

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

Fall, 2019

Professor (lecturer): Richard Arneson.

Teaching Assistants: Ryan Stringer and Shawn Wang.

For further information about the course, which will change week by week, consult the Philosophy 13 course Canvaspage. Required and recommended readings, Powerpoint lecture notes, this course syllabus, and eventually handouts on the midterm, writing assignment, and final exam will be made available at this Canvas page.

To access course materials in Canvas, go to the Canvas course web page. A menu of Phil 13 class materials will show up on the screen.

Lectures: Tuesdays and Thursdays 11:00 a.m.-12:20 p.m. in Center Hall 212.

Discussion sections meet once a week: section #1, Monday 3:00-3:50 p.m. in APM 2301; section #2, Wednesday 11:00-11:50 a.m. in HSS 2954; section #3, Thursday 5:00-5:50 p.m. in APM 2301; and section #4, Friday 12:00 noon to 12:50 p.m., in WLH 2114. Shawn Wang is the instructor for section #1 and #3, Ryan Stringer for sections #2 and #4.

Ryan Stringer office hours: 1-2 Tuesdays and Thursdays at the Mandeville coffee cart. Shawn Wang office hours: 3-5 Thursdays at 7086 HSS. Shawn Wang email: shawntinghaowang@gmail.com

The final exam for this course will be a regular 3-hour exam comprehending all course materials including readings and background readings, course lectures, and powerpoint slides. The final exam will take place on Wednesday, December 11, from 11:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m., place to be announced (possibly in our regular classroom, Center 212). If you enroll in this class, you must be free to take a regular final exam for this course at this time.

SKELETON OUTLINE OF COURSE THEMES

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 third view just described is correct.

Somewhat similar alternatives are in play when it comes to judgments of good and bad. But we need to make a couple of clarifying distinctions. Some concepts of things have evaluative standards built into the concept. A good knife is one that is functional for doing the kinds of cutting that knives are by definition supposed to do. A good assassin has the traits that make for success in the role of killing people for hire. A good football team has the characteristics that tend to bring it about that the team wins football games. But is the world a better place for having good knives, good assassins, and good football teams in it? Is a good human life one filled with enjoyable experiences or is something more, or something else, needed? The concepts we pick out by the terms "world" and "life" don't have evaluative standards built into them. We should also distinguish claims that something is good as a means to some specified further goal and claims that something is good not just as a means but for its own sake. Opening the refrigerator door is good as a means of getting at what's inside and picking a soft drink out of the refrigerator is a good means to getting its taste in my mouth, but getting that pleasant experience may be valued not as a means to anything further but for its own sake. About claims that something is good for its own sake, some might say such claims express the pro-attitudes of the speaker; if I say "beer is good" that expresses my positive attitude to it. Another view is that such claims can be objectively correct or incorrect, true or false; "Beer is good" makes a genuine assertion and is true just in case beer really is valuable. A prescriptive view is also an alternative—saying something is bad might be a way of saying "Don't choose it!".

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? At the beginning of the course we look briefly at three opposed answers.. One is relativism—there is a correct standard, but for the people in each separate society, the correct standard for those people is relative to their particular society. (Another possible relativism says, there is a correct standard, but for each person, the correct standard for that person, determining what is right and wrong for that person to do, is relative to that very person's convictions, attitudes, or outlook.) A second possible answer is skepticism or nihilism—there is no correct standard, so there are

no correct answers to what is morally right or wrong for any person to do. Many people believe there are correct answers, but they are all mistaken. Moral claims make assertions about what it is morally right and wrong to do, but all such assertions are false. A third possible answer is realism or objectivism. This says, there is a correct fundamental standard for determining what is right and wrong that applies to all persons at all times or places. At any given time we may lack access to this standard, or have only partial access, but it still exists, whether we know it or not. What according to the one true standard is right and wrong to do may vary with circumstances. Maybe what is right to do in cold climates differs from what is right to do in hot climates; maybe what is right and wrong to do in hunter-gatherer social conditions is different from what it is right and wrong to do in a modern wealthy society, and so on. Most of the authors we study in this course take a realist/objectivist line.

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).

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.

At the end of the class we move from exploring different views about what is morally right and wrong (that is, morally required, permitted, and forbidden) to exploring a different kind of question: what if anything makes a person morally blameworthy for doing bad things, or maybe for being disposed to do bad things, and morally praiseworthy for doing good things, or maybe for being disposed to do good things?

Suppose somebody smashes your face. You are upset, but he says, “Don’t blame me! It’s not my fault! I’m not responsible for smashing your face!” What if anything makes such statements true or false? Notice, the issue here is not whether you do what is right or wrong, good or bad. The issue is what makes you responsible or not for your role in the doing of it. Being responsible for some choice you take (or disposition to choice or action you have) is being an appropriate target of moral praise or blame, depending on the quality of what you do (or choose, or are disposed to do).

This issue of responsibility seems to get to the heart of what makes us persons, and special, as persons. A nonperson animal such as a dog or cat is an agent, can act to satisfy her preferences, but cannot really be morally responsible for what she does. It’s tempting to blame your pet for shitting on the rug, for example, but on some level we understand, blaming an animal is inappropriate, does not make sense. Yet we do in a way punish animals for exhibiting undesired behavior. We reward desired behavior and penalize undesired behavior (like shitting on the rug). Is there more to holding persons morally responsible for what they do than practices of rewarding desired behavior and penalizing undesired behavior? If so, what is the something more and what might justify it? There are puzzles here.

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 Canvas 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 further list of “Merely

recommended 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.

CLICKERS QUESTIONS & IN-CLASS WRITING EXERCISES. At some points during some lectures an I-clicker question will be posed, and so each enrolled student must have an iclicker for this course.

Some of these questions will be just have the purpose of helping you and me learn whether we are understanding the material being covered, and your answers will not be recorded.

Sometimes an iclicker question will be announced as “for credit,” your scores on these will be recorded and count toward your lecture participation grade. For these, you get credit both for answering and for answering correctly. In addition, sometimes students at lecture will be asked to do in-class writing exercises, which will be collected and count toward lecture participation and performance for that day. The point of these writing exercises is to get us actively thinking about course materials.

NO USE OF ELECTRONIC DEVICES (COMPUTERS, I-PHONES, I-PADS AND SO ON) is permitted during class. If you want to take notes during class, you can use pens and paper. This rule applies to lectures.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS: Attendance at lectures is required, but will not affect the course grade except as it registers in the in-class writing exercises and graded iclicker questions. Regular participation in discussion section meetings is required. There will be a midterm takehome exam (about 1500 words) (due on Thursday of week 3), a short writing assignment (about 1500 words) (due on Tuesday of Week 8), 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 powerpoint slides accompanying lectures and posted at the course Triton-Ed page.

GRADING: Your participation in discussion section meetings counts for 10 percent of your overall course grade; I-Clickers quizzes and in-class writing exercises at lecture classes count for 15 per cent of your final course grade, the midterm takehome exam counts for 15 per cent, the writing assignment for 25 per cent, and the final examination for 35 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.

GRADING FOR PASS/NOT PASS STUDENTS. If you are enrolled in this course on a pass/not pass basis, and have an A minus or better overall average on the midterm takehome exam, the writing assignment, lecture participation, and section participation, going into the final exam, you have already earned a PASS grade in the course and are excused from taking the final exam. This information probably will not be available until the end of week 10 of the course. Be sure to check with your TA if you believe you have qualified to pass the course without taking the final exam as just described, to make sure there are no misunderstandings.

DISCUSSION SECTIONS. A discussion meeting for each section will occur once a week. Participation and performance at section meetings will contribute to your course grade. Your TA will explain the details. 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 Canvas course page are some handouts with tips about how to write philosophy essays. As you work on your writing assignment (due on Tuesday of week 8), 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). 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 Canvas course page

Week 0. September 23-29 (Instruction starts Thursday, Sept., 26).

THURSDAY: Introduction to moral argument. Morality, ethics—what's that?

Reading: Jonathan Glover, "The Scope and Limits of Moral Argument"; also Thomas Nagel, "Right and Wrong"; Merely recommended: John Rawls, "Some Remarks on Moral Theory"; also Russ Shafer-Landau, "Introduction" to his *The Fundamentals of Ethics*.

Week 1. September 30-October 6.

TUESDAY: Moral relativism and moral skepticism.

Reading, Statement on Human rights, American Anthropological Association, 1947. Also, James Rachels, "Morality Is Not Relative." Also: Russ Shafer-Landau, "Moral Reasoning" section, pages 5-13, of his "Introduction" (see Week 0 to access this reading).

THURSDAY: John Stuart Mill's utilitarianism. Mill: we need a criterion of right & wrong. Utilitarianism: what is morally right is maximally bringing about what is good. Mill's fancy hedonism. Mill's scalar utilitarianism. Utilitarianism and common-sense moral rules.

Reading: J. S. Mill, *Utilitarianism*, chapters 1 & 2.

Merely recommended reading: Robert Nozick, "The experience machine."

Week 2. October 7-13.

TUESDAY. What makes your life go better for you rather than worse? Rival views of human good: desire satisfaction, objective list.

Reading: Richard Kraut, "Desire and Human Good."

THURSDAY. What makes your life go better for you rather than worse? Hybrid views.

Reading: Robert Adams, "Well-Being and Excellence."

Week 3. October 14-20.

TUESDAY. Utilitarianism and justice; utilitarianism & consequentialism; arguments against consequentialism.

Reading: Mill, *Utilitarianism*, chapter 5. Available at <http://www.utilitarianism.com/mill5.htm>

Merely recommended reading: Russ Shafer-Landau, "Consequentialism: Its Difficulties."

THURSDAY: MIDTERM TAKEHOME EXAM DUE IN CLASS & AT TUNITIN

THURSDAY: Constraints and options. Morality as respecting persons by honoring individual moral rights.

Reading: Robert Nozick, *Anarchy, State, & Utopia*, chapter 3 and excerpt from chapter 7.

Week 4. October 21-27.

TUESDAY: More on constraints and options. Are constraints against wrongfully harming others stronger for harming we do than for harm we allow, and stronger for intended consequences of what we do and allow than for merely foreseen consequences of what we do and allow?

Reading: Warren Quinn, "Actions, Intentions, and Consequences: The Doctrine of Double Effect."

Merely recommended reading: Judith Thomson, "The Trolley Problem."

THURSDAY: Pluralism and a morality of pro tanto duties (any of which can be overridden in any particular circumstances by any combination of the others). Morality as a list of duties.

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

Merely recommended reading: Brad Hooker, *Ideal Code, Real World*, excerpts; also Russ Shafer-Landau, "Ethical pluralism & prima facie duties."

Week 5. October 28-November 3.

TUESDAY: Social ethics. What Part 1, The socialist ideal.

Reading: G. A. Cohen, "Why Not Socialism?"

Merely recommended reading: Richard Arneson, "Why Not Capitalism?"

THURSDAY: Social ethics. What institutions & public policies does justice require? Part 2, the capitalist ideal.

Reading: Jason Brennan, "Why Not Capitalism?", chapters 1-2.

Week 6. November 4-10.

TUESDAY: More on Brennan on capitalism.

Reading: Jason Brennan, "Why Not Capitalism?", chapters 3-4.

THURSDAY: Equality or priority:

Reading: Derek Parfit, "Equality or Priority?"

Week 7. November 11-17.

TUESDAY: Neither equality nor priority. Justice requires that everyone have enough. The sufficiency doctrine.

Reading: Harry Frankfurt: "Equality as a moral ideal."

Merely recommended reading: Paula Casal: "Why Sufficiency Is Not Enough."

THURSDAY: More on a morality of individual rights, constraints and options.

Reading: Judith Thomson, "Self-Defense."

WEEK 8. November 18-24.

TUESDAY: Writing Assignment due via Turnitin.

TUESDAY: More on self-defense.

Reading: Michael Otsuka, "Killing the Innocent in Self-Defense."

THURSDAY: Self-defense and moral blameworthiness..

Reading: Richard Arneson: "Self-Defense and Culpability: Fault forfeits first."

Week 9. November 25-December 1.

TUESDAY: Blameworthiness, deservingness, moral worth.

Reading: Nomy Arpaly, "Moral Worth."

THURSDAY: NO CLASS. THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY.

Week 10. December 2-8.

TUESDAY: Is it OK to regard people as morally blameworthy for what lies beyond their power to control?

Reading: Thomas Nagel, "Moral Luck."

THURSDAY: Responsibility as self-disclosure and responsibility as accountability.

Reading: Gary Watson, "Two Faces of Responsibility."

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

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