

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

**Fall, 2017**

Professor (lecturer): Richard Arneson.

Teaching Assistants: Rosalind Chaplin, Marcus McGahhey, and Ayoob Shahmoradi.

For further information about the course, which will change week by week, consult the Philosophy 13 course TritonEd page. Required and recommended readings (other than the course texts available in the Bookstore), occasional class notes, this course syllabus, and eventually advance information handouts on the final exam will be made available at this TritonEd page.

**To access course materials in TritonEd, go to the TritonEd course web page, from the left-hand side of page menu click on "Content." A list of Phil 13 class materials will then show up on the screen.**

Lectures: Tuesdays and Thursdays 12:30 p.m. to 1:50 in Center Hall 115.

Discussion sections meet once a week: section #1 Monday 2-3 (TA Marcus McGahhey), section #2 Monday 3-4 (TA Ayoob Shahmoradi), section #3 Wednesday 2-3 (TA Rosalind Chaplin), section #4 Wednesday 3-4 (TA Rosalind Chaplin), section #5 Thursday 5-6 (TA Ayoob Shahmoradi), section #6 Friday 11-12 (TA Marcus McGahhey).

The final exam for this course will take place on December 15 from 11:30 a.m. to 2:30. 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 and ethical issues. These are issues about what we fundamentally owe one another by way of conduct, and about what, if anything, is really good or choiceworthy in human life. We have these disagreements in ordinary life, not just in philosophy classes or in academic journals. If someone says "Abortion is wrong" and another person says "Abortion is not wrong," what sort of disagreement is this? One view is that moral disagreement is disagreement in attitude. One person is expressing a favorable attitude toward abortion, the other is expressing an unfavorable attitude. On this view, moral statements are not genuine assertions, and cannot be true or false. Another possible view is that moral claims are a type of order or command, so "abortion is wrong" means something like "Don't have an abortion!" On yet another view, moral claims make genuine assertions, and can be true or false, correct or incorrect. Most of the authors of the writings we will read in this class assume the latter view just described. In the last week of the course, we look briefly at what might be said on both sides of this issue, and also ask, what could make moral claims true, if they are true.

Moral codes concerning the right and the good differ from society to society and change over time within any single society. Is there some uniquely valid fundamental standard for determining what is right and good or not? We study two contrasting proposals for identifying fundamental standards. Call them "consequentialism" and "nonconsequentialism." One proposal holds that we should assess laws, social practices, actions and policies by their consequences. What's morally right is always the act or policy that would produce the best reachable outcome.

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 (utility) of all humans (and other animals). Critics of Mill's views deny that happiness as Mill conceives of it (pleasure and the absence of pain) is really the correct standard for assessing the quality of a person's life, what makes someone's life go better for worse for the person who is living it. Critics also deny that what's morally right is always doing what maximizes aggregate human happiness.

The other proposal as to the standard of morally right conduct rejects consequentialism. This 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. Along with affirming moral constraints, nonconsequentialist morality also affirms options. So long as we aren't violating the moral constraints, each of us has wide freedom to choose and pursue our own projects and live as we choose, even if our choices and actions aren't maximizing good consequences. Some nonconsequentialists hold that some moral constraints are absolute and exceptionless: there are some things we may not do whatever the consequences. In our course readings, the 20<sup>th</sup>-century philosophers Robert Nozick and Judith Thomson affirm moral positions that take respect for individual human rights to be fundamental.

We test rival approaches to morality by examining some controversial moral issues. (1) One is whether abortion is morally permissible or morally forbidden. A further issue is what stance the state should adopt toward the practice of abortion. (2) A second issue is, under what circumstances is having asexual relations with another person or

persons morally permissible. Some think that a necessary condition for morally permissible sexual activity is that all participants voluntarily consent to it. Some think such voluntary consent is necessary and sufficient for permissibility. Tom Dougherty argues that to be valid, consent to sexual activity must be communicated, and that consent based on misinformation is invalid. Some also argue that intoxication vitiates consent. Others disagree. Again, we might distinguish what morality requires and what laws and social norms should prescribe. (3) A third issue concerns justifiable self-defense: Under what conditions is it morally permissible to attack another person with lethal force in order to save oneself from grievous harm? (4) Another issue is to what extent, if any, we are bound by moral duties to rescue people in peril. If there are such duties, are they legitimately enforceable? If so, when?

**THE AIMS OF THE COURSE** are (1) to improve our skills at reading and understanding difficult writings and thinking clearly about complex issues and writing about those issues (2) to become more aware of the structure of our own moral views and of moral positions opposed to our own.

**COURSE TEXTS:** All course readings are available for downloading at the course TritonEd page, except for Mill's *Utilitarianism*, which is available on line at a link provided (see Schedule of lecture topics and readings, weeks 1 and 3).

**READINGS & FURTHER RECOMMENDED READINGS.** The required readings for each class are listed as "Readings" on the Schedule of Lecture Topics and Readings below. For some classes there will be a list of "Further recommended list of readings" in smaller print—like this. These MERELY RECOMMENDED NOT REQUIRED readings will not show up on exams. They are optional. I include them for anyone who wants to explore the topic for that day a bit further.

**COURSE REQUIREMENTS:** Attendance at lectures is required, but will not affect the course grade except as it registers in the in-class writing exercises. Regular participation in discussion section meetings is required. There will be a midterm exam in class (week 5), 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 readings, lectures, and handouts distributed in class.

(In the course of some lectures, a question or topic based on that day's reading will be posed, and each student will be asked to write a short analytical response to it. These short writing exercises will be graded by your TA and returned to you. The point of these writing exercises is to get us actively thinking about course materials. Over the term there will be seven in-class graded writing exercises, and your best six grades on these will be averaged and will contribute to the class participation component of your grade).

**GRADING FOR PASS/NOT PASS ENROLLEES:** 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.

**GRADING:** Quizzes given in discussion section meetings and in-class writing exercises 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. Quizzes will sometimes be given in section meetings, and these will contribute to 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. Helped by your TA, you learn from your classmates and they from you. Also, the TA will offer a different perspective on the issues from what the lectures provide.

**DISABILITY.** If you have a certified disability that requires accommodation, you should register with the campus Office for Students with Disabilities (OSD) and provide me a current Authorization for Accommodation (AFA) letter issued by that Office. A copy of this same letter should also be given to the OSD liaison person in the Philosophy Department at the start of the term, so accommodation can be arranged. 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.

**ACADEMIC INTEGRITY.** Integrity of scholarship is essential for an academic community. The University expects that both faculty and students will honor this principle and in so doing protect the validity of University intellectual work. For students, this means that all academic work will be done by the individual to whom it is assigned, without unauthorized aid of any kind. No dishonesty or cheating, in other words. See the University Policy on academic Integrity at <http://students.ucsd.edu/academics/academic-integrity/index.html/>

**OFFICE HOURS:** You are welcome and encouraged to come to my (Arneson's) office hours or those of your TA whenever you want to talk about the course material and themes, the assignments, or any other course-related concerns you have.

**Writing:** Your success in this class will depend in part on your ability to express yourself clearly. The course readings provide exemplars of clear philosophical writing. At the TritonEd course page are some handouts with tips about how to write philosophy essays. As you work on your writing assignment (due on Tuesday, November 21 (the Tuesday just before Thanksgiving holiday). your TAs and I can help you talk through your ideas. Another resource is the UCSD Writing Center (located at 127 Mandeville; [writingcenter@ucsd.edu](mailto:writingcenter@ucsd.edu)). Their staff can help you with drafts of essays and generally provide advice for you at all stages of the writing process.

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

**Note: All readings are available at the TritonEd course page, except for the Mill reading, excerpts from Utilitarianism (weeks 1 & 3), available online**

Week 0. September 25-October 1.

THURSDAY: Introduction to ethics and moral theory.

Reading: Jonathan Glover, "The Scope and Limits of Moral Argument"; also Russ Shafer-Landau, "Introduction" to his *The Fundamentals of Ethics*.

Recommended reading: Thomas Nagel, "Right and Wrong."

Week 1. October 2-8.

TUESDAY: Mill's utilitarianism.

Reading: J. S. Mill, *Utilitarianism*, chapters 1 & 2. Available at <http://www.utilitarianism.com/mill1.htm>

THURSDAY: Hedonism (what is good in itself for anyone is feeling good and nothing but feeling good). Mill on "higher pleasures."

Reading: Mill, *Utilitarianism*, paragraphs 1-12 of chapter 2; also Robert Nozick, "The Experience Machine"; also Roger Crisp, "Hedonism Reconsidered."

Week 2. October 9-15.

TUESDAY: What makes someone's life good for that very person? Another view: desire satisfactionism.

Reading: Derek Parfit, "What Makes Someone's Life Go Best?"; also Richard Kraut, "Desire and the Human Good."

THURSDAY: Objective list views, perfectionism, and hybrid views of the good.

Reading: Richard Arneson, "BOL! Defending the Bare Objective List Account of Well-Being"; also Shelly Kagan, "Well-Being as Enjoying the Good."

Recommended reading: Christopher Heathwood, "The Desire-Fulfillment Theory; Gwen Bradford, "Perfectionism"; also Robert Adams, "Well-Being and Excellence."

Week 3. October 16-22.

TUESDAY: Mill on justice; Utilitarianism and consequentialism; arguments against consequentialism.

Reading: J. S. Mill, *Utilitarianism*, chapter 5. Available at <http://www.utilitarianism.com/mill5.htm>. Also Russ Shafer-Landau, "Consequentialism: Its Difficulties."

THURSDAY: The structure of nonconsequentialist morality; constraints and options; prima facie duties.

Reading: Philippa Foot, "The Problem of Abortion and the Doctrine of Double Effect"; also Thomas Nagel, "Agent-relativity & Deontology."

Further recommended reading: Victor Tadros, excerpts from *The Ends of Harm*; Larry Alexander and Michael Moore, "Deontological Ethics."

Week 4. October 23-29.

TUESDAY: Moral rights; natural moral rights; overriding rights.

Reading: Robert Nozick, "Moral Constraints and Moral Goals," chapter 3 of his *Anarchy, State, & Utopia*; also Amartya Sen "Rights and Agency," sections 1-4 only.

THURSDAY: **MIDTERM EXAM IN CLASS.**

Week 5. October 30-November 5.

TUESDAY: Abortion.

Reading: Judith Thomson, "A Defense of Abortion."

THURSDAY: Abortion and infanticide.

Reading: Don Marquis, "Why Abortion Is Immoral"; Mary Anne Warren, "On the Moral and Legal Status of Abortion."

Reading: Richard Arneson, "Basic Equality, Rational Agency Capacity, Potential, and Personhood."

Further recommended reading: Jeff McMahan, "Infanticide."

Week 6. November 6-12.

TUES: Consent to sexual relations. Deception.

Reading: Tom Dougherty, "Sex, Lies, and Consent."

Hallie Liberto: "Intention and Sexual Consent."

Alan Wertheimer: "Deception," Chapter 9 in his *Consent to Sexual Relations*.

THUR: Consent to sexual relations.

Reading: Tom Dougherty, "Yes Means Yes: Consent as Communication"; also Alan Wertheimer, "Coercion," Chapter 8 in his *Consent to Sexual Relations*.

Week 7. November 13-19.

TUES: Self-defense.

Reading: Judith Thomson, "Self-Defense"; also Helen Frowe, chapters 1 & 2 of her *Defensive Killing*.

Recommended reading: Michael Otsuka, "Killing the Innocent in Self-Defense." Further recommended reading:

Richard Arneson, "Self-defense and Culpability: Fault Forfeits First."

THUR: Beneficence and distant needy strangers.

Reading: Peter Singer, "Famine, Affluence, and Morality"; also Jean Hampton, "Selflessness and the Loss of Self".

Further recommended reading: Garrett Cullity, "Asking Too Much"; also Leif Wenar, "Poverty is No Pond: Challenges for the Affluent"; Liam Murphy, "The Demands of Beneficence"; Richard Arneson, "Moral Limits on the Demands of Beneficence?"

Week 8. November 20--26.

TUES: **WRITING ASSIGNMENT DUE IN CLASS.** Global poverty.

Reading: Thomas Pogge, "Are We Violating the Human Rights of the World's Poor?"

THUR: **No class. Thanksgiving Holiday.**

WEEK 9: November 27-December 3.

TUES: A conservative line on duties to needy strangers.

Reading: Jan Narveson, "We Don't Owe Them a Thing! A Tough-minded but Soft-Hearted View of Aid to the Faraway Needy."

THUR: Ethics, moral rules, skepticism.

Reading: Russ Shafer-Landau, "Ethical Pluralism: Prima Facie Duties and Ethical Particularism"; also Brad Hooker, *Ideal Code, Real World* excerpts. See also the "Rule Consequentialism discussion, pages 153-156 of the Russ Shafer-Landau reading for Tuesday of week 3.

Recommended reading: W.D. Ross, "What Makes Right Acts Right?"

Week 10. December 4-10.

TUES: Moral skepticism.

Reading: John Mackie, "The Subjectivity of Values."

THUR: What, if anything, could make moral claims true? Coherentism and ideal reflective equilibrium.

Reading: John Rawls, "Some Remarks on Moral Theory"; also Michael Huemer, "Revisionary Intuitionism."

**Arneson's office hours: Wednesdays 2-3 & Fridays 3:00-4:00 in HSS 8057.**

**Arneson's email: rarneson@ucsd.edu**