed to the motivational role of moral judgments to argue that moral judgments should be understood to express noncognitive attitudes, rather than beliefs about objective properties of the world.

- (A) A.J. Ayer, *Language, Truth, and Logic* (New York: Dover, 1930), ch. 6 [ER]; C.K. Stevenson, "The Emotive Meaning of Ethical Terms" *Mind* 46 (1937): 14-31 [ER].
- (B) Brink, *Moral Realism and the Foundations of Ethics*, ch. 6 and "Moral Motivation" *Ethics* 107 (1997): 4-32; Michael Smith, *The Moral Problem* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994); and Irwin, *The Development of Ethics*, ch. 88 [HR]

11. Elizabeth Anscombe (1919-2001). Anscombe claimed that the modern moral focus on duty and obligation presupposed the idea of a moral law, which made no sense within a secular world-view. Though her own Catholic perspective on moral matters should not have trouble with this presupposition, she recommended returning to an ethics of character and virtue, rather than an ethics of duty. For this reason, Anscombe is often credited, at least in part, with the rebirth of virtue ethics in the late twentieth century.

- (A) Elizabeth Anscombe, "Modern Moral Philosophy" *Philosophy* 33 (1958) [ER].

12. Philippa Foot (1920-2010). In “Morality as a System of Hypothetical Imperatives” Foot embraces a kind of anti-rationalism about ethics according to which moral requirements are inescapable but not necessarily authoritative. Interestingly, she denies that this form of anti-rationalism should be seen as threatening or subversive. Though she has since repudiated this kind of anti-rationalism, it is a wonderfully clear statement of a view that many would find attractive.

- (A) Philippa Foot, “Morality as a System of Hypothetical Imperatives” *Philosophical Review* 81 (1972): 305-16 reprinted with postscript in Philippa Foot, *Virtues and Vices* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1978) [ER].
- (B) David O. Brink, “Kantian Rationalism: Inescapability, Authority, and Supremacy” in *Ethics and Practical Reason*, ed. G. Cullity and B. Gaut (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997).

13. Bernard Williams (1929-2003). Like Anscombe, Williams is famous for expressing doubts about philosophical conceptions of moral duty and obligation and advocating for a more central role in moral theory and deliberation for the agent’s character and emotions. As part of this jeremiad against moral obligation, he is especially critical of modern moral theories, such as utilitarianism and Kantianism, which insist on impartiality.

- (A) Bernard Williams, “Persons, Character, and Morality” in *The Identities of Persons*, ed. A. Rorty (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976) and reprinted in Bernard Williams, *Moral Luck* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981) [ER].
- Bernard Williams, “A Critique of Utilitarianism” in Smart and Williams, *Utilitarianism: For and Against* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973); “Internal and External Reasons” reprinted in *Moral Luck*; and *Ethics and the Limits of Philosophy* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1980).

14. John Rawls (1921-2002). In *A Theory of Justice* Rawls defends a liberal egalitarian conception of social justice in contrast to libertarian and utilitarian rivals. He defends his conception of justice by appeal to a hypothetical social contract in which contractors deliberate behind a veil of ignorance, which represents contractors as free and equal moral persons, occupying fair initial conditions. This is why he calls his conception Justice as Fairness. After reconstructing the main features of Justice as Fairness, we will examine the details of his contractual and contract-independent arguments against utilitarianism and the Kantian pedigree of Justice as Fairness.

- (A) John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1971) §§1-9, 11-17, 20-30, 31-33, 36, 39-40, 46, 49, 60-66, 82.
- (B) The rest of *A Theory of Justice*; **Reading Rawls*, ed. N. Daniels (Oxford: Blackwell, 1975); and Irwin, *The Development of Ethics*, chs. 95-96 [HR].