

PHIL1008: Introduction to Ethics

Course Description:

This course will provide an introduction to central topics in ethics and the most prominent approaches to thinking about them. We will examine different theories of what makes an action right or wrong, how we might respond to the view that we should only ever should act in line with self-interest, what could make a given entity worthy of moral concern, and what might explain the place of morality in our universe. Particular attention will be paid to consequentialism, deontology, and virtue theory as frameworks for thinking about key ethical questions. We will consider the role that certain other issues in philosophy, such as whether human beings have free will, should play in approaching topics in ethics. In addition, we will think about how philosophical work in ethics can inform decisions that we regularly make in our lives.

Course Meetings:

Lectures: Wednesday 9-10am in Law Lecture Theatre, Friday 9-10am in Law Link T
Tutorials: Coombs Seminar Room D

Instructor:

Matthew Lindauer
matthew.lindauer@anu.edu.au
Coombs 2210
Wednesday 3-4pm and by appt.

Course Requirements:

Participation: 10%
First Essay: 20%
Second Essay: 30%
Final Exam: 40%

Course Papers:

Topics will be distributed in advance of the paper due dates. I will be available in office hours to discuss outlines and even early stage ideas (so don't hesitate to come and meet with me). Please submit papers double-spaced with normal font by email.

Course Readings:

The following texts and suggested editions will be used in the course:
John Stuart Mill, *Utilitarianism*, Hackett
Immanuel Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, Cambridge
Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Hackett

Other readings will be distributed using Wattle.

Attendance, Preparation, and Participation:

1) Attendance: To get the most out of the class, you should do your best to attend every course session and tutorial. Attendance, at every tutorial session is mandatory. You are allowed one unexcused absence from tutorials. Each unexcused absence after this one will reduce your participation grade by 20%.

2) Preparation and Participation: When you attend the course sessions, I will expect you to have done the required reading. I will also ask that each student submit a brief reading response using Wattle at least 24 hours in advance of the next lecture. These reading responses will not be graded (beyond whether or not they were submitted, which is included under your participation grade), but will be used to get a sense of what parts of the readings were most exciting or confusing and where discussion should tend towards in the coming class. They can take the form of just two or three questions, and I don't want students to be concerned about putting a lot of time or effort into these. Since you'll be doing the readings anyway, it shouldn't be much extra work to jot down a few thoughts or questions that came to you in the course of reading.

Academic Integrity:

I expect all students to abide by the standards of academic integrity. For the ANU's website containing information about these requirements, see <http://www.anu.edu.au/students/program-administration/assessments-exams/academic-honesty-plagiarism>. One of the most severe violations of academic integrity is plagiarism. If you directly quote, closely paraphrase, or use some original idea from another author, you must cite the source of this material. This includes material drawn lectures, journal articles, books, and also internet sources, such as websites. Do make use of the university requirements or get in touch if you have questions about these requirements. All violations of academic integrity or honesty will be taken seriously and resolved in line with the University's policies.

Course Meeting Schedule:

February 17, 19

Introduction, Mill, Chapter 1

February 24, 26

Mill, Chapters 2 and 3

March 2, 4

Mill, Chapters 4 and 5

March 9, 11

Kant, Section 1

March 16, 18

Kant, Sections 2 and 3

March 23

Kant continued

March 30, April 1

Korsgaard on realism and constructivism
van Inwagen on free will

April 3, First Paper Due

April 4-15, Teaching Break

April 20, 22

Aristotle, Books 1 and 2

April 27, 29

Aristotle, Books 3 and 4
Foot, selections from *Natural Goodness*

May 4, 6

Hume, selections from *A Treatise of Human Nature*;
Hobbes, selections from *Leviathan*

May 11, 13

Rachels, "Egoism and Moral Skepticism"
Nagel, "Right and Wrong"

May 17

Make-Up Session, Review, End of Year Gathering,
Benjamin Library, Coombs Building

May 18, 20

Issues in Applied Ethics:

- 1) Guest Lecture, Seth Lazar on War
 - Read his new Stanford Encyclopedia article,
<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/war/>
- 2) Determined by student interest,
Topic selected was "Career Choice"
 - MacAskill, "Replaceability, Career Choice, and Making a Difference"
 - Amia Srinivasan, "Stop the Robot Apocalypse," in the London Review of Books: <http://www.lrb.co.uk/v37/n18/amia-srinivasan/stop-the-robot-apocalypse>
 - A set of articles on effective altruism in the Boston Review:
<https://bostonreview.net/forum/peter-singer-logic-effective-altruism>
 - Jeff McMahan, "Philosophical Critiques of Effective Altruism," forthcoming in *The Philosopher's Magazine*:

<http://jeffersonmcmahan.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/11/Philosophical-Critiques-of-Effective-Altruism-refs-in-text.pdf>

May 29, Second Paper Due

June 9, Take-Home Exam